

Role Interpretation and Actor Training in the Nigerian Film Industry

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Abstract

Acting as an art has been abused and misused by some amateurs and non-professionals who see acting as an art that deserves no formal training, hence they rush into it and by implication exhibit poor role interpretation. This paper therefore presents the problem of poor role interpretation as it concerns film making in Nigeria. It made use of the content analysis approach of the qualitative research method in explicating the problem of poor acting and how it has persecuted the quality of production content of Nigerian films. It went further to stress the importance of constant and formal training towards the realization of a believable character. It suggests that there is need for all talented actors to be exposed to trainings and capacity development programs that will refine their raw talent.

Keywords: Actor Training, Role Interpretation, formal, talent, acting

Introduction

Role interpretation describes the primary duty of an actor in relation to a performance script. It is the fulfillment of this act by an actor alongside other production elements that gives life to a script. Acting is great only if it produces a reasonable effect upon a given audience. However, most actors perceive acting to be a very easy task and this explains why many untrained but ambitious individuals dabble into the art of acting without understanding its approaches, dynamics as well as techniques. Considering that the origin of western theatre is traceable to Greece, the development of acting as a professional art can be traceable to the City Dionysia Festival in Greece. However, acting is believed to exist in every indigenous culture from the earliest times as part of practical expressions of man. The most widely followed history is based upon the assumption that theatre including acting evolved from ritual.

One of the first actors who laid the foundation for modern acting is believed to have been an ancient Greek called Thespis of Icaria. Writing two centuries after the event, Aristotle in his

“Poetics” (C.355BCE) suggests that “Thespis stepped out of the dithyrambic chorus and addressed it as a separate character, he stepped on the stage at theatre Dionysus to become the first known person to speak words as a character on stage, prior to this, Grecian stories were only expressed in song, dance and in third person narrative” (25). Thespis is said to have introduced the first principal actor in addition to the chorus. He was a singer of dithyrambs (songs about stories from mythology with choric refrains) who is credited with introducing a new style in which one singer or actor performed the words of individual characters in the stories distinguishing between the characters with the aid of different mask.

Effiong Johnson observes that:

Drama as practiced in the Western world began in Greece with Festivals held in honor of Dionysus, the god of fertility and wine. Greek acting therefore evolved from the recitations and songs from the poetic texts, as well as the ritual dance movements for Dionysus (37).

The new style is called tragedy and Thespis was the most popular exponent of it. Eventually, in 53BC, competitions to find best tragedy were instituted at the city Dionysus in Athens and Thespis won the first documented competition. Capitalizing on his success, Thespis also invented theatrical touring, he would tour various cities while carrying his costumes, masks and other props in a horse-drawn wagon. According to Neziroski Lirim (4) “formerly, in some societies, only men could become actors and women roles were generally played by men or boys, when used for stage, women occasionally played the role of young boys, but later, women boldly took up roles and went as far as putting in their best into actualizing such roles” .

An actor is a person who portrays a character in a performance. The actor performs in the flesh and stage or in electronic media such as films, radio and television. Acting is the art of make-believe where actors assume characters and recreate fictional situations which the audience willingly accepts as artistic reality. Hence Jessica Alba states “I love acting because it is the space where dreams can be realized, fantasy comes to life and there are no limitations on what’s possible” (62).

Acting is the art of interpretation thus the actor is basically engaged in role interpretation. To act is to create a character in performance. In “*The Theatre And Its Double*”, Antonin Artaud

rightly posits that “The actor is an athlete of the heart” (20). Being an athlete and one who champions the heart, an actor expresses ideas and portrays characters in theatre, film, television and other performing art media by interpreting a writer’s script to entertain, educate or inform an audience. Hence, acting is an activity in which a story is told by means of enactment by an actor who adapts a character in theatre, television, film, radio or any other medium that makes use of mimetic mode.

Acting involves a broad range of skills including a well-developed imagination, emotional facility, physical expressivity, vocal projection, clarity of speech and the ability to interpret dramatic situations and actions. An ideal actor should possess all or even more of the above qualities as Sarah Bernhardt rightly explains that:

A defective voice will always prelude an artist from achieving the complete development of his art, however intelligent he may be , the voice is an instrument which the artist must learn to use with suppleness and sureness as if it were a limb. (45)

The actor is an interpretative artist who conveys to the audience the words of the playwright, ideas and feelings other than his own. He works within the director’s overall concept of the production and the author’s description of the character. The actor goes as far as taking the plot, theme, character, setting and dialogue of the playwright and correlates his ideas of characterization with those of the playwright and the director to make the play happen on stage. In other words, a playwright’s work including the shaping and movement of the director as given in the play production are observed and transformed in the creative work of an actor. Each character has a purpose for which it was created which include some dramatic purposes. It is therefore the duty of an actor to identify these purposes and determine what he is expected to contribute with regards to role interpretation in the play. Every actor must try to understand what a character does and why. This implies that actor must know what a character is expected to do in each scene he appears in.

Each scene solves a particular dramatic purpose which includes conveying information, establishing and disposing character relationship and thereby advances the action of the play

towards the climax and resolution of the conflicts. Therefore, it is paramount that an actor understands why a character is included in any scene as well as what a character is expected to accomplish. A good actor is one who has an understanding of what the plot is about, analyzes each individual scene in the script as integral part of the dramatic composition by taking cognizance of the following: What is the intent of the scene? (what does the scene stand for dramatically), What are the plot points? (points that move the story forward), What is the climax of each scene? (the turning point), what is the resolution? (How is the conflict resolved), What is the conclusion?

The script breakdown of an actor is a critical and complex process as each time he reads the script, he discovers something different about the story or the character. To buttress the point above, Konstantin Stanislavsky in his book, *An Actor Prepares*, posits:

In the circle of light on the stage and in the midst of darkness, you have the section of being entirely alone, this is called solitude in public, during a performance, before an audience of thousands, you can always enclose yourself in this circle, like a snail in its shell, you can carry it wherever you go. (125)

Therefore, as an actor likened to a snail in its shell, he carries the role or character wherever he goes until the production is over. It becomes a part of him thus the actor lives the role as part of him indeed. He continues:

Living the part helps the artist to carry out one of his main objectives. His job is not to present merely the external life of his character, rather he must fit his own human qualities to the use of this other person, and pour into it all of his own soul. The fundamental aim of art is the creation of an inner life of a human spirit and it is in an artistic form. (Stanislavsky,14)

A successful actor is therefore one who puts his mind and might into living the character, believing in his new personality to achieve the desired artistic transformation.

Constantine Stanislavsky's The Method

“The Method” which overtime has become a theory, focuses on making the audience see the actor as a character rather than mere representation of imitator. For Giovanni Morassutti “The Method tends to be linear, almost like a 19th century mechanistic way of thinking in its search for a cause that produces the desired effect” (27).

Stanislavsky's techniques were aimed at understanding a character and relating to the role with believability and without having a doubt that the actor is part of the character. The method is an actor's training system made up of various different techniques design need to allow actors create believable characters and help them really put themselves in the place of a character. The elements or techniques of the Method include Magic if, Given Circumstances, imagination, relaxation, emotional memory, communication, truth and believe etc.

For Jean Benedetti "Through The Method, the performers will explore the role by taking a period of time living as characters and learning about them in details so as to achieve what Stanislavsky's refers to as 'verisimilitude', that is feeling of truth in the audience when they watch in performance"(15). Stanislavsky believed that through in-depth study of the play, analysis of the role and recall of previous emotions, the actor could arrive at the "inner truth" of a part by actually experiencing the emotions he conveyed to the audience.

According to Benedetti :

An indication of the success of the system was the emergence from his training methods of all the best Russian actors of the 20th century, his rehearsals which often resembled acting classes began with the discussion of the super objective and the through action of the play and at the same time the actor examined the previous history of his character and his pretext (80).

During rehearsals, the actor searches for inner motives to justify action and then definition of what the character seeks to achieve in any given moment. Later, Stanislavsky elaborated the system with a more physically grounded rehearsal process that came to be known as "Method of Physical Action". He then encouraged an "Acting Analysis" in which the sequences of dramatic situations are improvised. For him, the best analysis of a play is to take action in the given circumstances. The system does not exist in vacuum, it exists in other to prepare actors for real roles within actual plays. The system propagates that an actor utilize amongst other things, his emotional memory (i.e. his recall of past experiences and actions). The magic if is a very good way to consider natural reaction to the events of the story. It insists that the actor should begin his work by asking "what will I do if I were in these circumstances?". Stanislavsky opines that "It acts as a level to lift us out of the world of actuality in to the realm of imagination" (46). 'Emotional Memory' is when an actor finds a real past experience where they felt a similar emotion to that

demanded by the role they are playing, they now borrow those feelings to bring the role to life. In his book, *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavsky posits “Just as your visual memory can reconstruct an inner image of forgotten things, place or person, your emotional memory can bring back feeling you have already experienced” (168).

Sense of imagination as well as truth and believe can also aid the actor in his quest for good role interpretation if only he believes in the truthfulness and in what he intends to depict because every invention of the actor’s imagination must be thoroughly worked out and solidly built on a basis of fact, it must be able to answer all the questions where, why, how, and when he is drawing his inventive facilities on how to make a more definite picture of a make believe existence. He should also try not to over act as over acting is really overcompensating of lack of real emotion. Another of Stanislavsky’s ideas closely linked to Magic If is that when creating a role, an actor must have a good awareness of the given circumstances surrounding his role. Stanislavsky gives further insight on Given Circumstances thus:

Given circumstances means the story of the play, its facts, events, epoch, time and place of action, conditions of life, the actors and regisseur’s interpretation, the mise-en-scene, the production, the sets, the costumes, properties, lighting and sound effect all the circumstances that are given to an actor to take into account as he creates his role. If it is the starting point, the given circumstances, the development, one cannot exist without the other, if it is to possess a necessary stimulating quality. However, their function differ somewhat: If gives the push to dormant imagination, whereas the given circumstances build the basis for itself, and they both together and separately, help to create an inner stimulus (51).

Given circumstances include conditions of the character’s world like, specifics of time and place. In *Hamlet* for instance, being in Elisnore at a specific time in history is a given circumstance. More so, elements from the history of the character's environment e.g. in *Hamlet*, the death of the old King Hamlet preceding the play's plot and elements from the character's personal situation e.g. the character Hamlet is a crown prince are all given circumstances.

Stanislavsky concludes:

You must learn to adapt yourselves to circumstances, to time, and to each individual person. If you are called upon to deal with a stupid person you must adjust yourself to his mentality, and find the simplest means with which to reach his mind and understanding. But if your man is shrewd, you should

proceed more cautiously and use subtler means so that he won't see through your wife (228).

Stanislavsky's first book on acting titled *An Actor Prepares* is the diary of a fictional student named Kostya during his first year of training in Stanislavsky's system. Kostya and his fellow students have little to no experience in acting. As they go through the class, Tortsov their teacher and theatre director addresses the many assumptions they have formed that do not coincide with the 'system'. Stanislavsky relates his message with examples. He argues that "His System is not a particular method, but a systematic analysis of the natural order of theatrical truth, the system that he describes is a means both of mastering the craft of acting and of stimulating the actor's individual creativeness and imagination" (163). It has influenced the majority of performances we see on the stage or screen. The book is autobiographical and deals with many different areas of acting skills, including action, imagination, concentration of attention, relaxation of muscles, units and objectives, faith and a sense of truth, emotion memory, communion, adaptation, inner motive forces, the unbroken line, the inner creative state, the super-objective and the subconscious mind. Tortsov, the director, explains all these art forms in great detail, and thereby transforms *An Actor Prepares* into a type of textbook that has become a theoretical reference source on the art of acting in modern theatre and performance. On stage, the actor must also achieve Solitude in Public. To really have a truthful performance on stage, the actor must be fully comfortable on it. Stanislavski states that full comfort is reached in moments of solitude, when no one is observing you. He insists "Bring yourself to the part of taking hold of a role as if it were your own life, speak for your character in your own person, when you sense this real kinship to your part, your newly created being will become soul of your soul, flesh of your flesh" (73).

Therefore, the actor must be able to find that sort of solitude on stage, even in front of thousands of people. The successful execution of this technique varies for all actors, but it starts with successful creation of the fourth wall to best block out the audience. At the end of the book, the students recall their first exercise, sitting in a chair in a way that interests the audience, and searching for a brooch convincingly.

Uta Hagen's Transference

Transference is a technique propounded by Uta Hagen. She initially called it “substitution”. It is the process of attempting to find counterparts from your own experience for the people, places and things you interact with in the course of your performance. *The key elements of Hagen’s technique are substitution, transference, specificity, authenticity and preparation. Hagen communicated her philosophies on acting through exercises that she refined as a teacher in New York City; thus, her insights are best experienced kinesthetically and in layers. While Hagen’s technique was indeed in concert with the beliefs of ‘The System’ or ‘The Method’, she encouraged actors to not overintellectualize their processes and instead root themselves in real activities and create confidence through rigorous preparation. While some teachers like Strasberg encouraged actors to mentally re-create the conditions of lived experiences to behave authentically onstage, Hagen taught the technique of substitution. To support this assertion, she insists in her book Respect for Acting that an actor should “Keep pace with the present, take a trip to the moon and then envision the future” (105).*

Substitution is a variation of emotional recall with clear parameters. Hagen believed that there was danger in an actor internalizing a technique and getting lost in a role. Through substitution, she wanted actors to find themselves in a part. Hagen said that if an actor attempted to re-create the conditions of a definitive nonfictional psychological moment they had experienced for the use of their acting onstage, it would be distorted, because the way we perceive circumstances in moments of high emotion is not necessarily logical, Instead, actors should use an “imaginative extension of realities” within the fictitious circumstances of a play. As a principle, substitution is more about the actor convincingly putting themselves in the organic circumstances of the play rather than replicating the conditions of their own life onto the play. Uta Hagen’s exercises are her greatest gift to actors working today. She developed them between Broadway jobs to solve some acting problems that she had never seen anyone tackle to her satisfaction. The result is that Hagen’s exercises give actors a way to observe human behavior and catalog it so they can recall it onstage when it is useful in a role. Some examples of Hagen’s exercises include:

- **The Basic Object Exercise:** Sometimes called “two minutes of daily life,” this exercise requires the actor to replicate activities from their own daily routine in specific detail (think making breakfast or getting ready to go out). The goal of this exercise is to increase the actor’s awareness of their un-observed behavior.

- **Three Entrances:** Starting off-stage, the actor enters the environment of the scene. The actor's performance should answer three questions: What did I just do? What am I going to do? What is the first thing I want?
- **Immediacy:** Hagen asked actors to search for a small object that they need. You can perform the exercise on a set or in your home. As you search, you should observe the behavior and thoughts that arise as you authentically try to find something. The objective is to identify the thoughts, behaviors, and sensations you experience when you genuinely don't know the outcome, so you can use them on stage.
- **Fourth Side:** This exercise starts with a phone call to a person you know. You should call them with a specific objective in mind. During the conversation, Hagen wants you to focus on your surroundings and the specific objects that your eyes rest on. The purpose is to help actors observe how they interact with all dimensions of an enclosed physical space so they can recreate the feeling of privacy on stage.
- **Endowment:** This exercise is designed to help actors apply their observed behaviors to endow props with qualities that they cannot safely have on stage. Hot irons and sharp knives are typical examples. The Endowment exercise asks actors to believably treat objects on stage as though they have the qualities the actor needs in a scene. In her first book, "Respect For Acting", She goes further to develop nine essential questions which help actors develop the granular details of their character's backstory. These questions include:
 - **Who am I?** This question's answer includes all relevant details from name and age to physical traits, education, and beliefs.
 - **What time is it?** Depending on the scene, the most relevant measure of time can be the era, the season, the day, or even the specific minute.
 - **Where am I?** This answer covers the country, town, neighborhood, room, or even the specific part of the room.
 - **What surrounds me?** Characters can be surrounded by anything from weather to furnishings, landscape, or people.

- What are the given circumstances? These include what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen to a character.
- What are my relationships? Relationships can be with other characters in the play, inanimate objects, or even recent events.
- What do I want? Wants can be what the character desires in the moment, or in the overall course of the play.
- What is in my way? This is the actor's chance to understand the obstacles the character must react to and overcome.

What do I do to get what I want? In Hagen's teaching, "do" means physical action.

However, in her later book, *A Challenge for the Actor*, which this research adopts, she condensed her original nine questions to six steps. The six steps include:

Who am I?

What are the circumstances?

What are my relationships?

What do I want?

What is my obstacle?

What do I do to get what I want? .

For Uta Hagen:

Hagen aimed to encourage the actor to articulate moments where their life and the life of the play as created by the writer meshed. On this regard, she continues "My strength as an actor rested in the unshakable faith I had in make-believe, I made myself believe the characters I was allowed to play and the circumstances of the characters' lives in the events of the play" (33). The work of substituting is something the actor must do herself it is not something a director can construct. This adds to Hagen's sense of an actor's craft: Only an actor can articulate an adequate substitution, adding a sense of discipline and rigor to an actor's function. It is the actor's duty, Hagen said, to find their relationship to the character based on their own experience and

perspective, a process she terms “transference.” And the work of substitution is merely a foundation for the actor to move into the realm of making definitive choices in the rehearsal hall or on the stage aimed at giving the actor a sense of confidence because they trust the circumstances of the character’s stakes. However, Hagen is also very clear that an actor should never substitute circumstances onstage that they’re uncomfortable talking about or exploring publicly.

Another critical element of Hagen’s technique which is to be applied in the rehearsal room or onstage is the establishment of destinations. In her studio, Hagen always pestered students to fully utilize props, costumes, or even architectural features of the venue to motivate authentic action. During scene work, Hagen’s students always had a pile of props and furniture on the stage because it was their relationship to objects that manifested in naturalistic behavior. By focusing on destinations, actors are always forced to think regarding actions and objectives like “What do I, the character, want in every single beat of the play?”. This is rooted in the language of Stanislavsky and participates in the belief that an actor’s energy onstage is dependent on the actor having tasks that relate to the character’s objective or obstacles.

The Concept of Role Interpretation

It is however important to note that acting is not just imitation as perceived by novices and some practitioners. Effiong Johnson, goes further to justify this assertion by explaining vividly that “Imitation among others connotes counterfeiting, it implies that an original thing exists desirably somewhere, but one could only afford or make use of its nearest or closest in quality. This is not true about acting” (28).

In other words, imitation requires a reference point or an object. That is the reason that children imitate their parents walking, talking, and behavior. Teenagers find great power in imitation, sometimes out of peer pressure. Whatever our age, it is true that most of the times we consciously or subconsciously imitate others or act under someone’s influence. All of the creative arts originate from imitation, and regular practice of this imitation turns the imitation into a performance. Even if people have the same teacher, same training, and time of practice, the depth of imitation may differ, and so will the performance. They may even be striving to reach the same standard in their performance or the so-called level of perfection, but there will be differences in

their performances. Thus, it can be inferred that you can imitate outward actions by being curious and practicing hard. However, you cannot really copy anyone's thoughts and feelings exactly. Therefore, it is impossible to replicate someone's unique performance as the art of imitation is subtle. Imitation is defined as acting under the influence of a model. When you practice imitating, you learn the differences and use contrasts to form relationships based on relative standards. While imitating you should guard against imitating people superficially, as there's a danger of crossing a certain limit, for which you could be accused of duplicating.

Over the years, acting as an art has been and is still being misinterpreted, hence the driving force behind John Fernald who opines that:

Acting is an ability which is as misinterpreted and misunderstood as any that has occupied man throughout his entire history. Acting is not the pretending to be somebody else that children find themselves doing from as far back as they can remember in the nursery. (65)

Acting on stage however is different from acting in real life and on this note Edwin Wilson explains that:

Another important difference between acting on stage and in real life is that a theatrical performance is always conscious. There is an already gained insight by the actors and audience that the presentation has been planned ahead of time. This consciousness of a performance sometimes leads to a more truthful reenactment than we encounter in real life. (183)

This shows that despite its glamour, acting is a very difficult and demanding profession which requires actual training and preparation if it must be believable. For Effiong (195) "It is not an all comers affair which anyone can jump into its parade and match to win prizes". By implication, it becomes necessary that an actor undergoes certain training to fortify him or herself for the task ahead. On this note, Stanislavsky opines "In order to express a most delicate and largely subconscious life, it is necessary to have control of an unusually responsive, excellently prepared vocal and physical apparatus" (66).

Actors are the embodiment of any film production. Theirs is the public face which represents many others' work and efforts. It is rare for the public to see the Scriptwriter, the Producer, or the Director of a film. Their perception is based on what is portrayed by the Actors

on screen. They present a visual interpretation of the script. For some roles, they carry out extensive research, for others their character is molded and developed during rehearsals. They work with the director to create believable, natural built upon in order to convince the audience of their veracity. In films, they learn their lines quickly, and retain their meaning and inflection while sometimes repeating the same scene many times over, for re-takes, and while scenes are shot from different angles. They also know their fellow Actors' lines, so that they can respond to them accurately and appropriately. Actors contribute ideas and suggestions to improve their own performance in a creative and collaborative way, whilst also being able to take direction, notes and constructive criticism from members of the directing team. They exact positions and movements at any given time during the performance to assist with continuity.

They need strong powers of observation, in order to learn from others' body language, so that they can create believable characters. On this note Stanislavski opines "Ideally an actor should be carried away in his part, by the subconscious as long as it carries him in the right direction, but it's impossible to control the subconscious without destroying it" (88).

Actors in film also need to be aware of how their performance may be affected by the types and positions of cameras, different lighting techniques and the requirements of different sets and locations. They must be aware of the professional etiquette and traditions of working on film sets and locations as Michael Caine rightly puts "Actually, I am really quite vain about the whole problem because I figure there is no competition, I am what I am and either I am needed as that or I am not suitable anyways"(48). In fact, acting is described as an imitation of situations. It is this creative imitation that helps the audience relate to the character. In addition, he requires a wide range of skills which include adaptation, vocal projection, clarity of speech, physical expression, improvisation, observation, emulation, body language emotional facility as well as a well imagination to enhance the interpretation of role.

Actors Training and Exposure as a Vital Step for good Role Interpretation

The problem of poor acting has bedeviled the quality of production content of the Nigerian movie industry as many ambitious Nigerians jump into acting without understanding the demands. That is why there is the need for all talented actors to be exposed to trainings and capacity development programs that will refine their raw talent. There has been a long tradition of actor

apprenticeship in the culture of Western theatre by which students learn from their more experienced colleagues. This tradition has remained strong and been passed on through the generations. Both in early Greek theatre, dominated by theatrical families of wealth and position, and in ancient Roman times, where actors were usually slaves of low status, actor's training was firmly rooted in the historical practices of apprenticeship and learning by doing. It was likely that even Greek drama choruses were trained, particularly in the area of voice control. Although institutionalized actor training is largely a twentieth century phenomenon, its roots are as old as acting itself, dating from the beginning of the fifth century BC.

One of the biggest mistakes that anyone can make as an actor is that they think too highly of themselves and skip training because they think that "*they've already got what it takes to be a star.*" Yes, some people may be natural-born actors who can just come out at any time and say that they're ready to take on an important acting role. Yet, know that having the necessary practice to refine your skills will help push you much farther. Nearly every single star in Hollywood and on the television and silver screen relies on training so that they never lose grasp on the mastery of their skills. Acting classes and training sessions cover different topics, ranging from accents and movements all the way to workshops on channeling emotions. It's best to assume that if there's an aspect of acting that anyone's struggling with, then there's a certain acting class that can help. Regardless, if you're an up-and-coming industry professional or a budding actor who has yet to land a major role, there's no denying that training regularly will always be helpful. Roles that are put out for an audition, on average, will have hundreds to thousands of applicants who are all invited in taking their shot towards an acting career. If one is keen on landing a certain part or making a name for yourself in the acting industry, then you will need to train hard to ensure that you have the skills to stand out in the eyes of a casting director. In the end, know that actors are selected for roles beyond the idea of good looks and connections because skill is required to portray the complexity of any character. This is why one must make sure that you're well-trained for your ideal role. Keep in mind that training is not only there to help actors refine their skills for their next potential gig, but it also helps with the important concept of self-discovery. Throughout your training, it will become easier to discover what genres suit one's skills, what type of roles one like to take on, and what your standard of success truly is. Succeeding as an actor entails knowing what your strengths and weaknesses are and where you stand amongst other actors. With its hardships

and highly-competitive atmosphere, it can be quite easy to fall out of love with acting if you don't have the necessary driving force to push you until you land even more roles. By training consistently, one will discover the intricacies of acting and understand every skill on a deeper level so that he or she will be able to act like it is second nature to you. Training is the key to success that any actor can use to stand their ground in the acting industry and cement their future.

The qualifications of the actor are generally thought to be a good physique, a retentive memory, an alert brain, a clear, resonant voice with good articulation, and controlled breathing. While looks and the even more important element of personality are undoubtedly factors, their characteristics are difficult to determine, they are usually recognized after the actor has become successful rather than before. Many actors do not possess them offstage but seem to ignite them as soon as they begin to perform. The central element of the actor's talent, as differentiated from his means, is a special sensibility ("fire," "enthusiasm," "spirit," in the words of 18th-century theoreticians), an ability to respond to imaginary stimuli and situations, which makes it possible for him to enter into the experience and emotions of the character he is to represent. These elements have always been recognized as distinguishing the great actor but were assumed to be beyond the reach of the ordinary actor, they were regarded as elements "born in him" and not susceptible to training. This is precisely the area of the modern training of the actor. For Stella Andler "Actors need a kind of aggression, a kind of inner force. Do not be only one sided, sweet, nice, good. Get rid of being average, Find the killer in you" (40).

The first stage in the training of the actor's control of his physical, mental, and psychical resources is the ability to relax. Because this ability seems to have little to do with the final achievements in acting, it is often disregarded, but it is basic to any expenditure of will and energy on his part. In a state of physical or mental tension, or both, the actor cannot think, the commands he gives himself are not transmitted, sensation is stifled, and expression is inhibited. The process of relaxation serves to clear the actor of the unnecessary pressures that he has accumulated before the moment of acting begins, to free him of blocks or interferences that may inhibit sensory responses. Physical and mental energies are comparatively easy to train, but sensory control is much more difficult. Relaxation is not a static state or effort. Often in the initial stages of training the actor is subject to strong eruptions of unconscious impulses. He must learn to continue the relaxation, to force his will to maintain his effort on the action of the nerves and the muscles.

The converse of relaxation is concentration. Everything the actor does demands concentration. His training proceeds by work with imaginary objects. Working with real objects often leads to pantomimic or to physical imitation, but the actor may begin with them in order to learn how to respond with his entire organism and to apply such responses to his work with imaginary objects, the real medium of the stage as he would to real ones. This capacity to respond to stimuli that come not from outward reality but from the promptings of one's own imagination may be seen to some extent in every human being; something akin to it is found in psychology in the study of conditioned reflexes, of automatic and spontaneous reactions, and of behavior patterns. In heightening the sensory awareness and stimulating the senses to respond more strongly in life, the actor acquires the ability to recreate any object, sensation, or experience in the imagination.

In strengthening his concentration, the actor uses not only will but also a process of self-awareness by which he trains the instrument that is his body and voice to respond to his commands. The very process of concentration and of commitment and involvement must include awareness. The more the actor learns to master concentration, the more aware he becomes.

An additional factor is the development of the actor's sense of truth. A faculty particularly stressed by Konstantine Stanislavsky and by followers of his System. The growth of self-awareness is useless if it is not accompanied by a correct evaluation of what is true and what is false. If the actor must rely on outside judgment and remain dependent on it, he may become insecure and lose his spontaneity and responsiveness. His mastery of inner relaxation and concentration helps him achieve a combination of spontaneity, commitment, and awareness. Thus, the actor's involvement and his awareness, rather than being in opposition to each other, are in accord. On this regard, Michael Shurleff posits "Take nothing for granted, make an emotional discovery as often as you can find one in every scene, ask yourself what is new?" (31).

The actor's sense of truth is also involved in another major area of the actor's training his work with actions (the way he behaves physically on the stage), sometimes called the "business" of the actor. Some idea must supply an incentive or intention to pull together what could otherwise be a series of disconnected and unrelated physical deeds. Some purpose, some aim must motivate

the actor's will and energy. Any performance thus may be seen as a series of actions as the score of the play which must be carried out not simply physically but logically and truthfully.

Conclusion

This paper is of the opinion that in order to keep the profession of acting alive and in good shape, the Nigerian actor must be innovative and ready to be a role model to prospective actors. Furthermore, though it is important that an intending actor have some natural talents in acting, it is also vital that this talent be subjected to professional training in order to refine it and open opportunities for the actor to know the theories of drama for a better role interpretation so as to debunk the notion that Nigerian movie industry is rating third in terms of quantity and not quality to the world.

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