
**ANALYZING THE DISTINCTIONS:
FILM SETS VS. STAGE
PLATFORMS – INVESTIGATING
THE SUBTLE DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN THEATRE AND FILM**

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Abstract: Often, we face an unspoken dispute between theatre actors and the stars emerging from lead or supporting roles in cinema. Who truly qualifies as a celebrity? Consequently, due to ignorance, trained theatre actors have become unsung heroes, while society has always highlighted screen personalities. This article showcases the main challenges faced by actors from both mediums, focusing on the differences between the two branches of acting. The first and most obvious difference lies in the space. In the section on the actor and the camera, we closely examined the dimensions of a cinema screen, the importance of sound, and how actors enter people's homes through close-ups and all the adjacent structures of a film montage. While stage actor training must encompass the ability to maintain the truth of the character while adjusting the voice level slightly higher, in order to project that reality to a large audience, on the contrary, the camera functions like a microscope, scrutinizing every movement of the actor, even the softest whisper. These differences highlight the unique demands of each medium and underline the importance of adaptability and stage technique in an actor's training and performance.

Keywords: cinema, theatre, film set, audience, stage speech, theatre paradigm, cinema paradigm.

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Introduction

The prevailing perception among the general public, as well as some professionals, posits a clear distinction between the arts of directing and acting in theatre versus film. This common preconception, which classifies individuals as either theatre actors or film actors, and similarly as film directors or theatre directors, warrants closer scrutiny and analysis. While it is true that some actors and directors possess more experience in one medium than the other and may need to make specific adjustments or be aware of particular elements when transitioning between mediums, the fundamental principles underlying these arts remain consistent. The belief that theatre and film require completely different skills and competences overlooks the core similarities in the principles of performance and direction.

Although practical differences exist – such as the need for theatre actors to project their voices and actions to reach a live audience versus the film actor's reliance on the camera to capture subtle nuances – these variations do not alter the essential objectives of truthfully conveying a character or story. It is also important to recognize that possessing talent in one area does not automatically confer talent in another. A skilled actor does not inherently possess the skills to

be a proficient director, nor should it be assumed that a talented director can seamlessly transition to acting.

Each discipline requires a distinct set of skills and training, even though they share foundational artistic principles. While experience and expertise in one medium may require adaptations when working in another, the overarching principles of acting and directing remain consistent across theatre and film. A deeper understanding of these principles can facilitate more fluid transitions between mediums, challenging the notion of rigid distinctions within the performing arts. If you were to enter an acting class and inquire about why the students have chosen to be trained as actors, many will quickly tell you that they aspire to become film stars. Ask about their mentors, and you will hear names like Meryl Streep, Robert De Niro, or Nicole Kidman, just to name a few. Their reasoning is not incongruent with the fact that they are celebrities, as their global recognition is owed to their appearances in many award-winning films beloved by audiences worldwide. Many of these students are not prepared to accept that, just as there is Hollywood, there is also Broadway. Some acting students who may have preferred artistic fulfillment from performing on stage are also discouraged by the fact that stage productions are rare and barely break even financially, even when they are part of a cast in a theatre. As a result, most theatre trained actors gravitate towards the screen in pursuit of fame.

From the above, it is imperative to note that theatre schools in Romania offer acting courses and stage training, with a system that has led many of these students to have a rather theatrical style on the film set. What is vital today should be related to an actor's ability to appreciate where their true talent lies and to assess more decisively which environment ultimately provides them with the best opportunity to ply their trade. In contemporary society, we encounter numerous actors, varying in prominence, based on the geographical and cultural context in which they practice their crafts. A common thread among these actors is that most began their studies as theatre actors, performing on stage before a live audience. Many subsequently achieve fame as film actors, as cinema's capabilities transcend social, cultural, spatial, and temporal boundaries. This progression suggests that the acting skills acquired in theatre can seamlessly translate into film, supporting the notion that acting, whether on stage or in front of a camera, remains the same at its core. However, key differences between stage and screen acting deserve examination. These distinctions can be compared to a painter switching from acrylics to watercolors; while the painter remains a visual artist, the change in medium requires a modification in the working process. Similarly, a ballerina transitioning from the rigid structure of classical ballet to contemporary dance experiences a shift in technique and expression.

Theatre actors often begin their careers with rigorous training focused on vocal projection, physical expressiveness, and maintaining a continuous live connection with the audience. These skills are essential for delivering a compelling performance that can be perceived from the front row to the back of the auditorium. The immediacy and direct feedback of a live audience also shape the actor's craft, fostering spontaneity and adaptability. In contrast, film acting requires a different set of techniques tailored to the camera's ability to capture subtle nuances and close-up details.

The film actor must convey authenticity and emotional depth through minimalistic gestures and expressions, often performing scenes out of chronological order. The fragmented nature of film production requires a heightened awareness of continuity and consistency in character portrayal. Thus, while the foundational principles of acting, such as embodying a character and conveying truth—remain unchanged across mediums, the methods of execution differ. The transition from theatre to film involves adapting to the technical demands and constraints of each medium while leveraging the core skills developed through theatrical training. Understanding and embracing the distinctions between stage and screen enhances the actor's ability to deliver nuanced and convincing performances, regardless of the medium. This adaptability reflects the broader capacity of the performing arts to evolve and transcend traditional boundaries, much like a painter or dancer navigating different artistic landscapes. For an actor, the differences between theatre and film can become a double-edged threat if not acknowledged and reconsidered in time.

The art of acting

K.S. Stanislavski, and all his Russian and American descendants, define acting as the ability to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances. Romanian professor Ion Cojar supports this approach, noting that

the principle of Organic Unity, between the inner life of the human psyche and the outer life of the body, as well as the method of physical actions or the “Magic if”, constitute fundamental theses of this system, which far surpassed a particular, restricted aspect of the pedagogy of the actor's art and played an important role in the understanding and evolution of twentieth-century theatre (Cojar, 1999, p. 19).

Various researchers and acting instructors have expressed differing opinions on acting styles, yet they all emphasize the importance and necessity

of Stanislavski's "Magic If". This technique allows actors to transcend the constraints of realism by considering what would happen "if" circumstances were different or "if" the situations faced by their characters were happening to them personally. From this perspective, it is evident that both theatre and film actors face a common challenge: the need to be convincing and credible enough to capture the audience's attention and support.

For an actor to portray a character convincingly, they must integrate both the psychological and physical aspects of their performance. Relying solely on physical actions renders a performance lifeless, as the psychological and physical are intrinsically linked. Tom Isbell quotes Barrymore's definition of acting as "the art of saying something on stage as if you believed every word spoken represents the eternal truth of life" (Isbell, 2006, p. 4). This sentiment echoes the idea that the essence of acting is to convey truth within the imaginary circumstances of the script.

Adding to this discourse, Michael Chekhov, a distinguished acting teacher and practitioner, in the direct descent of Stanislavski, emphasized the importance of an actor's imagination and the use of psychological gestures. Chekhov believed that by using specific physical actions, actors could evoke the inner feelings and motivations of their characters. He stated, "The body is the actor's instrument. Through it, the actor expresses the subtlest nuances of his soul" (Chekhov, 1991, p. 93). This technique bridges the inner life of the actor with their external performance and creates a holistic approach to character development. Whether on stage or on screen, the actor's challenge remains the same: to tell a lie so truthfully that it resonates as genuine to the audience. This balance between inner truth and external action is what ultimately breathes life into a character.

Navigating the unique demands of live performance

Stage acting presents a unique set of challenges that actors must confront to achieve success. Over the last years, the forms of theatre art became more difficult to analyze. To some extent, this is caused by using rapidly developing technologies on stage. However, from an artistic point of view, even the boldest performance, using cutting-edge technologies, doesn't represent anything if a valuable message is not included. Sooner or later, the audience will see and feel the inner emptiness of the performance (Anderson, 2019). The experience of actors during a performance involves a complex interplay between internal and external elements. I argue that this complexity is rooted in formal actor training programs and skill-building experiences. These foundations are further developed through diverse theatrical performance events that actors encounter, including the intricate process of role formation. Beyond formal education, actors engage in a

variety of skill-building experiences that contribute to their professional growth. Workshops, improvisation classes, and rehearsals provide opportunities for stage actors to experiment with different techniques and approaches. These experiences help actors refine their ability to switch seamlessly between internal emotional truth and external performance demands. For instance, practicing improvisation can enhance an actor's spontaneity and adaptability, vital for maintaining authenticity under the unpredictable nature of live theatre. Divergent thinking tasks are therefore considered as a valid measurement for creativity (Kim, 2006).

The crucial role of rehearsal in the stage process

Rehearsal plays a pivotal role in the acting process, far beyond the mere memorization of lines. While knowing the script is fundamental, rehearsal encompasses a broad range of activities that prepare actors to deliver compelling performances and adapt to the myriad challenges that can arise during a live representation. Building character and emotional depth is the first step that gives meaning to the on-stage practice. Rehearsals provide actors with the time and space to develop their characters fully to the detriment of the film actor. This involves exploring the psychological and emotional dimensions of the character, understanding their motivations, and experimenting with different ways to portray them. Rehearsals allow actors to delve deeply into their roles, which is essential for creating believable and engaging characters on stage. During rehearsals, actors also work on the physical aspects of their performance. This includes learning and perfecting the blocking—where and how they move on stage. Effective blocking ensures that the performance is visually engaging and that actors can interact smoothly with the set, props, and the other performers. A study in *Journal of Theatre and Performing Art* highlights that well-rehearsed blocking can significantly enhance the visual storytelling of a production (Leveroy, 2013).

Theatre, as a complex system of signs, requires actors to master the art of deciphering its multifaceted equations. Jean Sabatine's seminal theory, articulated in 1995, offers a structured approach to this challenge through his concept of the "Triad." Sabatine divides actor training into three interconnected parts: *Exercises*, *Explorations*, and *Applications*. These stages collectively aim to fortify the actor's physical, mental, and emotional faculties, which in turn create a cohesive and dynamic performer. The initial stage, *Exercises*, focuses on the fundamental tasks of alignment—both internal and external—and conditioning of the body. This phase is crucial for developing flexibility, confidence, and precision in movement. Through rigorous physical training, actors learn to avoid stage fright, unnatural gestures, and expressionless immobility. Techniques such as yoga, the Alexander

Technique, and various forms of physical theatre exercises are often incorporated to enhance body awareness and control. This stage is not only about physical readiness, but also about establishing a disciplined mental framework that supports an actor's performance.

The second stage, *Exploration*, is where actors delve deeply into the expressive capabilities of their bodies. According to Sabatine, this stage is about learning how the body can convey emotion and narrative through movement (Sabatine, 1995, p. 22). Actors experiment with various forms of physical expression, understanding how to use space and movement in order to create meaning. This stage often involves improvisation and movement exercises that push the boundaries of traditional acting techniques, encouraging actors to explore how different physicalities affect their portrayal of characters and emotions. Sabatine emphasizes that this exploration helps actors perceive the world through the lens of movement, enriching their ability to convey complex stories without relying solely on dialogue.

The final stage, *Application*, is where actors synthesize their learned skills into cohesive performances. Having honed their physical, mental, and emotional capabilities in the previous stages, actors now focus on applying these skills in a structured, conscious manner. This involves using their refined abilities to interact dynamically with the dramatic text, scene partners, space, and audience. What Sabatine's theory highlights is the importance of paralinguistic communication—how actors use non-verbal cues and body language to enhance their performance.. Sabatine's Triad provides a robust framework for actor training, but it can be further enriched with modern techniques and insights. For example, integrating technology into rehearsal processes, such as using video playback for self-review, can help actors refine their physical and vocal delivery. Additionally, incorporating mindfulness and psychological resilience training can support the mental and emotional aspects of the Triad, helping actors maintain their well-being in the demanding environment of live theatre.

Memorization and line articulation

The actor's craft involves adopting methods and methodological models unique to theatre and the performing arts. It's true that no technique is infallible. Whether the actor opts for subjective or objective mechanisms (deductive or analytical thinking) to comprehend the text and its contextual elements (social, cultural, political, etc.), whether they favor a technique of distancing or identification, or whether they draw inspiration from Brecht, Grotowski, Ariane Mnouchkine, or Meyerhold, we must accept that finding a definitive answer to how an actor

should approach a role is impossible without following a path that each creator must tread. This choice can be problematic and challenging, and the methods an actor uses to approach the dramatic text can make the difference between rote memorization or the genuine learning of lines.

I've often debated the dangers of mechanical memorization. Mechanical memorization of lines disrupts the flow of authenticity, as the actor spends much of their time on stage trying not to forget their lines, rather than studying humanity and expressing themselves artistically. When an actor internalizes their lines, the action flows more naturally, and rehearsals progress more effectively. There are several techniques for memorizing lines that I have examined throughout my career. Rote memorization is the simplest and most traditional method, involving the repetition of lines until they are committed to memory. Actors frequently read their lines aloud repeatedly, sometimes writing them down or recording themselves and listening back. This method emphasizes muscle memory and auditory reinforcement. In addition to rote memorization, some actors use mnemonic devices or associations to link lines with specific actions or emotions. Others may break down the script into smaller, manageable sections, focusing on mastering each part before moving on. Regardless of the method chosen, the goal remains the same: to create a seamless and authentic performance that allows the actor to fully inhabit their character and connect with the audience. The Chunking method involves dividing the script into smaller, manageable sections or "chunks". Actors concentrate on memorizing these smaller parts individually before linking them together into a cohesive whole. This technique is based on cognitive psychology principles, which suggest that the human brain can more easily recall information when it is grouped into chunks. Visualization is another method where actors create mental images or "mind maps" to associate with their lines. This technique leverages the actor's spatial and visual memory, making abstract lines more concrete through visual representation. The Physical Movement method, also known as the kinesthetic method, involves associating lines with specific physical actions or movements. By rehearsing lines while performing related gestures, actors develop muscle memory that aids recall. The Emotional Connection method focuses on linking lines with the emotional context of the scene. By understanding the character's emotions and motivations, actors can use these emotional cues to trigger their memory of the lines. On set, some actors use cue cards or electronic prompters during rehearsals to aid memorization. These tools serve as reminders for lines and can be gradually phased out as memorization improves.

According to a study published in the *Developmental Psychology Journal*, breaking information into chunks significantly enhances recall and cognitive processing (Smith, 2010). Additionally, combining visualization with emotional

connection can create a more immersive and effective memorization process, as suggested by the research cited above. The choice of memorization technique can profoundly impact the quality of an actor's performance. The systems for memorizing lines vary widely, each with its strengths and suited to different learning styles. We cannot assert that a single method suits every type of creation or creator. This principle is evident in how an actor approaches their character. Brockett and Ball emphasize this by stating:

Memorization can be aided by a few straightforward techniques. Since it's unrealistic to memorize everything simultaneously, the script should be divided into sequences and mastered individually. Within each sequence, actors must learn not only their lines but also the cues (the preceding words or actions that trigger their lines) just as thoroughly as their own lines. Analyzing these sequences as a structure of ideas or shifts in emotion and tone, as well as the overall progression of a scene, is beneficial (Brockett, Ball, 2004).

From this perspective, it is clear that memorizing lines is not an impulsive act but a careful process designed to ensure effective line delivery.

Changing the setting and costumes

One of the benefits of being a film actor is access to high-end objects and experiences. This privilege has exerted social pressure on many actors, compelling them to live beyond their means in order to maintain the image portrayed through their characters and the projects they are associated with. In his book, *Film and Television Stardom*, Kylo-Patrick R. Hart elucidates: "The psychology of fame is variously described as leaving the individual feeling lonely; insecure; like in a bubble; their family space is invaded; there is always the feeling of being watched; like living in a fishbowl; like being in a locked room; and on top of all this, there is a familiarity that generates inappropriate closeness" (Hart, 2008, p. 31).

This is why it's only obvious that television and theatre require distinct approaches, particularly when it comes to changing settings and costumes.

The theatre experience

In theatre, the actor's relationship with the setting and costumes is deeply integrated into the performance process. The nature of live theatre demands a seamless flow of action, which requires actors to be proficient in rapid costume changes and setting transitions. A compelling example of this can be seen in *Life*

X3, a play by Yasmina Reza, where I was part of the cast. In this production, the actors faced lightning-fast costume and set changes. To facilitate these transitions, an automated semicircular screen was used to rotate around the actors, providing a quick change of scene. However, this innovation did not eliminate the need for actors to change costumes swiftly by themselves, often within a minute, as there was no backstage space for a dresser to assist. Theatre actors have the advantage of familiarizing themselves with the set and costumes during technical rehearsals and costume fittings. These sessions allow actors to rehearse set, lighting, and costume changes in detail, creating a secure and predictable environment. Additionally, the continuity of live performance requires theatre actors to remain in character for the duration of the play. This sustained engagement allows for a deeper connection with the role and a more immersive experience for both actor and audience.

The television experience

In contrast, television production operates under a different paradigm. Television actors often arrive on set on the day of filming and must quickly adapt to their surroundings. The nature of television production, with its emphasis on efficiency and rapid turnaround, means that actors frequently encounter new and unfamiliar settings. This environment demands a high degree of adaptability and flexibility from the actors, who must be able to quickly adjust to different locations and set designs. Costume changes in television are typically managed by a team of dressers and costume designers, allowing actors to focus more on their performance. However, the lack of continuity in shooting schedules poses its own set of challenges. Television scenes are often shot out of sequence, requiring actors to repeatedly enter and exit their characters' emotional states. This discontinuity can disrupt the actor's connection with the role, necessitating a different kind of mental preparation and emotional agility. Moreover, the technical aspects of television production, such as camera angles, lighting, and sound, play a significant role in shaping the performance. Actors must be mindful of their movements and positioning to ensure they are captured effectively on camera. This focus on technical precision can sometimes detract from the actor's ability to fully inhabit the character, as they must constantly balance performance with the demands of the medium.

The differences between television and theatre in terms of setting and costume changes are profound and impact the actor's approach to their craft. Theatre offers a more immersive and continuous experience, allowing actors to develop a deep connection with their role and the performance space. Television, on the other hand, requires actors to be highly adaptable and flexible, capable of

quickly adjusting to new and unfamiliar settings. The discontinuity of shooting schedules and the technical demands of the medium necessitate a different kind of mental preparation and emotional agility. As mentioned above, television actors benefit from the support of a dedicated costume and production team. However, the rapid pace and efficiency-driven nature of television production present unique challenges. Ultimately, both mediums demand a high level of skill and dedication from actors.

The relationship with the audience

The relationship between actors and their audience is a defining element that distinguishes theatre from film and television acting. The dynamics of this relationship shape how performances are crafted and perceived, influenced by the theories of notable practitioners like Konstantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg. In theatre, the audience is an active participant in the performance. The immediacy of a live audience creates a unique energy and presence that actors can feed off, leading to more spontaneous and dynamic performances. This direct interaction requires actors to maintain a heightened sense of awareness and responsiveness to the audience's reactions. The feedback is instant, whether through applause, laughter, or silence, allowing actors to adjust their performance in real time.

Konstantin Stanislavski's system, which emphasizes the actor's connection to the truth of the moment, is particularly relevant in theatre. Stanislavski encouraged actors to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances, focusing on genuine emotion and intent. This approach aligns well with the live nature of theatre, where authenticity and presence are key. The actor's ability to stay "in the moment" and respond to the audience's energy can enhance the overall theatrical experience, creating a powerful, shared reality between performers and viewers. The ultimate goal of an actor is to showcase everything they have rehearsed in front of an audience. Nevertheless, it is rare to see an actor who has not experienced some form of nervousness at some point. Confronting the fact that one is nervous before a performance, according to Caltagirone, "is a major part of taming stage fright." He goes on to state that knowing how well-prepared an actor is serves as a defense against stage fright (9). During a performance, stage actors face the audience directly and receive immediate feedback for their performance. This is a reality that most screen actors are not capable of facing. The actor must project their voice and presence to reach the entire audience, ensuring clarity and engagement. Unlike their screen counterparts, who benefit from microphones and camera angles, stage actors rely on their vocal projection and physicality to convey their characters effectively. This direct exposure to the

audience's reactions can be both exhilarating and daunting, as the actor is at the mercy of the audience, which can become restless if the performance does not hold their interest.

Another challenge for stage actors is the repetition of performances. As Brockett and Ball state, "The long series of performances creates special dangers because actors can begin to perform mechanically due to over-familiarity with their roles. The best precautions against such declines are concentration and remembering that each performance is the first for this audience" (358). Over time, actors may become too familiar with their roles, leading to a risk of boredom and a decline in performance quality.

In contrast, acting for the camera involves a different kind of relationship with the audience—one that is mediated through the lens and experienced by viewers at a distance. Film and television actors perform without the immediate feedback of an audience, requiring them to internalize their performance and rely on the direction of the camera to convey emotion and intent. The presence of the camera can be both a limitation and a tool, as it captures subtle nuances and close-up details that are not possible in theatre. Lee Strasberg's method acting, derived from Stanislavski's principles, emphasizes deep emotional identification and personal connection to the character's experience. Strasberg's approach is particularly effective for screen acting, where the camera magnifies every expression and gesture. This method encourages actors to draw on their own emotional memories and experiences to create a believable and compelling performance, which is essential for engaging an audience that is not physically present. The technical aspects of television production, such as camera angles, lighting, and sound, play a significant role in shaping the performance. This focus on technical precision can sometimes detract from the actor's ability to fully inhabit the character, as they must constantly balance performance with the demands of the medium. Additionally, film and television actors often benefit from the assistance of microphones, which allows them to speak in more natural, softer tones, contrasting with the projection required in theatre.

The relationship with the audience in theatre and film/television acting presents distinct challenges and opportunities for actors. Theatre offers an immediate, energetic exchange that can enhance the authenticity and presence of a performance, guided by Stanislavski's emphasis on living truthfully in the moment. Film and television, on the other hand, provide a more intimate and detailed portrayal of characters, benefiting from Strasberg's method acting techniques that draw on deep emotional connections. In any case, both mediums demand a high level of skill and adaptability, requiring actors to tailor their techniques to the environment they find themselves in.

Acting for the Screen

Just as we study and practice various acting techniques and styles to deliver compelling stage performances, the film actor must also develop a unique set of skills tailored to acting in front of the camera. An actor must be well-versed in filming techniques to avoid delivering a subpar performance. While many actors believe that movement on stage is meticulously calculated to ensure balance and composition, this is not always the case. Similarly, actors on a film set are directed to move within specific parameters dictated by the filming locations. They must also maintain a particular gaze, and ensure continuity of their character from scene to scene. Michael Caine asserts:

The use of the body is important both in front of the camera and on stage. In fact, it may be even more critical in a film. The camera does not forgive. You may have heard of actors gaining fifty pounds for a certain role. An actor will do this to look consistent with the role they are portraying. Because the camera often presents close-ups of the actor, it is even more important for the actor to look appropriate for the role they are playing (2000, p. 14).

There is also a psychological dimension to this, as theatre audiences often perceive that stage actors expend more energy, given they witness the delivery of lines, as well as the changing of sets and costumes in real-time. Conversely, watching an actor on screen from the comfort of one's home can impart a sense of ease to the viewer, as the actions are presented post-editing and in the absence of a live audience. Every performance ultimately meets the video screen, where the demystified subject is frozen and dies; there, performance once again encounters representation (Féral, Lyons, 1982, p. 181). This transformation from live action to recorded medium introduces a new layer of complexity, as the actor's work is now subject to the interpretive lens of the director, editor, and even the audience.

To conduct a comparative analytical study, I have identified four challenges faced by film actors. First, they must master the subtlety required for close-up shots, where every small movement is magnified. Second, they need to maintain emotional continuity across non-sequential scenes. Third, the physical demands of repeated takes can be taxing. Lastly, they must adapt to the fragmented nature of film production, which can disrupt the flow of their performance.

Knowing the other actors

Unlike the stage actor, who is often “bound” to rehearse a play for several weeks or even months, the film actor is typically spared what many might perceive as the stress of extensive rehearsals. However, while the rehearsal period affords stage actors the opportunity to become well-acquainted with their fellow performers, film actors frequently meet their co-actors for the first time on set. Giannetti (1996) observes:

Unlike the stage actor, the film actor does not have to cultivate an intimate relationship with the other actors: Sometimes, they have not even met until they arrive on set or at the location. Actors sometimes do not know their lines: this is remedied by the presence of a prompter on set, or by writing the lines on an unseen board where the actor can read them (p. 46).

This dynamic requires film actors to quickly adapt to working with a diverse range of individuals, often necessitating an immediate rapport to convey believable on-screen chemistry. The absence of prolonged rehearsal periods means that film actors must rely heavily on their ability to spontaneously generate connections and integrate into the collaborative environment of the set. This spontaneity, while challenging, can also bring a fresh and authentic energy to the performance, as interactions unfold naturally in real time.

The presence of prompters and other aids on set further distinguishes the film actor’s experience from that of the stage actor. These tools can help maintain the flow of dialogue and ensure continuity, allowing actors to focus more on their delivery and less on memorization. However, this can also limit the depth of character immersion that stage actors achieve through repetitive practice and sustained interaction with their peers. While theatre actors benefit from the extended preparation and deep bonds formed during rehearsals, film actors must leverage their adaptability and quick-learning skills to navigate the often fragmented and fast-paced nature of film production.

Continuity

Continuity can be considered the most formidable technical challenge encountered by a film actor. While a stage play must progress in a linear, chronological order, film production is organized based on logistical efficiency. As Caltagirone states:

When a director sits with a script, he or she does not decide to start filming from the beginning and go straight to the end. For example, if there are eight scenes where a character is at a farm, these eight scenes will be filmed together, even if they appear at different times in the film (p. 11).

The shooting schedule is predominantly influenced by economic considerations, leading to the filming of various sequences in a non-linear order, which may not always align logically from an artistic perspective.

An actor may be required to perform a climactic scene within the initial days of filming. Unlike a stage actor, who has the opportunity to emotionally “build” their character through the linear progression of the play, a film actor must be adept at delivering high-intensity emotional performances on demand. This necessitates an exceptional degree of concentration, as the actor must control and evoke their emotions accurately for brief periods.

Maintaining continuity in character and performance becomes a crucial task under these circumstances. A lack of coherence in a film performance often results from an actor’s failure to master the art of continuity. Those unaware of this challenge are at the mercy of editors, who may struggle to piece together a consistent performance due to fragmented shooting sequences. Errors in continuity can lead to costly and time-consuming corrections during the editing process.

Aristotle’s principles of dramatic structure, as outlined in his *Poetics*, emphasize the importance of a coherent and unified narrative. In theatre, the plot must unfold with logical progression and emotional build-up, ensuring that the audience remains engaged and invested in the story. This concept is equally critical in film, albeit achieved through different means. Film actors must internalize their character’s emotional arc and be capable of accessing the appropriate emotional states regardless of the shooting order. This requires not only a deep understanding of their character but also the ability to compartmentalize and recall specific emotions and motivations at a moment’s notice. Furthermore, Aristotle’s idea of catharsis, the emotional release experienced by the audience, is contingent upon the actor’s ability to maintain continuity. Inconsistent performances disrupt the audience’s suspension of disbelief, diminishing the overall impact of the film. Thus, the film actor’s skill in sustaining character continuity directly influences the narrative’s coherence and the audience’s emotional engagement.

Location and shooting

This topic has been carefully chosen to address the misconception that theatrical art is an overly rigorous experience for the actor. Unlike theatre plays, films are

recorded with an almost complete sense of reality. Filmmaking often requires actors to travel to remote locations, far from their families and friends, for extended periods. War scenes, in particular, can be incredibly exhausting, as they need to be filmed multiple times from various angles based on the director's vision. It is not uncommon for actors to suffer serious injuries during such intense filming sessions. Caltagirone observes:

The long and tiring hours of filming also put a physical demand on an actor. If you perform on stage, you have two hours of performance. If you do a matinee and an evening show, you might have four hours on stage. But with filming, you can spend long hours on set day after day (p. 75).

Actors often endure hours under harsh conditions, such as standing in the scorching sun or braving the cold for nighttime scenes. They must perform intimate scenes with numerous technicians present, maintaining an appearance of complete ease despite the discomfort of bright lights and frequent makeup adjustments. The camera's distorting effect requires actors to perform some scenes in unnatural ways. For instance, during an embrace, actors cannot truly look into each other's eyes without appearing cross-eyed on screen. Often, the performer is unaware of how a scene will be used in the final cut, or if it will be included at all. The disjointed nature of film production places the performer largely in the hands of the director.

Carl Jung's theories on the collective unconscious and archetypes can provide insight into the actor's experience on set. Jung posited that certain universal symbols and themes reside within the collective unconscious, influencing human behavior and perception (Jung, 1991). Actors, when filming on location or performing under strenuous conditions, tap into these archetypes, embodying roles that resonate on a deep, psychological level with both themselves and the audience. The challenges they face on set become part of a broader narrative, connecting individual performances to universal human experiences.

Peter Brook's ideas on theatre as a "holy space" can also be applied to the film set. Brook emphasized the transformative power of the theatrical environment, where the actor's presence and performance transcend the physical space (2023). Similarly, the film set, despite its technical and often fragmented nature, becomes a sacred space where the actor's craft unfolds. The actor must navigate the discontinuity of time and space, trusting the director to shape their performance into a coherent and compelling narrative.

One thing is clear – the physical and psychological demands of film acting are substantial, requiring actors to adapt to diverse and often challenging environments.

By drawing on Jung's archetypes and Brook's concept of the sacred space, actors can find deeper meaning and connection in their work, despite the rigors and unpredictability of the film production process.

The final result and audience reaction

The audience is not privileged to see the film in its raw state, complete with all the mistakes that necessitate multiple takes. Feedback becomes more challenging if the film, unfortunately, turns out to be poor. This directly contrasts with the belief that in film acting, there is no feedback until the finished product is showcased and praised, which is often seen as an advantage. Unlike live theatre performances, whose memory may fade over time, films are documented and remain accessible to the public, allowing audiences to rewatch and relive either negative memories due to a poor performance or positive memories due to a good film.

Such memorable performances often lead to actors being closely associated with their characters, sometimes even changing how they are perceived in public. For example, Bryan Cranston, who played Walter White in the critically acclaimed TV series *Breaking Bad*, is often called by his character's name when seen in public. His portrayal was so impactful that it left a lasting impression, cementing his association with the character in the minds of the audience.

This phenomenon highlights the enduring impact of film and television performances compared to theatre. While a live theatre performance exists primarily in the memories of those who attended, films and TV shows are preserved and can be experienced repeatedly. This permanence means that a single outstanding performance can define an actor's career, while a poor one can equally have long-lasting negative effects.

Conclusions

For both theatre and film actors, the essential principle behind their technique is truth. Whether on stage or in front of the camera, acting is about conveying human truth within the confines of the script. The actor's goal is to find the most effective tools of expression to present this truth to the audience, with no room for exaggeration or superfluous gestures. Various methodologies provide structured approaches to the actor's process, beginning with Stanislavski's *An Actor's Work on Himself* and extending to more contemporary works like Declan Donnellan's *The Actor and the Target* and Ivana Chubbuck's *The Power of the Actor*. These texts emphasize the importance of a "live" interpretation of the dramatic score. They discuss techniques for bypassing the conscious mind, which might be plagued by distracting thoughts such as "now you're on stage, a hundred people are

watching you, do something, say something, don't look at the audience, see how you're standing, take your hands out of your pockets, oh God, I delivered that line poorly, etc.," to achieve what Sanford Meisner describes as "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" (Meisner & Longwell).

The evolution of acting techniques over the years reflects a deepening understanding of how to achieve this truthful performance. Early acting styles often relied on more exaggerated and declamatory methods, which were well-suited to the larger-than-life requirements of early theatrical productions. However, with the advent of realism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, spearheaded by practitioners like Stanislavski, there was a shift towards more naturalistic and psychologically nuanced performances. This trend continued and evolved with the development of method acting, as popularized by Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner, who built upon Stanislavski's foundation to create techniques that emphasized emotional truth and personal connection to the material. One crucial aspect often overlooked is the state of vulnerability inherent in performing. Rarely discussed is the cause of those distracting thoughts—the inherent vulnerability of someone exposing themselves for two hours on a theatre stage or in front of a camera. Actors learn a variety of techniques to mask or manage this vulnerability, enabling them to focus on their performance rather than their self-consciousness. The evolution of acting methodologies—from the structured approaches of Stanislavski to the personal connection emphasized by Meisner and Chubbuck—aims to equip actors with the tools needed to achieve genuine, believable performances.

As acting continues to evolve, the core principle of truth remains constant. The actor's journey is one of finding the most authentic way to connect with their character and convey that truth to the audience. Whether on stage or screen, the goal is the same: to transcend the artificiality of the performance space and create a living, breathing embodiment of human experience.

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