

The actor on stage and on screen

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Abstract. The article formulates the specifics of acting. It describes the different forms of connection between the stage and the auditorium and singles out the actor as the one who gives a theatrical expression to everything that is on the stage. There are some examples of “demolition” and “removal” of the ramp, as well as the stability of its boundaries given.

The main point of the paper is about the television conditions which destroy the familiar forms of acting and the distinction between two different styles of acting - theatrical and cinematic.

Cinema changes the typical for the theatre relationship between conditionality and authenticity, but their mutual influence and enrichment - between the stage and the screen (big and small) - are tangible.

Keywords: actor, stage, screen, theatrical, cinematic, audience

Theatre is defined as a synthesis of many arts that interact with each other - literature, painting, architecture, music, vocal art, and dance. Among them, however, there is one that belongs only to the theatre - the art of the actor.

The organic combination of the various arts in the theatre is possible only if each of them fulfils a certain theatrical function. Thus, each of the arts acquires a new theatrical quality. Theatrical painting is not the same as painting in itself, theatrical music is not the same as just music, etc. Only the actor's art is truly theatrical. It is the actor who brings out the specifics of the theatre, he/she is the focus through which other art forms are refracted. In the theatre, the playwright, the director, the musician “talk” to the audience through the actor, with the actor, about the actor.

The actor gives a theatrical expression to everything on the stage. Everything that is created in the theatre depends on the actor to give it a theatrical form. Everything else, claiming independent existence, is non-theatrical.

According to K. S. Stanislavsky, the fundamental principle in theatre is communication. Jean-Louis Barrault argues that what matters is not what happens on stage, nor what happens in the auditorium, but what happens between the stage and the auditorium. One of the important elements of the

theatre performance is the reaction of the audience, because the theatre is a spectacle which is created right in front of the eyes of the audience.

On this occasion, the Bulgarian actress Tsvetana Maneva shares: *“The actor’s influence in theatre is more immediate because the auditorium helps us. And that is the beauty of the theatre - the exchange of feelings and thoughts between the stage and the auditorium”* (Gyurova 2004, 187).

Asked why she distanced herself from the theatre, the great French actress Catherine Deneuve answered: *“I’d rather stay away from working in the theatre. The closeness of the audience paralyzes me. I’m frightened even when I have to go on stage to receive an award”* (Markova 2007, 89).

There are different forms of connection between the stage and the auditorium - from immediate contact and involvement of the audience in the performance, to creating the illusion of no contact at all (K. S. Stanislavsky, A. Y. Tairov, V. E. Meyerhold, Y. B. Vakhtangov).

Bertolt Brecht gives another meaning to the stage-audience connection. His idea of “alienation” helps actors to openly declare their social, political and class positions. In this way, they show their attitude towards the character they portray, making the audience take their side.

The multiple examples “demolishing” the wall as well as the stability of its borders only show us that *“outstanding acting is always essential”* (Guthrie 1981, 61-62).

The situation in which TV acting takes place is completely different. Then the “stage” is a screen in a room, and the audience consists of only one person. The real-time reaction of the audience which influences the actors and the whole performance is missing.

Television is not only art but also mass communication media. The essence of this type of communication is that it builds itself on the principle “one vs. one” - the spectator and the person from the screen in front of him.

The attitude of the interlocutor defines the specific forms of communication between the actor and the TV spectator. Unlike theatre, on TV the actor can reach much broader audience as well as each of them individually. TV conditions are unusual for the actor and “destroy” his/her familiar ways of playing in front of an audience.

There have long been different styles of acting. Cinema puts the actor in uncustomary conditions which change the typical theatre interrelation between conditionality and authenticity. When the actor is not on stage but in his/her natural environment, he/she has to adjust to it. On screen, theatrical acting technique would seem overacted, gestures - too large, intonation - intrusive, voice - exaggerated. What is convincing on the stage and could, according to the poetics of a performance, be considered an adequate depiction of reality, in cinema repulses with its proximity. The term “theatrical”, which is a synonym for a vivid stage performance in theatre, has negative meaning in cinema. That is why there is a theatrical and cinematic style of acting.

Claudia Cardinale, an actress with rich experience in both cinema and theatre, thinks that *“working in cinema is like a sprint, while working in theatre is like long distance running”* (Hristov 2014, 17).

Comparing stage and TV characters, Russian actor Mikhail Kozakov says that they relate to each other like a portrait to a miniature. *“In miniatures, striking is the depth of achieving the character, within the limitations of the painting area. The expressiveness is the same as with the portrait, but the brush is thinner, the colours - more transparent. The miniature is more intimate than the wall portrait, it was not accidentally worn and kept as a talisman”* (Sabashnikova 1982, 57-62).

One can look at the miniature, but this implies persistence. Wide shots of the actors - the most expressive “material” for the director on television, are characterized by great duration and tension. They are usually closely related to the word - not only spoken but also heard.

According to the outstanding Russian actor and director Prof. Boris Babochkin, suitable for TV is what Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko call “internal monologue”. This monologue flows simultaneously with the external action. In our consciousness it is connected with stream of associations, thoughts, images which play the role of subtext. In psychology it is known as “internal flow”. On screen, such monologue is action.

Bringing the actor’s face as close as possible to the viewer, the TV screen makes, according to the great Italian film director Federico Fellini, “a psychological X-ray”. The thought process becomes visible and that revelation of “the man from within” is actually the most captivating spectacle.

The screen sets a different relationship between conditionality and authenticity from the theatre. When the actor acts in a natural environment, the conditionality of the stage is replaced by a living, natural, everyday setting and here the magnified acting technique seems false and unacceptable. Often, when the camera is close to the actor’s face, he/she cannot just be part of the authentic environment, but becomes the only expression of the desired authenticity.

The acting in which the performer draws a clear line between the character and himself (according to Brecht’s method) turns out to be no less attractive to the camera than the incarnation according to all the rules of Stanislavsky system. The screen fully allows for “the merging of actor and character” to varying degrees, as well as different techniques for conveying an “attitude to the character”.

The mutual influence and enrichment between the stage and the screen are tangible. The “hypersensitivity” on the small screen sobers up a number of sensational talents from cinema and theatre, who cannot hide their pretense or their artisan attitude towards the profession. The Soviet theatre and film critic Vladimir Sappak calls the television an “X-ray of the character” (Sappak 1963, 143) and argues that the personality of the person on the screen is of the utmost importance because the human “I” of the actor is more important than anything else in creating the character.

On this issue, the Russian-Georgian theatre director Georgy Tovstonogov claims that a good actor under any circumstances remains an individual, regardless of the ways and means of revealing it. And this individuality of the actor should not be overcome, but discovered (Tovstonogov 1973, 11).

Everyone from the team works for the actor, but the actor is the one who bears “all the responsibility” on the screen because he/she comes into direct contact with the viewer and bears his/her praise or disapproval. The actor is

the mediator through whom the thoughts and emotions of the whole creative group come into direct contact with each viewer. Although subordinated to the author's text and the director's concept, the actor is an independent creative figure who gives flesh, mind and passion to the character that he/she portrays. His/her every word, his/her every move is carefully observed. The actor must imagine that there is no barrier between him/her and the viewer and at the same time create a character, doing his/her best to convince his/her interlocutor of the ideas of his/her character and the authenticity of the fate he/she embodies.

Naturalness and authenticity are important, but not the only qualities of the actor on the screen. When the camera brings his/her face as close as possible, it gives us the opportunity to look deeply and capture details of his/her inner life, to understand how he/she thinks and how he/she makes decisions, how he/she perceives what is happening around him/her. In this case, the viewer not only observes the development of the action, but sees it through the eyes of the character and understands from him/her about the course of events.

The television actor must be able to feel the camera as a film actor and play his/her role without interruption as a theatrical actor. The second requirement speaks of a television feature that allows the actor to build in a continuous creative process a more thorough and complete character than in cinema. There are many theatrical actors who, considered "unsuitable" in cinema, find their place in television. This is also an opportunity for a new qualification of the actors. The TV art teaches moderation - something that is often lost on stage. On television, acting requires subtle and expressive means, so necessary for the theatre. Compared to cinema, this frugality is different, in a sense that on the screen the performance is more vivid and telling.

When there is no unity of place, it is necessary to capture everything in a given setting and only then move on. The consistency of the role, this most important element of theatre acting, as well as the opportunity to indulge in the incarnation, disappear.

On the TV screen, the acting is now only a visual duplicate of its original occurrence and gets life regardless of its creator, who is already absent. According to the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello, in this situation the actor begins "*to feel like in exile. Expelled not only from the stage, but also from his/her own personality [...] The small equipment will play with his/her shadow in front of the audience, and he himself/she herself must be content to play in front of it*" (Benjamin 1980, 127).

On the screen the acting is separated from its material medium. The television equipment divides it and installs, arranges and places its accents. It is the camera that imposes its point of view on the viewer - through the detail, through the angle. The camera divides the acting into many episodes, separating and differentiating one or another acting performance.

The Bulgarian actress Leda Tasseva calls the camera "my friend". As for the creators of the studio atmosphere, she says that the actors and the good cinematographers are "*something very strange - they are artists, and painters, and poets, and all of that at the same time*" (Apostolova 1983, 38-42).

In the theatre, the role is built step by step, line by line, not only during rehearsals, but also after the premiere. On the screen, this whole process must be expressed on the actor's face.

The Bulgarian rather popular actor Georgi Kaloyanchev also spoke about the actor's work in theatre, cinema and television. In Kristina Tosheva's book *Actors about their profession*, he says: *"The theatre is particularly attractive with the ability to adjust your sight at the moment. The loud applause is a great joy for the actor. Everyone loves to hear a praise about themselves. The critics are often silent. And they don't like to applaud. The people are applauding. That is the biggest reward for the actor. There is a living, spontaneous process in the theatre, the participation in which cannot replace any other art. But in the cinema, in front of the camera with just one look, with one twitch of the lips you can say a lot. The camera develops a sense of detail, of immediacy, which transferred to the stage and subordinated to its conventions, builds the modern actor. It is different with participation in television. There you can only rely on honest, well-meaning and strict friends. Because the most popular art remains locked up at home. And the reviews about it are more 'apocryphal' or remain shrouded in silence"* (Tosheva 1979, 125).

In this context, knowing the capabilities of the Bulgarian actor, I claim that they have always been vast and he/she has always proved his/her talent, enthusiasm and sense of style and form. As long as there is someone to lead him/her, someone to trust and give his/her talent for significant artistic tasks.

In conclusion, I would argue that theatre and television are different arts, with their own specifics. They require from the actors special training, acting techniques, and qualities. Nevertheless, wherever the actor plays, in the core of acting is his/her power to say something, to go beyond the boundaries of the stage or screen and touch the hearts of the spectators.

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