

# A Short History of Acting Training, Their Teachers and Proponents

## Classical Training Technique

### PHYSICAL

**Delsarte** — codified emotion into specific facial expressions, gestures and attitudes.

### MASK & MIME

**Jacques Copeau** — Influenced by commedia dell'arte, used masks and mime to free actor's imagination.

**Marcel Marceaux** — A student of Copeau, becomes world renowned mime.

**Michael Saint-Denis** — Copeau's nephew, founded major acting schools in Europe, England, Canada and the US, including the Julliard acting program.

**Jaques Lecoq** — Influenced by Copeau, focuses on the mask, as well as mime, as a means of freeing actor's movement.

### TEXT & THE BRITS

**John Barton** — director at RSC, writes *Playing Shakespeare* based on a series of BBC interviews with Shakespearean actors; the focus is on text and scansion.

**Joseph Bertram** — Focusses on the Elizabethan subject of "loudspeaking," and rhetoric.

**Cicely Berry** — Her book, *The Actor and the Text* emphasizes communicating the meaning of the line.

## Constantine Stanislavski System

Based on Pavlov's experiments in conditioned response

### RENEGADES

**Vsevolod Meyerhold** — Viewed theatre as an arena for experiment and creation of new staging methods; a fervent advocate of Symbolism in theatre.

**Yevgeny Vachtangov** — Influenced by Meyerhold and Stanislavski, his productions incorporated masks, music, dance, abstract costume, avant-garde sets as well as a detailed analysis of the texts of plays and the psychological motivations of its characters.

**Michael Chekov** — *On the Technique of Acting* explores accessing creativity through movement and the "psychological gesture" to find the physical core of a character. His techniques, though seemingly external, were meant to lead the actor to a rich internal life.

### DISCIPLES

**Richard Boleslavski** — Based on physical, vocal and mental training, he explains the system of creating the inner workings of a character in his book, *Acting: The First Six Lessons*.

**Maria Ouspenskia** — Trained at the Moscow Arts Theatre, emigrated to the U.S. where she appeared on Broadway and taught at the American Laboratory Theatre.

**Stella Adler & Robert Lewis** — broke with Method, focussing instead on Given Circumstances. Lewis wrote *Method or Madness* and *Advice to the Players*.

**Robert Cohen** — Professor at U.C. Irvine wrote *Acting One*. Best known for teaching on subtext and the "contentless scene."

### METHOD

**Psychological Realism**  
Freudian based

**Lee Strasberg** — Helped found the Actor's Studio, focus on sense and emotional memory, which Stanislavski later rejected; created the concept of the private moment.

**Marlon Brando** — Film actor who popularized Method Acting.

**Sanford Meisner** — Famously said, "Acting is Doing." Advocates a high commitment to the action choices in his Meisner Approach.

**Uta Hagen** — Advocates realistic acting, where the actor uses his own psyche to identify with the role, trusting that a form will result.

**Film Acting** — Teaches that acting is living and being (playing yourself). Acting is reacting.

## Reactionaries Theorist

### ESSENCE OF THEATRE

**Antoin Artaud** — Theatre of Cruelty, finds essence of human existence in laughter and the scream, as they don't require translation. Wrote *Theatre and Its Double*.

**Bertold Brecht** — Alienation theory uses actors as messengers rather than emotional characters. Although never fully realized, it influenced much of later theatre including musicals theatre.

**Peter Brook** — His book *The Empty Space* champions the neutral playing space, leading to the minimalist movement which emphasizes the actor over sets and costumes.

**Jerzy Grotowski** — His book *Towards the Poor Theatre* focuses on the actor and the plastique of body and face.

### IMPROVISATION

**Viola Spolin** — Advocated improv and games as an approach to theatre training. Wrote *Improvisation for the Theatre*.

**Paul Sills** — Spolin's son and 1st director of Chicago's Second City. Created "Story Theatre", using improv to create pieces.

**Del Close** — Coached many of the top comics of the late 20th century. Developed the long-form improv call "The Harold."

### THEATRE OF CHANCE

**Joseph Chaikin** — Open Theatre, an attempt to rediscover the ritual origins and core of theatre.

**Happenings** (Performance Art) — Largely interactive in nature between audience and the work, script minimal.

## Revolutionary New Theorist

**Charles Marowitz** — Takes new approach to productions, re-imagining script from his own point of view, rather than the playwright's.

**Richard Wilson** — Avant garde theatre director and vanguard theatre artist, stretching the limits of what is theatre.

**Anne Bogart** — Developed an improvisational, ensemble-building technique called Viewpoints

**David Mamet & William H. Macy** — Practical Aesthetic rejects Stanislavski, "Method" and character development for the actor. Advocates simple, 'honest' style, where the actor's job is to play the action and speak up simply.