

Aleksandra Mikołajczyk – abstract of the doctoral dissertation

METHOD - my acting journey.

Using Lee Strasberg's method in role work

Christine in "Honeymoon" and Alice in "With a Face Against the Wall."

Lee Strasberg's METHOD is currently one of the most popular techniques for working on a role in the United States. In my work, I present it against the background of other methods for the development of this acting workshop – the approach of Stanislowski, Stella Adler or Meisner.

Analyzing the selected acting techniques, one can come to the conclusion that although they differ from each other in methodology, polemicize with each other or even negate assumptions, they actually have the same goal. The idea is to use the chosen technique to develop organic and real acting. Ultimately, it is up to the actor to choose the way of working and which exercises and which direction of acting development suits him best.

According to the METHOD before transforming into a stage character, one should understand her/his own psyche and get to know her/his own senses and check how they react. It is important to experience life and the world around us using the five senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste. Because, as Lola Cohen writes in her book "Lee Strasberg's METHOD Handbook of Acting Exercises": "By recalling and experiencing sensory experiences during the preparation for the role, the actor can breathe life – his own and imagined by the author – into the created characters."

My work is based not only on literature, but above all on personal experiences from trip to the United States and lectures at the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute conducted by two practitioners of the METHOD – Lola Cohen and Geoffrey Horne and meeting with Anna Strasberg, Lee Strasberg's wife. I describe specific exercises that I practice myself and I know that they can be helpful for any actor in order to develop his own stage workshop. They have a practical tutorial and workshop character and many of them have not been published so far – I propose a collection of exercises based on my own lecture notes. I also present 10 tips on how to use the method after meeting Anna Strasberg.

The first goal of my work is to illustrate the usefulness of the METHOD by the way I used it in my work on two completely different characters, in two different performances. These are the roles of Christina in Gabriel Barylli's "Honeymoon" and Alice in Anna Bednarska's "With a Face Against the Wall". Although these are completely different stagings, in order to obtain a high diapazon of emotions, in both cases it was necessary to prepare the role analytically, as well as to find in oneself, thanks to the exercises of the METHOD, the right emotions.

The second goal of the work is to show that METHOD is universal. It can be used in the work on virtually any stage material. The universality of the METHOD and the fact that certain exercises that are part of it can be used to prepare various roles, I show by analyzing my preparation and forplaying roles on stage in the above-mentioned performances.

In addition I try to emphasize the diversity of the METHOD. It offers very different exercises that can help the actor in the development of his craft. There are analytical exercises that are necessary to define the character and have an in-depth understanding of the material we are working on. There are also exercises supporting the training of our senses and the development of emotions to ultimately be able to use them in stage work.

Acting development is all about being able to learn about different methods of working on a role. Explore a variety of ways to get to stage truth and build characters. Then determine what serves us and what does not. And finally, consciously choose some elements and reject others. And so it happened to me. Although it was not a quick process, I managed to "filter" through my knowledge about the METHOD and choose from it what helps me in my professional work. This is in line with what Grzegorz Jarzyna says on this subject: "There is no single, ideal method, but the exercise of the mind, body and senses according to the Strasberg Method will certainly bring us closer to discovering our original and unique acting condition."