

Manifestation

Chapter 5

Manifestation

Manifest (verb): to make clear or evident to the eye or to the understanding; show plainly: Latin origin, *manifestus* and *manifestare*: to make public, detected in the act, evident, visible. Synonyms: reveal, demonstrate, and express.³⁵

Manifestation can mean the indication of existence, the presence of something, a public display, or clear appearance or understanding of something. A manifesto is “a public declaration of principles, policies, or intentions,” and a manifestation is the “resulting belief revealed.”³⁶ In the TEAM, manifestation represents how the beliefs and intentions of the character reveal or display themselves through embodied acting. Manifestation techniques take the theoretical to the tangible and believable.

Stanislavski describes this culminating step as the Through Action or the Unbroken Line where the “inner motive forces will be drawn into action.”³⁷ In order to embody this Through Action, an actor must (1) manifest the character’s inner and outer story, (2) make understandable and believable connections with the character, and (3) recognize that the character is also striving for a manifested result, or the evidence of achieving a victory.

Here is where the TEAM culminates with techniques that bridge the theories explored in earlier chapters to the actor’s understanding and embodiment of

34. Constantine Stanislavski, *Creating a Role* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1961), 95.

35. Dictionary.com (2012) <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

36. “The Online Etymology Dictionary,” accessed September 1, 2012, <http://www.etymonline.com>.

37. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 253.

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the role. This chapter provides methods for making Personal Connections with the character's objectives and needs. Steps are provided for creating, using, and adjusting a TEAM score in rehearsal and for specific acting occasions. The TEAM for Actors side-coaching process provides a culminating method for encouraging embodiment of the TEAM score and for providing feedback when parts of the TEAM are not clearly revealed in the acting. The chapter then concludes with suggestions for further exploration and study of various embodiment techniques that can be used as companions to the TEAM.

There is a common directive given to actors: "Be believable." When this is not met, a director might say, "I didn't believe you in that moment." As you learn more about Manifestation techniques, consider this: if you fully analyze your character's thoughts, emotions, and actions—but are unable to find some semblance of belief in these discoveries, how can you broadcast a believable situation for your character to the audience? Can you convey truth and belief if you don't actually believe in the situation you are acting?

Inhabiting the Part

To inhabit a part means that you are believing in and expressing the thoughts, actions, and reactions of the character from inside-out. In other words, are living in their words and thoughts. Some characters you will play may be very accessible to you, and then others may require an understanding of challenging life circumstances that appear at first to be out of your reach. Such characters may have experiences so foreign to your own that you may not even be able to imagine, let alone believe. In order to portray these experiences fully and truthfully, you will need to find a way to connect them, or bring them closer, to your own experience.

The Essence of Extreme Loss

When I was thirty years old, I was acting in a world premiere of a new Irish play, At the Black Pig's Dyke. The play depicts the lives of a mother and daughter living on a small farm in Northern Ireland during the early 1960s, or the beginning of "the troubles." At Christmas time in county Antrim, men dressed as mummers—wearing cloaks and tall cone-shaped masks made out of potato sacks and straw—would visit

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people's homes to sing holiday songs and play practical jokes. However, with the dispute between Catholics and Protestants, some were using the mummer disguises to intimidate and attack their identified enemies.

I play the lead role of Lizzie, who is struggling with the murder of her husband by men disguised as mummies. In one particularly long monologue delivered out to the audience, my character tells the story of how she has come home from picking up her daughter at school and cannot find her husband. She takes her young daughter's hand and starts to wander the fields, calling for him. She eventually stumbles upon her husband's dead body, and she and her daughter are faced with the gruesome scene, discovering him "slashed to pieces" and lying in a pool of blood.

While rehearsing this play I found I was able to make solid connections with most of Lizzie's scenes and objectives; however, whenever I came to this monologue I ended up delivering it from an emotional distance, like a storyteller too far removed from the situation. I knew I had to find a way to connect more fully with this woman's true story of incredible loss, fear, and pain. Having no husband or child in my personal life at the time, and never encountering a situation of such extreme loss and brutality, I knew I needed to find a way to connect some essence of this woman's story with my own personal life experiences. But how?

(story continued later in this chapter)

Essential Action

The Essential Action helps actors understand the essence, or basic element, of anything they are attempting to portray. Connecting with a character's Essential Action is much like empathizing with another person's situation, feelings, and motives in real life. It is important for an actor to first empathize with the character before attempting to display this person's needs, desires, and reactions in performance. Once the Essential Action is identified, you can personally understand how to embody the situation through objectives, tactics, actions and emotions. No matter how different the role is from your life experiences or how unique the occasion is, if you identify the essence of that character's situation

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and then relate it to your own life experience, you will be able obtain a core understanding and empathy for the situation.

Universal Qualities in Essential Actions

In order to identify Essential Actions, you must first understand the use of Universal Qualities. Identifying universal qualities in a person or situation is recognizing what is *of or belonging to all*. This is the first step in achieving empathy for and achieving an understanding of another's life experience. A simple way to identify universal qualities is to ask yourself, "What is the common human action in this situation?"

The book continues with further explanation and support of manifesting...