

Visual Imagination in Actor Training

The Importance of the 'Minds Eye' and the Challenge of Aphantasia

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Constantin Stanislavski

‘we sometimes have to deal with sluggish imaginations, which will not respond to even the simplest questions. Then I have only one course open, I not only propound the question, I also suggest the answer. If the student can use the answer he goes on from there. If not, he changes it, and puts something else in its place. In either case he has been obliged to use his own inner vision. In the end something of an illusory existence is created, even if the material is only partially contributed by the student. The result may not be entirely satisfactory, but it does accomplish something. Before this attempt has been made the student has either had no image in his mind’s eye, or what he had was vague and confused. After the effort he can see something definite and even vivid’.

Stanislavski, C. (1989) *An Actor Prepares*. Routledge. p.67

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Michael Chekhov

‘Actors and directors, like all creative artists, are well acquainted with this power. “I am always surrounded by images,” said [director] Max Reinhardt. The whole morning, wrote Dickens, he sat in his study expecting *Oliver Twist* to appear. Goethe observed that inspiring images appear before us of their own accord, exclaiming “Here we are!”. Rafael saw an image pass before him in his room and this was the *Sistine Madonna*. Michelangelo exclaimed in despair that images pursued him and forced him to carve their likenesses out of rocks.’

Chekhov, M. (2002) *To The Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. Routledge. p.22

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Michael Chekhov

‘From a play choose a short scene having few characters. Act out the scene with all its characters several times in your imagination. Then put before the characters a series of questions and give them a number of suggestions.’
Chekhov, M. (2002) *To The Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. Routledge. p.29

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