

ART AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Eusebius ȘTEFĂNESCU

Actor, Bucharest National Theatre, Prof., PhD, Faculty of Arts, "Hyperion" University of Bucharest, Romania
Corresponding author: eusebiustefanescu@yahoo.com

I have been haunted for a long time by this idea of establishing a board of "Art and Communication Strategy", within the theatre faculties, as well as in those faculties teaching P.R., management, political sciences, law etc., through which one could teach a special rhetoric, of maximum efficiency in relation to the public.

There are some laws that refer only to rhetor's behavior, physiognomy, and port and not to the content of ideas and feelings he/she wants to communicate. These laws are related simply to the way of communication, to establishing an ideal relationship with the discussion participants, with a small or large audience.

I know that there have been written numerous studies in this area, subtle findings have been made related to social psychology (Le Bon - Crowd Psychology) or communication theory. But I want to refer to a less studied field, that in which one forms the psychology and personality of he who wants to become, like the actor, a manipulator of collective emotions.

And here there are many attempts at establishing rules to succeed in life, some recipes. All refer to the assimilation of a code of conduct, *i.e.* of some formal, exterior means. What I want is to discover an inside spring that could build charisma, the charm of a personality.

The road may be longer or shorter, depending on the abilities of the one who wants to improve. Still, it leaves from a zero point: One must first discover oneself by honestly exhibiting, expressing all complexes, limits, turmoil, lack of fulfillment, joys, achievements, obsessions, sins. It's just like beginning a homeopathic treatment by taking a purification bath.

In my turn, I, as a teacher, discover the "buttons" one needs to press in order to trigger the student's abilities. To acquire the means of expression, he/she must study simultaneously

stage speech, stage movement and improvisation. Improvisational exercises should follow especially the development of imagination, the adaptation to different situations, self-control, mastery of space and timing, but mostly the ability of transposing oneself in other's psychology and world vision. Communication exercises are advisable: interviews with changed identities, speaking in an invented language, the meeting of two known or imagined characters and so on.

There will follow the dramatizations stage, then the interpretation of scenes from realistic plays, focusing on relationships and the communication, on a constant awareness of the public, whose importance is undeniable. One will also study the direct relationship with the public, considering the fact that the faculty can train specialists in mass media: TV show moderators, reporters, broadcasters, presenters of shows, brokers. I think this faculty would be required of politicians, diplomats, lawyers, teachers, all who use the phrase chosen to persuade an audience.

There are some secrets to establish a favorable relationship with the public. The first step of the actor / rhetor / speaker / moderator is *captatio benevolentiae*. This captivation of the audience is done by means of an agreement with the public in a direct relation - a confession or a helpful question, in which the answer is contained: "Are you unhappy?" "Yes!" "Do you want a better life?" "Yes!" "Through dictatorship?" "No". "Through democracy?" "Yes!" - or by highlighting certain acting attributes that arouse admiration and create an uplifting state.

Once the public is captured, you must know how to manipulate it in a good way, to convince the people of the truth of your words. I emphasize the word truth, because when you plead, you

must firmly believe in the fairness of your claims, you must be convinced yourself so that you could convince others, just as in the acting art.

From the moment the consonance is established, the discourse must be exciting, run smoothly, with no babbling, no interruption, without searching one's words through various onomatopoeia, without breachings that might allow for the audience reactions (disapproval, booing).

All these goals are valid for the professional actor's theatrical discourse as well. All those who aspire to improve themselves will study the two Shakespearean scenes that make proof of a brilliant rhetoric: the first is the scene where Mark Anthony displays a philippic against Brutus, concluding every argument with an obsessively favorable remark: "But Brutus is an honest man!" The desired effect is achieved; it attracts the public opprobrium on the opponent. The second scene to be studied as a virtuoso exercise in the application of persuasion is the scene between Richard III-rd and Lady Ann.

I am going to share an interesting experience, lived while rehearsing Richard III-rd with my students. I explained them why this scene is a touchstone for any actor: because the actor playing it must make fierce Lady Ann's giving in to Richard believable, while it's just within a couple of minutes that she has to get from the cursed utmost hatred against Richard, to going to bed with him and accepting the engagement. How to explain this miracle of persuasion that it amazes Richard himself? At the end of the scene, he asks himself: "Have you ever seen a woman conquered like this?" Of course, we analyzed each step that Richard climbs to Lady Ann's stoned heart: first, he invokes her pity, that every good Christian should give evidence of, then he makes her partake in the crime, telling her that her eyes urged him to commit heinous acts, and eventually he gives her the sword, and, uncovering his chest, offers himself to her revenge. Here is a key moment: she gives in because she is unable to kill him. It's a threshold that Richard makes use of in a very refined way, as a subtle connoisseur of feminine psychology. Since she couldn't thrust the sword, she has no chance of survival.

But all these are just theoretical speculations, validated or not, according to the actors'

interpretation. Richard's interpreter must have a special charm that would annul his obvious flaws; he must build his persuasion system on a surprising honesty that no one should suspect in this odious character, not even Lady Ann. And this appearance must be doubled by the concealment of the noblest feelings: compassion, respect, tolerance, and love supreme.

We have established that Lady Ann must give a tragic dimension to the curse, to lead her hatred of Richard to paroxysm, so that the designed stake be almost insurmountable, and Richard surprise her and us, the spectators, from the first moment, by revealing another image than that he was known by.

The students, in their ambition and ardor, discovered an unusual solution. Lady Ann has designed her curse as a ritual. She pulled out of a bag some bones; she arranged them so as to form a cross, made over them the cabalistic gestures and uttered the curse giving it a magic, oracular load. Suddenly, a voice was heard from the bier: "Have mercy, My Lady!", as the dead would have begged her. Lady Ann turned her gaze to the bier, befuddled. Richard, with a sudden gesture, put aside the shroud, revealing himself. Thus Richard, wishing to convince her of his love, entered the shrine of the dead and listened to the curse from therein. What an advantage he has created upon her! When you manage successfully an educational process, you may have the revelation to receive more than you have planted, and this is your mentor's reward.

Let us return to the actor condition that all of us are experimenting during our lifetime, some out of a playful disposition, others from the desire to conceal their feelings, others because of the ambition to overcome their social status, and others – the privileged ones – because they are drama professionals. However, the game has its rules, and seriously practiced, it can bring major rewards, it can ensure a career fulfillment: a teacher, lawyer, politician, businessman, leader and, last but not least, ACTOR.

The pedagogical purpose of he/she who teaches the art of acting is to make people happy. A person reaching the performance of expressing the dominant of his/her own personality is one that has privileged access to that sublime exercise that we might call the practice of happiness.