Drama - HALF YEARLY STUDY:

Stanislavski (1863-1938):

KEY TERMS:

The System: Techniques actors can use to create a character, it uses body, voice and mind exercises and it based on the theories of Stanislavski.

Unit of action: section of text that contains one objective

Beat: One thought in a unit.

Fundamental questions: series of questions developed by Stanislavski to help an actor sustain conviction in a situation. Questions are supposed to enhance understanding and feeling for character. Answers of fundamental questions are found in the text.

Given circumstances: circumstances in a text at a given moment

Super objective: character’s overall objective

Through-line: connection between all character’s objectives, what makes the character tick? Or what leads the character to form super objectives?

Muscular memory: memory of physical sensation

Emotional memory: memory of an emotion

Creative imagination: part of imagination that allows you to put yourself in your character’s situation

‘What if?’ question designed to help actor use their creative imagination

Circles of attention: concept to help actor maintain concentration in front of audience

Public solitude: actor’s sense of being alone while performing

Ensemble acting: style of performance that relies on acting with and through others

Obstacle: something that stands in the way of your action

Stanislavski life:

- Born in 1863 into a rich family
- Changed name to Stanislavski as stage name
- Enrolled in Moscow drama school, left three weeks after dissatisfied
- First Russian founder of acting system, method acting
- Felt that acting in his times were too mechanical and lacked realism in acting, costumes and sets
- 1897, met Anton Chekhov
- 1898, founded Moscow art theatre
- 1906, began working on a system for training actors
- established ‘first studio’, theatre for improvising plays and developing acting techniques
- 1922-23 Moscow art theatre went on tour throughout Europe and USA, critically acclaimed.
- 1928 gave up acting but continued directing
- 1936, ‘an actor prepares’ was published, it included principles of the system
- Died in 1938, ‘building a character,’ and ‘creating a role’ were published after his death

**Stanislavski’s System:** is a detailed programme to lift performances to a higher, more artistic level. In this system, techniques are used to create a character. Techniques include: body, voice and mind of actor. One important aspect of Stanislavski’s system is that the actor should play the absolute truth of emotions and thought. The character must live through the actor, he also believed that actors should use their past experiences and memories to build a life for the character.

**FAMOUS QUOTE:** ‘There are no small parts, only small actors,’ he believed that actors must forget their ambitions in order to create an important piece of theatre. Stanislavski taught his actors to; during a performance, interact with each other rather than interacting with the audience which was contrasted against the theatre performed in those times. Stanislavski’s method taught realism and to achieve realism you must relax and focus on the stage but also be aware of the audience. Actors must be aware of what is happening on stage and off, they must concentrate on making their words and actions clear enough for everyone in the audience and keep up the reality of their performance.

**FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS:**
Who am I?
Where am I?
What surrounds me?
What are the given circumstances?
What are my relationships?
What is the obstacle?
What is the action?
What is my super objective?
What is my through line of action?

Stanislavski encouraged actors to observe people and their behaviour to learn.

_Augusta Boal:_

**KEY TERMS:**

_Spect-actors_: spectators (audience) in the theatre of the oppressed who are shown a performance about oppression and are invited to participate in the performance to end with a satisfactory ending.

_The Joker_: person who is the ‘master of ceremonies’ of a forum theatre performance. This is reference to the Joker in a pack of cards, as the joker is the highest card and can change the game whenever. The joker introduces the play, explains everything, instructs actors to run the play, invites audience to intervene and stops the performance if relevant.

_Magic_: is the word used by the joker (in forum theatre) to stop the performance if the spect-actor is out of character, or contradicts what has already happened in the performance.

_Spectator_: audience member who can become spect-actors

_Agit-prop theatre_ (agitation propaganda theatre): theatre that presents a political point of view and agitates for that point of view.

_Boal’s life:_

- Founder of theatre of the oppressed
- Born in 1931- Brazil- Rio de Janeiro
- Was co-artistic director of arena theatre
- Teachings were controversial, labeled cultural activist
- 1960, military saw him as a threat
- 1971, arrested and tortured
- 1972, after three months of prison and torture, he was sent to different countries, finally staying in France
- 1980s developed theatre of the oppressed, writing books about his work
- Founded a centre in Paris, invited to teach around the world
- Formulated ‘rainbow of desires’
- Moved back to Brazil, founded a centre there
- 1992, took his theatre company with him to a powerful city council, thus founded ‘legislative theatre, using theatre to form laws
- Wrote ‘theatre of the oppressed, (most academically influential work)’ ‘games for actors and non-actors (most practically influential book)’ and ‘the rainbow of desire: The Boal’s method of theatre and therapy.’

Theatre of the oppressed:
Oppression is defined by Boal as when one is dominated by the monologue of another and has no chance to reply.

It was established in early 1970s, and is a form of popular theatre for people engaged in the struggle for liberation. It is a rehearsal theatre for people to learn ways of fighting back against oppression

Image theatre:
Image theatre is a series of freeze frames, mime movements and physical improvisations which explore social and cultural behaviour. Boal designed this theatre to show and explore different experiences without the limitations of language. He believed through tableau and movement, it could be better expressed and understand them more deeply. Image theatre uses human body to represent feelings, ideas and relationships. Spect-actors embody the theme onto their bodies; these frozen images are then dynamized or brought to life. Transitions include:

1. **First dynamisation:** Spect-actors move back to form image at the same time
2. **Second dynamisation:** Spect-actors change image slightly so they are related, must create one perspective
3. **third dynamisation:** Spect-actors change from being oppressed to being the oppressor

**Real image:** image first created by group

**Ideal image:** solution to oppression
After discussion of possible **ideal images** spect-actors act out SILENTLY transition from **real image** to **ideal image**, using slow mo or series of freeze frames.

**Invisible theatre:**
Invisible theatre is a form of public theatre, where actors perform a prepared play in public; the public are unaware that it is a performance. Boal’s aim is to reveal the violence that exists in society (and drawing attention to problems) by trying to elicit violent reactions from the public and trying to get them to discuss their reactions. Invisible theatre appears to oppress the people it involves because it places them in a position where they are unaware of the truth, and they are manipulated by actors who hold power and knowledge. Invisible theatre breaks the conventions of theatre because it doesn’t share a journey of discovery between actors and audience. It is rarely used because strong reservations about ethics and usefulness.

**Forum theatre:**
Forum theatre goes beyond invisible theatre because spectators are aware they are involved and can join in. The aim is to promote discussion. In forum theatre, a play is performed which includes aspect of oppression. Audience observes then decides what is wrong in the play. The play is again performed, spect-actor can yell out, ‘stop!’ whenever they feel the oppressed is making a mistake. They take on the role of the oppressed to move it to a satisfactory ending. The actors must continue their oppressive roles so the difficulties of the situation remain. If spect-actor cannot continue, another may enter the oppressed role to change the situation.

**Legislative theatre:**
Legislative theatre was developed in 1997. In this system, forum theatre was used to allow groups of people to investigate issues of importance to them. Groups were encouraged to create plays with a political or social point which were performed at festivals and demonstrations. After the forum, they suggested laws to be passed to help their various causes. After editing, Boal took these the Chamber and proposed them. Using this type of theatre, more than 13 laws have been passed through Boal. **EXAMPLE:** Group of 60 people created a play about an elderly person being mistreated by an inexperienced doctor. As a result, a law was passed which forced hospitals to offer specialist treatment by doctors and nurses.