

M A S S I M O ' S T I P S ©

a) What does an Actor do?

The work of an actor may be said to fall into 5 categories:

- 1.0 He exhibits real physical skills (including vocal skills). That is, he makes demands upon his body apparatus that go beyond the general level of use and ability that apply in everyday life.
- 2.0 He exhibits mimetic skills. That is, he induces physical states and activities that are not real for him, yet he must use his own reality and resources to achieve a truthful result.
- 3.0 He imaginatively explores situations of time, space and character which may not be part of his immediate reality.
- 4.0 He exhibits patterns of human behaviour which may not be natural to him.
- 5.0 While engaging in all these activities, he interacts with other human beings, namely, the other actors/characters and the audience.

The actor's work therefore depends on: (1) Physical fitness and flexibility. It takes: a SOUND BODY as well developed and cared for as that of an athlete, and a dancer; A TRAINED VOICE, as flexible as that of a singer, and a FINE STANDARD SPEECH. (2) his ability to control the activities of his body resources, (3) the range of his imagination, (4) his ability to put the intentions of his imagination into immediate physical effect, (5) his ability to interact spontaneously with other people.

An actor's training therefore should be directed towards each of these areas.

None of the activities of the actor should be unique to him. All occur in everyday life. The processes by which he carries out his work are common to all human beings. The basic components of the characters we will play are somewhere within ourselves.

The significant difference for the actor is that he chooses to repeat their patterns of action in the presence of an audience and/or on command.

b) What does it take to be an Actor?

It takes talent. TALENT in the dictionary is defined as "The natural endowment of a person with special or creative aptitudes." In an actor these endowments consist of high sensitivity and responsiveness to sight, touch, taste, and smell: of exceptional sensitivity to others, of being easily moved by beauty and pain, and of having a soaring imagination without losing control of reality.

Once one is blessed with these endowments, it takes an UNSHAKABLE DESIRE TO BE AN ACTOR together with a NEED TO EXPRESS what one has sensed and felt in the concrete terms of the characters with whom one will identify on stage. The need to express should not be confused with vanity or a kind of "Look at me! Here I am!" egotism, which is so prevalent in the theatre.

He will also learn to face himself, to hide nothing from himself: and to do so takes an *insatiable curiosity about the human condition*.

c) What is Talent?

Talent is long patience.

Everything you want to express must be considered so long, and so attentively, as to enable you to find some aspect of it which no one has yet seen and expressed. The smallest thing has something unknown in it; we must find it.

To describe a blazing fire, a tree in a plain, we must stand face to face with that fire or that tree, until to us they are wholly unlike any other tree or fire. Thus we may become original. Whatever the thing we wish to say, there is but one word to express it, but one word to give it movement, but one adjective to qualify it. We must seek until we find this noun, this verb, and this adjective, never be content with getting very near it, and never allow ourselves to play tricks or cheat. [Linked to points g) n.6.0 & h) n. 4.3]

The most important thing to pay attention to, is human interaction. Any artistic medium tempts the artist to do violence to nature; but it is essential that he should not let himself be led into being unfaithful to nature.

d) What is Acting?

Acting is behaving as unobserved, with the capacity of increasing or decreasing the volume of speech at will.

e) What is an Emotion?

An emotion is a Biochemical reaction to a thought. It derives therefore, that the capacity to *playback* a thought may trigger the expression of a true emotion, or mood required by a particular scene.

The *realistic* actor learns that, at will, he can induce specific, imagined stimuli to produce an organically correct behavioural response in order to arrive at the essence of the experience.

*“The most serviceable triggers that I personally transfer to my stage life are always **visual**. Even though I have confidence that my other four senses are highly developed, I find that smells, sounds, touches, and tastes are difficult to recall on command when I need a particular emotional release.”* - A personal view -

f) What is the Theatre?

The Theatre is the art of human relationship in action.

A major part of the actor training, then, should be the exploration of human relationship in meetings and encounters, that form an intrinsic part of our everyday life.

g) What is a Character & what is a Character Action?

Character, as Aristotle said, *reveals itself in action*.

A Character Action is what a character does in order to get what he wants, and is also sometimes referred to as activity [Linked to point g) n. 6.0].

A Character may be defined by asking a series of simple but fundamental questions, the answers to which may appear to be self-evident, but which must be given careful consideration and must be relevant to the context of the Play, with the ultimate purpose of making everything personal and felt, in order to make us *become* the character we pretend to be.

1.0 WHO AM I?

Born.....Age....Childhood.....Adolescence....Happiest memory.....Saddest memory.....Political ideals.....Moral ideals.....Family.....What do I like.... What don't I like: e.g. it is not enough to say "I like board games", you must decide whether your Character prefers backgammon or chess, and why.

What does the Character says about himself & what do *others* say about him? Many facts may be mentioned in the play by your character, other characters, notes, stage directions etc. however there are bound to be missing facts.

Fill the gaps logically and organically, creating a character biography, and the character's psychological profile.

List of **INNER** and **OUTER** Characteristics.

Outer Characteristics are to do with how the character presents himself to other people/situations, and/or what the character thinks about himself. E.G. What they say, and how they say it. These can be found when reading and/or working on a script.

Inner Characteristics are to do with a particular condition that determines the reason *why* the character presents himself to other people/situations. I.E. What lies behind an outer appearance or the way something is communicated. E.G. Why they say it. These constitute an essential part of the actor's homework.

E.g.:	INNER	OUTER
Character 1	Vain	Arrogant
Character 2	Insecure	Shy
	<u>BUT ALSO</u>	
Character 3	Insecure	Arrogant
Character 4	Secure	Reserved

*Observing yourself in everyday life, you should make your own list of inner and outer characteristics as an exercise in self-analysis. When working on a character you should make the character's list of inner and outer characteristics; then you must compare the two: any discrepancies should become the source for your research and filled with **transferences** [Linked to point j)] in order to become truthful and meaningful.*

Physical Life

Every actor needs one, for each and every role he interprets.

Animal Characterisation is a way into the exploration of instinctive and sensual physical characterisation. *ALSO*, close observation of other human beings in movement.

Which ANIMAL am I most like? (given Inner and Outer characteristics of Character)

Inner Life

Every actor needs one. Character's thought process must be kept alive just as in real life.

1.1 WHY?

What is my Slogan of Life?

What has made me the way I am?

Has to do with the past and not with the future. Something happened in childhood?

E.g.: "Life is Hard!" "Life is Unfair!" "Life is Scary!" "Life is Funny!" "Life is for the taking"

2.0 WHAT ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES?

2.1 What Time is it?

Period, Country, Customs, Music, Culture, Politics, Economics, Year, Season, Day, Minute, Second.

2.2 Where am I?

Familiarity with Country, City, Neighbourhood, House, Room, Area of room.

Remember to think in human terms and stick to the given circumstances of the play. E.g.: A Cockney in London's West End will behave very differently if he finds himself in the middle of Newcastle.

2.3 What surrounds me?

Animate and inanimate objects.

What can I SEE, TOUCH, SMELL, HEAR?

2.4 What are the given circumstances?

Past, Present, Future and the Events leading up to this moment in time? Most importantly when entering on stage one must know exactly *where he has come from*; this is also of great help in getting rid of stage fright. One must also know *where one is going to* after, in order to execute a successful exit.

3.0 WHAT DO I WANT?

Character main and immediate objective.

What do I want in life?-What is my **SUPER OBJECTIVE**?

What do I want in the play?-What is my **OBJECTIVE**?

What do I want in the scene?-What is my **ACTION**?

What do I want now?-What is my **ACTIVITY**?

NB. The action always precedes the word and **not** vice versa.

4.0 WHAT'S IN MY WAY?

OBSTACLES. Mother and son have an argument; the deep love they feel for each other is an obstacle.

The actor should know that by grappling with whatever *is in the way* of what his character *wants*, with the obstacle to his wishes, he heightens and intensifies them.

Obstacles are not necessarily mentioned in a play, so.....Find them!

There can be:

Inner Obstacles. E.g.(Fill in)

Physical Obstacles. E.g.:(Fill in)

Moral Obstacles. E.g.:(Fill in)

Legal Obstacles. E.g.:(Fill in)

Religious Obstacles. E.g.:(Fill in)

Relationship Obstacles. E.g.:(Fill in)

5.0 WHAT ARE MY RELATIONSHIPS?

Relationships with objects and other people

Eg1: If I am packing an old suitcase, before a journey, everything I take must have a special meaning.

Eg2: If I am confronted by someone; Who is this person to me?
Do I respect and share his theories?
Do I feel at home with this person?
Do I secretly need him?
Do I like the smell of his aftershave?
Do I love him?
What is our age difference?
Am I a leader or a follower in this relationship?

NO Relationship on stage must be assumed. It must be explored, investigated, and tested.

6.0 WHAT ACTIVITIES (SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS CHARACTER ACTIONS) SHOULD I PLAY TO GET WHAT I WANT?

E.g.: Jago is very violent, but he uses *different* means to get what he wants

Activities (or Actions) are either Physical, verbal, psychological, or a combination of all three; they must travel **towards a target** in order to *interact* with the Physical, verbal, psychological actions of others.

In the context of a scene you should define at least **three** Activities to help you get what you want. An activity is an expression performed for a functional purpose, with a measure of conscious volition. With an activity you are doing something to someone in order to get what you want. E.G.: To Charm, to Shame, to Convince, to Threat, to Beguile, to Confound, to Challenge, to Seduce, to Bully, To Implore etc.(Always use ACTIVE Verbs)

6.1 What Physical activity am I DOING?

Which Physical activity am I in the process of carrying out.

E.g.: am I threading a needle, holding my crutch or whispering in her ear?

NB. If I am doing something there must be a reason behind it.

E.g.: The reason for walking is destination

j) Working on a Character: what to Do?

AFFINITY

How Do I Get Closer To Who My Character Is?

"If I were.....(Character).....?" "What would I do.....?"

At every step of the way one must tap one's own life experience in order to make a selection of the relevant *transferences* to those of the character.

E.G. My character is INNER/EVIL OUTER/VENDICTIVE and I do not consider myself as such. But if someone had just raped my little sister and I find him sleeping beside her those characteristics may become easier to imagine as mine.

Research and Compile a **scrapbook** of: pictures, photos, newspaper cut-outs, fragrances, costumes etc. Both of the period of the play and the contemporary equivalents. Then make mental pictures of everything so that you may call upon them before and/or during a scene to help you focus on the inner life of the character. (E.g.: Doctor: familiarise yourself with the profession, surroundings, objects, pastimes, medical instruments, the practice, etc.)

k) So, where to Start?

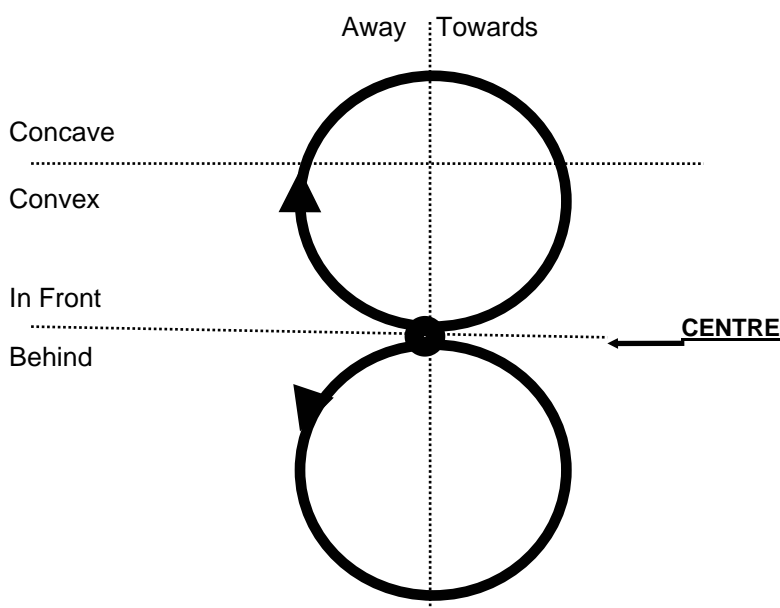
The Training starts with the actor's work on himself. Once the decision has been made to go down the "Acting" road a continuous process of self analysis and observation must consciously start. And never stop.

The actor must first learn to relax, to *centre* himself, to concentrate and to be able to sense and experience intensively. At the same time he must develop and strengthen the voice and body eliminating the stifling grip of habit and the inhibiting factors of non expression encouraged by social conditioning.

REMEMBER What is done to you by someone or something will evoke thoughts, pictures and emotions, and what you do about them is the "Acting". And the actions must be investigated by your wishes, needs, and objectives, with the hope and expectation that your wishes will be fulfilled.

l) How?

First find your centre. Be aware that from that **centre** (once experienced) any movement vocal, mental or physical, expresses a definite **direction** and **purpose**. Directions in space can be: concave or convex, towards or away from you, in front or behind you. And are generated somewhere along a "Figure of 8" that illustrates the various natural possible options of directions from the centre.



Also, each movement both physical and vocal is imbued with a certain **Energy**. There are **8** types of Energies, also called **Working Actions** or **Physical Tempos**.

Punching	(Opposite To)	Floating
Pressing	(Opposite To)	Flicking
Slashing	(Opposite To)	Gliding
Wringing	(Opposite To)	Dabbing

Energies used should be imbued with personal references: in order to be truthful and convincing [Linked to **c**) above.]

Each Working Action is a compound of 3 types of **Elements**.

Elements are classified into two categories: **Yielding** and **Contending**.

YIELDING ELEMENTS

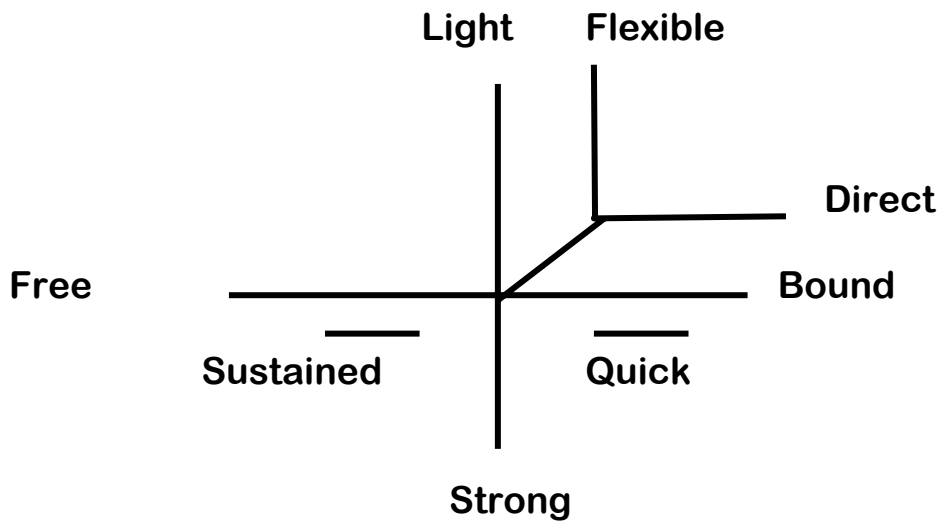
The **Feminine** Elements

- Light
- Flexible
- Sustained
- Free

CONTENDING ELEMENTS

The **Masculine** Elements

- Strong
- Direct
- Quick
- Bound



- Strong + Direct + Quick = **Punching**
- Strong + Direct + Sustained = **Pressing**(Fill in Shorthand)
- Strong + Flexible + Quick = **Slashing**(Fill in Shorthand)
- Strong + Flexible + Sustained = **Wringing**.....(Fill in Shorthand)
- Light + Direct + Quick = **Dabbing**
- Light + Direct + Sustained = **Gliding**.....(Fill in Shorthand)
- Light + Flexible + Quick = **Flicking**.....(Fill in Shorthand)
- Light + Flexible + Sustained = **Floating**(Fill in Shorthand)

Each working action can be performed either in a **FREE** or **BOUND** manner/ Free and Bound refer to the Flow of energy. (Like Relaxed or Tense.)

Make sure that you become the master of your tools, know their functions and learn to define everything specifically, and be able to work flexibly and on command. Everything needs to be personalised. Acting lies between the lines. Words used (in script) should be imbued with personal symbols in order to be truthful and convincing [linked to point c)]

Famous Last Words:

"My lifelong ambition is to give one performance in which I have only one conscious objective or intention, and that is what takes me out of the wings and on to the stage. The rest should come from reflex action to what happens out there!"

-Harry H. Corbett

"Is it not monstrous that this player here, But in a fiction, in a dream of passion, Could force his soul so to his own conceit That from her working all his visage waned, Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect, A broken voice, and his whole function suiting With forms of his conceit? And all for nothing!

For Hecuba!"

-Hamlet

*"The words come out of the character. Therefore an actor doesn't need to **learn lines**, The lines are learned, but subliminantly -germinating from the character- I don't start rehearsal until tomorrow, but I already know a lot of what my character does. I'll know a lot more tomorrow - ad infinitum"*

-Douglas Lambert

*"Remember that we can only find **answers** to our problems when we know how to ask the right **questions**"*

-Huta Hagen

"The harder you try consciously to achieve, the further you get from allowing the natural process to happen."

-Clive Barker