



# Weaving Chekhov into other Methods

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Why try?

The rapid growth of interest in Michael Chekhov's technique is very exciting to those of us who are devotees. Yet many performing artists, teachers and directors, while curious about the work, are reluctant to commit to an entire "Make Over" when it comes to their acting techniques. So what if you could weave some Chekhov ideas into your already known approaches and gain consistency, increased creativity, joy, and deeper transformation? Would you be interested and willing to try?

It seems like a win-win situation and regardless of what you already know about acting, if you haven't explored Chekhov's ideas and practiced the psychophysical exercises, there is most likely something here that could be just the nugget of information needed to spring your work to a higher level. Many actors are taking their work up a notch or two and winning awards by merely adding one Chekhov technique to their tool belts.

## General Acting Challenges

To begin, I want to address what I found to be general challenges in acting that went unmet by techniques I had learned prior to or in addition to Michael Chekhov's theories.

- Recalling memories I didn't have
  - Responding to actors who can't act
  - Losing control of emotions when recalling personal painful past
  - Feeling it when no one else can tell
  - Inconsistency of effect of memories
  - Feeling uncreative when strictly imitating life
  - How to be realistic in various styles
  - How to act while trying to have a sense of place
  - Running out of time to rehearse the climax and end of play
  - Anxiety, nervousness and lethargy from relaxation exercises
  - Self-criticism
  - Desperate need for approval from director, audience
  - Indicating and therefore losing a feeling of truth
  - Intelligent but predictable performances lacking in spontaneity.
  - Paralysis-by-analysis
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- I can tell you my objective and I don't know how to make that influence the scene.
  - A general lack of use of my body during training -- Confusion about how to react truthfully when the script calls for a very different response than I would have.
  - Coping with actors whose characters should be avoiding mine and who are looking straight at me.

**Psychophysical training --prepare the body to reflect the image**

Start with the challenge of feeling like you are having the inner experience and your coaches/directors are not seeing or getting what you are.

There's a very good reason this can occur and, yet, no other established technique actually outlines a training process to prevent this.

### **Finally- weaving MC into the System of Analysis**

As a resource for this I am utilizing the Stanislavsky Theatre Studio Plan for the Case Book from Andrei Malaev Babel. This work is an evolution of the work developed at the Vakhtangov School in Moscow. This school was originally part of the 2nd Moscow Art Theatre that Vahtkangov and then Michael Chekhov headed. Vakhtangov was considered by Stanislavsky to be the best teacher of Stanislavski's technique, indeed better than his own self. Chekhov was inspired by Vakhtangov's directing and integrated many ideas from their collaboration.

Later, when Chekhov was removed from the history of the Soviet, Chekhov's adaptations were officially extracted and forbidden to be taught throughout the Soviet. Anecdotal stories, though, indicate some were subtly included at the Vaktanghov School.

My personal experience in teaching in Russia and working with groups of Russians at various conferences in Europe, on the U.S. East Coast and in Los Angeles has led me to believe that the training from the Shukin Vahtkangov school that alumni Andrei Malaev Babel had, is one of the finest in the world. I think that this summary of the system of analysis is the most complete and cohesive system I have found. Some Russian historians today feel that Chekhov influenced Stanislavsky's own developments of his system. This evolved system on Stanislavsky's is generally unknown due to limitation placed on reformation of the original "System."