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The actor: An emotional science

Abstract

Acting is a form of storytelling through the given circumstances in the story. A truly good actor unleashes very controlled energy into a powerful emotional roller coaster that takes physical and mental tolls on the body much how real emotions can affect our behavior and drain our energy; such as being exhausted after a strong verbal disagreement with a loved one or dealing with grief from losing someone close.

Keywords

Acting, Emotions, Cognition

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The actor: An emotional science

Jake Bassi

Acting is a form of storytelling through the given circumstances in the story. A truly good actor unleashes very controlled energy into a powerful emotional roller coaster that takes physical and mental tolls on the body much how real emotions can affect our behavior and drain our energy; such as being exhausted after a strong verbal disagreement with a loved one or dealing with grief from losing someone close. Those emotions have to reign true should those emotions be a key ingredient to a characters growth, development, and resolution. What kind of physical and mental stress can the human body take especially since this stress is completely manufactured from the mind? Here explains what an Actor goes through to properly execute strong emotions and having these emotions be rendered authentic, real, and most importantly, believable.



Have you ever been emotionally exhausted? Actors and performers alike have been known to be tired after a performance even if the role portrayed doesn't involve much physical activity. The brain picks up expressions of intense emotion and takes willpower and strength to execute repetitively such as an athlete using his or her muscles to move swiftly through a defensive obstacle. That being said it must be very exhausting to deceive someone successfully. An increased heart rate is apparent when someone is telling a lie.

When an audience truly believes what is happening on stage or screen they are tricked in a sense. The audience is fully immersed because the story is truthful. If not, you have a bad performance and people will leave. They believe that Character A is devastated that Character B has succumb to a deadly disease of some sort. But when the lights go black or the camera cuts, everyone is fine. If these emotions are true or false, the human body goes through a physical change: Increased heart rate causing blood to flow faster, the heat from the lighting; increasing temperature, other factors such as the performer having to execute a paragraph in one rage of breath or crying. When an actor performs and does so in the best way there is no acting. The circumstances are still imaginary but the emotions are true. Think of a child playing with his toys. An element of play is involved in a performance. Entertainment from imagination without any reading skills is something we have all went through in our youth. To still hold on to one's imagination is what artists do and that is what characterization is all about. Scientifically speaking, truth and lies can be deciphered with a polygraph. There is truth in storytelling even though the story is a complete farce and fragmented.

Actors can be the ultimate liars. Hamlet in the Tragedy of Hamlet by William Shakespeare is tortured on deciding whether or not to kill his uncle, whom marries his widowed

mother after killing the king, his brother. The actor in mind playing Hamlet has to, in some methods, imagine what it is like to truly experience grief, and loss even if this particular actor has no experience in his or her personal life. Would these fragmented emotions pass a polygraph test? Would the emotional energy this actor is exhuming on the stage or screen be comparable to a professional athlete? In a Chicago Tribune interview circa 1998 with Steve Pickering he explains, "I hadn't trained my body or my mind for it. It's as if you need the training of a marathon runner. When I played Iago again, I worked out, and I made sure, every day, I drank a lot of water. For me, sweating is a big problem. When I played Macbeth, I lost 32 pounds, and I swear it was in sweat weight." It would be really interesting to actually see that be put to the test. To see if a highly experienced actor such as Meryl Streep, or Patrick Stewart could pass a polygraph test whilst being a character. Can an actor playing Hamlet or Macbeth, or any character with high stakes for that matter sweat more than an athlete? Also what is the psychosis of the actor? Can this lead to possible breakthroughs in science?

Take the placebo effect for example. If one is under the belief of a treatment working, a patient could improve just from belief. A determined and committed actor can do a complicated and riveting scene under sickness and even the trained eye wouldn't be able to detect such sickness. In the famous movie musical, "Singin' in the rain" Gene Kelly had a very high fever while filming the singing in the rain sequence. Being sick and being wet is a terrible circumstance but he had to convey emotions such as Happiness, Joy, Glee, Smitten, etc. Perhaps Kelly didn't even feel whatever misery was bestowed upon him while filming that scene. If that type of temporary healing can be harnessed and exercised within the human mind, it can open spiritual doors. Art has influenced and transcended other subjects for mankind and it is imperative that art be held in higher regards in society and should be available to everyone. Arts

and science also complement each other very well. What is being asked here in the grand scheme of things is can art physically affect and improve our science? Unfortunately I do not have the answers. This is a story that is not yet finished.

Source Material: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1998-10-19/features/9810190064_1_willy-loman-stage-actors-iago