

The Actor – A Vehicle of Meanings

Elena-Mirabela MOROȘANU¹

Abstract: *The actor – a vehicle of meanings – resorts to various means of expression when creating a role, committing to immersing themselves in given situations through play and creativity with the aid of affective memory, the internalization/assimilation of character data that is provided by the author or required by the director. Thus, the process of creative existence assists them in the situations and actions they engage in. Responsible for the entire process of self-discovery and self-knowledge, the actor becomes capable of existing as a vehicle of meanings, through which and with which they identify. By generating their own life experiences through thoughts and feelings, the actor brings together with them experiences which can be integrated whenever a character or a role involves situations similar to those they have personally lived before.*

Keywords: *vehicle of meanings; balance; imbalance; creative existence; creative freedom;*

Introduction

The first space of creation of the actor is the inner space, revealed in the way they move, accumulate experiences and memories, and *engage in play* through various means of expression. By first exploring their own inner space, the actor can then identify with other means, creating their own artistic act where they can actively participate. The actor's main task is to convince and draw the spectators into the “World” they have created, involving them physically and psychologically in the performance. Regardless of a particular performance, the actor’s work, study, qualities, and abilities developed through rehearsal make up the full arsenal with which they arm themselves for the Project. “The appearance of a body on stage draws attention to it, prompting the audience to form an opinion about the character, their traits, and development. Following this idea, we can conclude that the actor’s body serves as a stable bridge of communication”².

1. The Actor – Between the Balance and Imbalance of *Creative Existence*

The person who embodies a being by adopting the characters they are to meet and discover throughout their career is the actor.

Ion Cojar, a pedagogue in the performing arts, argues that “the actor-person should not be pushed towards interpreting roles that are too far away from their truth, but they should be rather helped to find and develop their own resources to create new possible existences”³. In other words,

¹ Faculty of Arts, Ovidius University of Constanta, mirabela.moroșanu @gmail.ro

² Geta Răvdan Huncanu. 2019. *The Actor's Physicality: Between Theory and Practice [Corporalitatea actorului, între teorie și practică]*. București: Editura Muzicală, p.154.

³ Ion Cojar. 1999. *A Poetics of the Actor's Art [O poetică a artei actorului]*. București: Paideia, p. 42.

the actor represents the *carrier*, the essential mechanism from which the action emerges and moves. The actor is the *engine* of the entire creative process. Through their means of expression and how they transpose themselves into an artistic act, the actor *paints the entire stage canvas with actions and images which reflect the reality into which they are immersed*. “The actor is the one who connects us with the true HUMAN within us, with the genuine inner feelings we are capable of manifesting. They help us rediscover the gesture by giving it a new dimension and significance, wrapping our thoughts in information we only felt before we knew”⁴.

Regardless of the medium used, be it body, movement, voice, speech, or song, the actor conveys easy to decipher and significant *meanings* through which they are expressing moods, sensations, and emotions. These are *vehicles of meaning* stored in their emotional memory and creative existence, in the creative existence that they propose with each personal involvement in the grand representation that they have set to reveal. “However, this fulfillment can occur in only three ways. One would be to force the actor to shed part of their personality and acquire the traits of the role that they, as a person, lack. The second would be to relinquish certain characteristics of the role so that it perfectly mirrors the actor. The third would be ultimately a compromise between the two, where both the actor and the role give up certain parts, thus creating a character halfway between them”⁵.

I would add here that both the actor and the character they create become one and the same and this is part of the actor’s conduct, completing the role in line with the director’s vision and in collaboration with the rest of the cast. “The measure of an actor’s creative capacity is determined by their ability to build contrasts”⁶. The experiences and the time spent on stage while working, or the experiences and the time spent “in class” have led me to believe and ascertain that between the two there is a balance that brings with it results and achievements whereby I easily discover that what is **important in the work**, in the study with the character or the student, **the work put in, the efforts, the creative freedom**, have helped me to discover my own way of working through which **I have given free rein to my imagination, creativity, to the joy of acting or to guide the work** of my *creative existence*, building a perspective on the creation of acting through multiple meanings of solving work situations. The tools and means used, already mentioned above, used in the professional approach that allows the actor to finalize the work on a scene, or a performance, support and control the whole course and the process through which it is transposed. „Grotowski combined the musicality and plasticity of Meyerhold with the psychological process proposed by Stanislavski to create a training system focused on introspection and the exploration of elements and beings beyond personal limits. Each individual has an intimate space, whose boundaries depend on their unique individuality”⁷. The actor is energy; a strong, controlled presence that is not fully identified with the character but carefully guided in order to avoid a chaotic release. “The instinct, the senses, the blind passions, the brutal possession, the reckless temptation, the immediate utility, the pride of power... all is endowed with active, dominating faculties, capable of deeply and lastingly shaping life processes and situations”⁸. The balance and imbalance of the

⁴ Radu-Silviu Olăreanu. 2021. *The Actor, the Poetry of the Human Knowledge [Actorul, poezia cunoașterii umane]*. Iași: Editura Artes, p. 19.

⁵ Victor Ion Popa. 1977. *A Short Guide to Theatre [Mic îndrepar de teatru]*. București: Editura Eminescu, p. 217.

⁶ Florin Vidamski. 2015. *The Road to Performance through the David Esrig Method for an Existential Theatre [Drumul spre spectacol prin metoda David Esrig pentru un teatru existențial]*. Bistrița/Iași: Editura Charmides/Editura Artes, p. 27.

⁷ Romina Boldășu. 2019. *About the Corporal Expressivity in the Art of the Actor [Despre expresivitate corporală în arta actorului]*. București: UNATC PRESS, p. 47.

⁸ Ion Zamfirescu. 1979. *Theatre and Humanity [Teatru și umanitate]*. București: Editura Eminescu, p. 6.

creative existence over the entire creation process of the actor occur in phases, between stability and movement, constraint and chaos, leading to oscillating interpretations or unpredictable freedom. The expressive tools whereby the actor highlights its presence become *meanings* that bring to life actions, situations, emotions, and experiences in distinct artistic structures.

The actor is a repository of meanings and expressions, a vehicle that lets the creative processes take shape, resulting in the construction of content. With every role and presence in the creative process, in the work with characters, the actor's reality is in a continuous change, transforming, becoming more self-aware. "Through intuition, imagination, and reflection, the actor must replicate and recreate this process in their laboratory, not in daily life. The moment they believe in each invented detail of the process, the fictional reality of the stage becomes credible to the audience"⁹.

Whether through gesture, movement, or voice, the actor engages a range of expressions that they use to recreate and describe everyday situations in a theatrical outcome. "When asked what he looks for in an actor, Brook enjoys replying with a play on words: *heart and hard*. Soul and boldness: when we have them, anything is possible; in theatre, as in life"¹⁰. The whole activity of the actor is a task, a pleasure, a joy of putting themselves at the service of the spectator in order to reach the message or the form of understanding that and by which they translate into the situations and the wide range of characters they strive to shape. With each premiere and performance, the actor takes off the coat they have donned with a responsibility, availability and commitment to which they have given their word each time they have signed on to the Role. In front of the spectator, the actor has a duty to come with an authenticity that and by which they "undress" of their own life, but brings that of the character as authentically, as wholeheartedly, honestly, courageously and clearly as they live their own. "It is important for a society to see itself in action on a theatre stage and to see itself in the mirror to understand its own shortcomings and its own limits, which it has at a given moment"¹¹. The actor puts themselves into the situations given by the playwright, but their own contribution is as much their own as that of the director putting on the play. The vehicle of meanings is closely linked on both sides, putting the Actor in action. It is up to them to paint on the white canvas the route and its entire course so that the board catches the colour, nuances, intentions, facets of the entire script. The actor is full of meanings, and their duty is to bring them before the audience in the surest and simplest way, that of translating themselves into the most sincere, upright and honest portrayals. The images sketched and traced by the actor are strings that they catch and tie throughout the play. They are in a great game of imagination, creativity, spontaneity in reality, given the context where they find themselves. Their acts of safety and enlistment are guided and controlled. Each movement, step, action is calculated, rehearsed to become natural each time having the freedom to increase the intensity and to recreate the naturalness and the naturalness with each performance. "We cannot think without, at least internally, speaking and acting. The same is true in both life and theatre"¹².

⁹ Florin Vidamski. 2015. *The Road to Performance through the David Esrig Method for an Existential Theatre*[*Drumul spre spectacol prin metoda David Esrig pentru un teatru existențial*] . Bistrița/Iași: Editura Charmides/Editura Artes, p. 54.

¹⁰ George Banu. 2005. *Peter Brook: Towards the Theatre of the Simple Forms* [*Peter Brook Spre teatrul formelor simple*]. Iași: Editura Polirom, p. 118.

¹¹ Radu-Silviu Olăreanu. 2021. *The Actor, the Poetry of the Human Knowledge* [*Actorul, poezia cunoașterii umane*]. Iași: Editura Artes, p. 25.

¹² *Idem*, Florin Vidamski, p. 62.

By deciphering the situations they gather from the first reading, the actor must understand and assume the intentions conveyed in the text to be able to dismantle, through action and intention, what must appear as *form* and *meaning* to the spectator. They must build the capacity not to play the words or short-term action of the scene, but to remain, throughout the scene or the entire performance, in constant evolution, transformation, in a steady *balance* of their *creative existence*. The action is determined by the situations present in the text; the intentions and the entire arc are determined by the actor's ability to place themselves not only in the given situations, but also in those they create themselves to finalize the creative process.

There are thresholds they discover throughout their evolution which they must detect to mark those key moments in the scene, those they must shape through the intentions that drive the unfolding of actions and events. In daily life, we encounter situations, conflicts, and actions that are the result of how we engage and act to resolve them. The actor, on stage and in the role they are to embody, uses the steps of identity, status, framing, action, and conflict to understand and adapt to the entire process and creative existence they surrender to—imagination, truth, and naturalness in resolving the situations and conflicts they face. “The creative capacity of an actor/director largely depends on their ability to build contrasts, oppositions, paradoxes. The skill of identifying and using contrasts in the course of a role indicates a refined level of craftsmanship and is an essential step in the analysis of the actor's part”¹³. In most of the proposed situations the actor brings with them when shaping a role, they also draw upon situations they have lived and which resonate with the character's story they are about to create. “The actor often draws upon lived emotions to be able to trigger a state in a situation which, note, follows the same rational development of an event as the one they lived – not imagined”¹⁴.

To find their creative path, to immerse themselves in the story they are about to engage with, the actor also draws upon moments they have lived, giving *creative existence* colour, value, feeling, and emotion from and through existential experiences already lived and personally felt.

The charm and ease with which the actor can sketch and shape the characters that allow them to build their *vehicle of meanings* help them construct their own journal, a kind of personal Decalogue by which they rediscover themselves. With every character, with every story, the actor knows which drawers to open, which buttons to press for each situation in which they find themselves or recognize themselves. “If you are expecting an answer from the wall in the form of an echo, your whole body must react to this possible answer. If you are going to give me an answer, you must do it with your body first. It is alive”¹⁵. They must constantly seek new types of characters, personalities, so that their palette is filled with all kinds of individuals they have encountered throughout their journey in the creative process of their existence in a theatre or in collaborations with the theatres where they are employed. “The actor who plays their role as a series of disconnected moments, without linking their entrances and exits, without considering what they did in previous scenes or what they must do in future ones, will never understand their role as a coherent whole”¹⁶.

From this stems the idea of commitment that the actor signs the moment they engage with any character they receive, with every project they begin. The journey towards and in search of

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

¹⁴ Radu-Silviu Olăreanu. 2021. *The Communication Reflex through the Mirror of the Actor's Art [Refelexul comunicării prin oglinda artei actorului]*. Iași: Editura Artes, p. 100.

¹⁵ Jerzy Grotowski. 1998. *Towards a poor theater [Spre un teatru sărac]*. București: Editura UNITEXT, p. 102

¹⁶ Michael Cehov. 2000. *Course in the Art of the Actor [Curs de arta actorului]*. București: Editura UNITEXT, p. 13.

creative existence, in which they become involved, is undertaken with responsibility and commitment, and the path they have to follow, with all its ups and downs, misunderstandings or clarifications with the whole team, brings with it the much-anticipated and desired outcome for all those involved.

The actor's work with themselves, with their scene partners, and with the entire team begins with small steps and culminates in the most spectacular accomplishments that mark the realization of a creative process to which they committed and which they brought to fruition. Every part of the team contributes its own energy and action, supporting the entire process and collaborative work.

2. Conclusions

In conclusion, The Actor, living between the balance and imbalance of *creative existence*, presents and lives a world of emotions, of both imaginary and real space, of thought and balanced actions aimed at awakening the spectator's inner mechanisms, those they have or those lying dormant. From the inside out, the actor sets in motion sensations and feelings that are difficult to recognize, bringing them to the surface. The actor's ongoing task is to move, to stir the spectator, in order to make them know and consciously understand: "the emotional connections that can form a bridge between the external motion of the world and the internal motion of the human being... through the power of emotion, they rediscover the true movement of the body, the hands, the gaze, the word spoken by them, and in that moment, they experience the joy of rediscovering themselves."¹⁷

3. References

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¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

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