

Stanislavski's System and a Dual-Process Approach to Performer Training

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Abstract. Konstantin Stanislavski's (1863-1938) development of actor training and performance methodology, which he called 'the system', has significantly shaped modern performance theory and practice. Stanislavski was keenly aware that a majority of human experience was shaped by processes not normally available to what he understood as conscious thought. Stanislavski was particularly interested in the role non-conscious processes could be harnessed to achieve his goal of reaching *perezhivanie*, or experiencing through a role. Subsequently, as he developed his approach towards actor training and rehearsal methodology he aimed to access what he considered the unconscious through conscious preparatory methods. In Stanislavski's understanding, he further divided the unconscious into a subconscious equated with instinct, and a superconscious that he associated with intuition. Most of what is currently understood of as intuition finds support in a dual or multiple processor theory of cognitive analysis. William James (1842-1910) first predicted a concept of a multiple or dual processing system in *Principles of Psychology* (1890) wherein he proposed one system of rational thought or true reasoning, and another devoted to impulse or associative thought. As advances in Cognitive Studies have increased understanding in cognitive function, a consensus has emerged of an acceptance of a dual or multiple processing systems divided between the so-called System 1 or fast and intuitive processes, and the System 2 slower analytical processes. This paper identifies several of Stanislavski's theories showing potential correlations with current understandings related to dual-process theories. In addition, I propose several approaches found in Stanislavski's methodology that hold potential to develop an actor's System 1 processing abilities as related to intuition in performance. Moreover, I identify gaps in Stanislavski's system that could benefit from alterations in methodology that would bring his approach in line with current understandings of the dual processing theory of cognitive function. Incorporating approaches aimed at developing the System 1 or fast processing system of cognition into the methodology of performer training and practice holds potential into strengthening performer skills once relegated to the numinous realm of an actor's intuition. In addition, further insight gathered from the performance situation offers a greater understanding of the role emotional response plays in judgement formation and cognitive function.

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