

Thesis

There is no instruction manual for the acting profession to define the accurate rules and laws, to give advice and to provide basic skills for those who know nothing about this field.

This comes from the complexity of acting itself, and this complexity is made even more complicated by the fact that everyone does it differently. Everyone is complex in a different way.

There is such a wide range of knowledge about acting, and there are so many pieces of information *stashed away* at diverse places that collecting and arranging them into a system is a mission impossible, although there would be a need for this.

In addition, it is not available on paper and in books but in the heads, bodies, customs as well as in good or bad habits, i.e. in practice. Ever since theatre has existed, few actors have embarked upon defining their own operating mechanism in an instructive manner, in a clear text or words that can also be understood by others.

The few documents that have been born in this topic are inevitably of descriptive nature. The subsequent definition of discoveries regarding operation many times highlights some kind of principles through specific case descriptions or sometimes exemplary anecdotes. This is but natural as in the background to the professionally perceivable knowledge about acting as a profession there is something indescribable that turns acting into a real art.

This something is a *secret* and probably this is just fine that way, but its description and perception is made more difficult by the fact that each actor has their own secret. Just like all people. The actors either know about their individual secrets or they don't. They can either define it or not. Some of them do not even want to know about their own secret as once they encounter something definite about their own art, they feel unmasked and get disappointed about losing the magic. Such actors have – by birth – enviably rich imagination, experiences, intuitive reflexes that are easy to mobilize, and a real sensitive nervous system. They have some extra skills. They are close to a genius.

If we do not happen to be like that:

We cannot stick to the comfortable standpoint that this is all about magic, so it is not worth taking it down to clear, centralized sentences ... as acting can basically be learned to some extent. A clear proof for this is when a young student turns – in front of our eyes - into a young actor who is using more and more tools and acting with more and more complicity, the young actor turns into an even more sophisticated and mature adult actor, etc. This does not happen just because the person becomes *more and more magical* as months and years go by. By him or herself?!

Of course, we mention practicing as the only key to development, but during practicing the actors evidently make discoveries and spot certain patterns in their own activities. According to my thesis, it is the best, and they properly control their own development if they (1) *spot* these patterns, (2) try to *interpret* them for themselves, then (3) they *conscientiously* use them throughout their work.

However, these are only their own discoveries about themselves.

Above, I mentioned the secrets, the actor's own secrets. I think these are not the secrets of a magician. Actors do not safeguard them because their knowledge and their skills work only and exclusively in front of the audience. Therefore it is in their elementary interest to somehow articulate their secrets, methods and professional experience for the sake of successful common work and *co-existence*. In a harmonious work process and at a theatre company this articulation is, of course, not conscious, and it goes almost unnoticed. It only covers open and sincere work, where the actors actually do not hide their fights, difficulties, partial results, joys, recognitions, i.e. their working method. In this process, young (or not so young) people who want to study and develop – if they are good observers and analysts – can (4) extend their own secrets with other people's secrets, can try to *define* them for themselves, then they can *consciously* use them in their work.

Thus, professional skills can be best developed through practice, they can be acquired by continuously observing and analyzing ourselves and our partners ... and can be inherited by word of mouth...

We need to take from everybody what they know, then we need to decide whether that knowledge is useful for us and whether we can use it in our small little world.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, few Hungarian actors did the favour of sharing their experience with us also in a written form and not just at rehearsals, in buffets and corridors or even at acting sessions (Tamás Major, Hilda Gobbi, Miklós Gábor, Péter Huszti, Gábor Máté...), giving us the chance to learn about their secrets.

The purpose of this thesis is to modestly join this short but prominent line, in the hope that it offers something that extends our common knowledge either through affirmation or negation. At least, the line will be longer. On paper.

My primary thesis is that each and every actor should undergo this test, e.g. they should try to describe and define what comes to their mind about their profession and all that is related to it. Whatever the conclusion is, they will pluck up more courage to embark upon the next set of rehearsals.

Gergely Kocsis