

STAGE VERSUS SCREEN: ACTING INSIGHTS IN THEATRE

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Abstract

There are varied aspects which make them two fields of fine arts. The main difference between the two Mediums is the art in which the meaning is expressed and conveyed to the audience theater requires strong vocabulary and verbal delivery i.e. voice quality. All acting is fundamentally the same however as an actor you don't have to choose just screen or stage acting but the key differences to acting on stage and on screen is from the way you use gestures and actions to the proximity of the audience.

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There is a close appositeness between the arena of the theater and the cinema. The interaction between them is one of the most significant influences on the cultural expressions of the twentieth century.

The antiquity of the stage falls back to the century B.C. Its evolution to the present times has been a history. The raised platforms above the audience, in past, to keep the characters as universal and impersonal beings and different from the individuals as the audience were, was the trend in those days. But in eighteenth century Shakespeare bridged this gap by reflecting the life of common people on stage. He laid emphasis on the stimulation of emotions and the visual coherence on the stage. Gradually we have reached to the modern theatre where Epic theatre, Absurd theatre and Post-Modern theatre are experimental in nature and they reject the conventions of the past trends.

Cinema plays are comparatively not so ancient. They are an off shoot of the stage plays formed in 1550. In modern times, Screen plays are considered one of the most sophisticated, technically sound form of fine arts, more refined than even the stage. Undoubtedly screen has become the modern extension of the stage.

There are varied aspects which make them two fields of fine arts. The main difference between the two Mediums is the art in which the meaning is expressed and conveyed to the audience theater requires strong vocabulary and verbal delivery i.e. voice quality. Utterances of phrases with the correct pauses, slow or quick oration of dialogues are some of the intricacies which a stage actor has to master. Hence language becomes the major source of meaning in drama.

Physical appearance is less challenging than required in the screen plays. An average looking person with good physique. Vigorous voice and flexible body can play the role of Roomer even at the age of forty with his words on stage and receives the feedback instantly. It is true that cinema portrays true to life images as exist in life but it has to depend on the imagination of the audience. Screen plays can create even the future and fantasy world which is impossible on stage. Leo Braudy, one of the famous film critics says: Films add a sense of mystery inside the character, expression of the face and body which the audience understands very well.

Theater reveals the story naturally as the audience always remains conscious of the actor's impersonation. Stage script provides the audience with an opening into the mind and emotions of the characters. On the contrary, film script is less confining. It can explore the character and the character projected for him but the actor is never identified with the characters as it projects only a part of the personality of the character. This is the reason, that actors are identified by their real names. They play various roles in different films, so the audience never identifies them with the characters they have played. The screen performance remains superior to the script but script is the dominant element, even above the performance on stage. If screen demands the display of visuals and the facial expression, the stage explores disguise. A stage actor is always identified with 'the character he has played on stage. He is rarely known by his real name.

Theater actor memorizes the entire role and puts it on like his costume. He coins the emotional depth and enormity that stage performance demands. A film actor learns his role in parts sometimes even out of the chronological order, he gets into his role on cue. There are continuous takes and retakes till the perfect shot is done which matches with the vision of the director. Too much technique on in films undercut the performance of the actor. Lucidly, the stage acting is still considered superior to screen play. A stage actor has to wrestle with the supremacy of the script. Thematic continuity in stage acting makes it preponderant. It signifies that screen acting can include stage better than the stage can do to screen.

Physical presence of the actor is judged by his gestures on the stage. He has to show his broader gestures so that the audience can comprehend his action even when they sit at the back rows. A stage actor always remains at the centre of the theater. He remains in complete control of his role and in receipt of feedback from the audience.

Both the mediums do use props and setting but everything is magnified on screen. The fade in or fade out scenes are shown by using proper lights on stage but this is in no comparison with Camera work which can do wonders as it can surpass

the time and space. The shots are juxtaposed and emotions are captured through close-ups. Hence camera controls the films and remains at the center of it

Economics plays a major role on screen while the stage requires aesthetics. In films there may be cast of hundreds. It needs a master scene whenever there is shift at the location and in time in which the action takes place. There is a frequent change in sequences, action goes on shifting from one place to other but for theater the cast has to be restricted keeping in view the size of the stage back stage where the actors move about when not in scene and the expense of the costume and make-up. Plays are often written in three acts where usually the first act introduces the protagonist and sets up the conflict. The second act splashed more complications for the main character and by the third act the 'protagonist commits to resolve the problematic issue and finally achieve his target.

Stage directions are based on the actor's physical position when he is facing the audience. In contrast to it, in movies directions are based on exteriors, interiors, off camera and close-ups etc. The duration of the screenplay is about two and half hours and the description of the actors are shown when they appear on screen. Even the ending is different when the movies play end here is Fade-out while curtain falls at the end of the stage play, on theater stories are expressed which happen in real life and in a living environment. Stage work can control the auditor response of the audience the visionary response. Actors, on stage, have to be vigilant; they cannot afford to commit mistakes as there are no replays. They have to maintain their energy level throughout the play. Hitchcock writes, "a good movie could be followed and understood even if the sound portion were turned off, in contrast, a good play one that could be followed fairly easily if you had your eyes closed". In other words there is stress on talking and talking on the stage whereas the same element will get the viewers restless and impatient in a screen play.

Theater deals with an anticipated audience who hear and see the actors live whereas in screen play the viewers are denied the control over the choice of their own attention. They see, hear from already recorded images, voices and music sounds etc. Hence they imagine the inside of the characters and respond to it emotionally though less

The Director is the most prestigious figure on screen as he assembles all the visual images, preside over everything. He visualizes the story line and the actors are not given free hand to perform their roles according to their own will. The in cinema script is rarely published; the audience can acquaint themselves with the script if it is an adaptation of some literary work. Opposite to it, stage script format is comparatively simple and the playwright is expected to mention minute details in his script. One can either choose to read it or watch it.

Michael Caine says, "The act of cinema acting is the exact opposite of stage acting. In the theatre you have to be big and broad and as loud as possible even in the quiet scenes whereas film acting is about standing six feet away from camera in blazing light.

In a short scan, screen has taken over the stage and it has become an international medium. Theater has limited audience so it is still a national one. Many stage directors have jumped from stage to screen and vice-versa. A renowned Hollywood Director Bergman says, "My films are only a distillation of what I do in the theatre. Theatre work is 60%". He considers this vacillation as a 'short step'. Innumerable stage works have been adapted for screen "Revival" is a stage word if another actor plays the same role on the stage while "Remake" is a screen word for the same expression. There are no challenges in 'remarks'. Vishal Bhardwaj's 'Omkaara' is an adaptation of 'Othello' but these two works purely belong to two different worlds and there is no comparison between the two.

Adaptations of stage works are difficult task on screen as one is visual medium and the other is verbal hence largely "metaphoric". Still many intellectuals have attempted this exercise through their own mystic experiences and daring spirits have departed from the original literary work. It is possible to create a brilliant work of art from the original provided it releases the same message.

In short the age old story-telling through language is replaced by pictures and music with wonderful special effects. It is a computer age so the adaptation sometimes gets the audience impatient with the slow actions. The modern sensualities do not accept the static emotions. Best example is finesse Williams "A Street Car Named Desire" which is much criticized for its slow action. But we should not ignore the grace of the theater over the technicalities of the cinema.

In India, much work has been done on the adaptation of literary work. To quote a few, the recent movie 3 Idiots, a box office hit, was an adaptation of Chetan Bhagat's novel 'Five Point Someone'. The most recent release 'Saat Khoon Maaf' is based on Ruskin Bond's famous short story "Susana's Seven Husbands". Vishal Bhardwaj is one name in the Bollywood Industry who dared to attempt Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and "Othello" in his screen adaptation as "Macree" and "Omkaara". "Raavan" is a modern adaptation of our great Indian Epic "Ramayana". This list is endless. Naseerudin Shah a great actor of India who has staged Shakespearean plays many times says, "the roots may look lost but every- big story in Hindi film industry is from Shakespeare".

To conclude, I must say that the stage and the screen are not two distant fields they are merely two different worlds. Modern techniques have already set in where

the cinema shots on video are released in the theatre. Hence screen and stage are surviving along side each other and serve to amalgamate each other.

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