

Acting Lab – Core Principles & Framework

Charlie Lockwood

1. Vision of the Affordable Acting Lab

- Pay-what-you-can model (\$20 suggested)
- All profits reinvested into a publicly audited fund
- Goal: build a \$10,000 production fund for future plays and short films
- Students who complete one scene may join the developing theater company

The lab exists to make serious acting training accessible while building toward independent production.

2. Acting Fundamentals & Historical Context

What Is Psychological Realism?

“Living truthfully under given circumstances.”
— Konstantin Stanislavski

- Modern acting is ~120–150 years old
- Originated in Russia with Stanislavski and Anton Chekhov
- Shifted theater from *presentational storytelling* to *lived human experience*
- Audience becomes a “fly on the wall”

Before this: theatrical, demonstrative, melodramatic.

After this: representational, experiential.

American Offshoots

Stanislavski’s system split into two dominant American approaches:

- **Emotion-focused** (Lee Strasberg / sense memory)
- **Behavior-focused** (Meisner, Stella Adler)

Charlie’s emphasis leans toward behavior and action over emotional manufacturing.

3. Core Acting Philosophy

Living Truthfully

Acting is not performing emotion.

- Emotion is a byproduct — “juice, not squeeze.”

You do not decide what to feel.

- You decide what you’re doing.

Public Solitude

“Being private in public.”

- The fourth wall is locked shut.
- No inviting the audience in.
- No performing for approval.
- No clapping after scenes — the focus is work, not validation.

Ego & Truth

Acting requires unlearning social defenses.

- Babies are naturally truthful.
- Society builds self-consciousness.
- Acting strips that away.

The actor’s job is not to show themselves.

It is to serve the story.

4. Two-Part Structure of Acting

Think before you act, so you can act without thinking.

Acting is half:

1. Intellectual (analysis & preparation)
2. Instinctual (behavior & live discovery)

Rehearsal tests analysis.

Performance is discovery in real time.

5. Set vs. Unset Elements

Set (Decided Beforehand – Intellectual)

- The script (exact words)
- The setting
- Character externals
- Script analysis
- Given circumstances

Unset (Discovered in the Moment – Instinctual)

- Behavior
- Tactics
- Moment-to-moment choices
- Adjustments

Acting lives in the relationship between set and unset.

You prepare deeply so you can be free.

6. The 5-Question Script Analysis Framework

Applied to every beat change (when what the character wants shifts).

Human beings only speak when they want something.

1. The Literal

What is my character talking to the other character about?

- Uninterpretive
- Simple
- One verb
- Format:
“_____ is talking to _____ about _____.”

This is the bedrock.

2. The Want

What does my character want the other character to **do** right now?

- Must be measurable
- Must have a clear “cap” (utopia moment)
- Cannot be an internal feeling
- Must require observable action

If they do it, the scene could end.

3. The Action

What essential human action am I doing to get what I want?

Format:

“To get someone to _____.”

- Active
- Relatable
- Should “light a fire under you”
- Universally human (e.g., “get someone off their high horse,” “get someone to give me the easy way out,” “slap someone into sobriety”)

You play the action — not the emotion.

4. Why Now

Why does the character need this now instead of tomorrow?

This creates:

- Urgency
- Stakes
- Status dynamics
- Specificity

Without urgency, there’s no engine.

5. The Test (Optional)

What is this action like to me?

“It’s as if…”

A personal scenario that contains the same essential human energy.

Not copying the situation — matching the action.

7. Teaching Principles

- Emotion is a byproduct.
- No predetermined feelings.
- Empathy comes through analysis, not emotional imitation.
- Actors are instruments serving the playwright.
- The goal is lived experience, not aesthetic performance