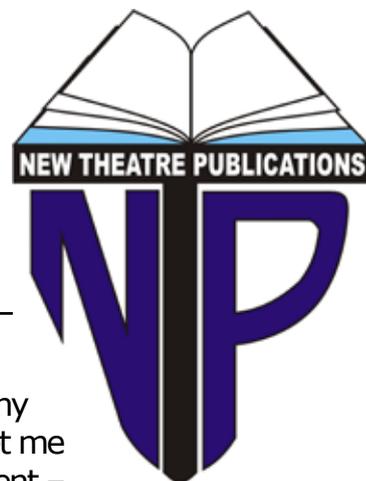


July 2011 Newsletter



Welcome back to the summer 2011 edition of New Theatre Publications Newsletter.

Life has a carefully limited number of Magic Moments for us. These give a much-needed boost to life and can stay with one for decades to follow. One such occurred to me in 1966. I was sound operator at the RSC in Stratford and in the mind-blowing process of coming to the intense realisation that there's a massive amount more to Shakespeare than destructively reading *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Richard II* round the class at school.

In fact Shakespeare became a passion of mine during those 9 to 10 months of sitting nightly through David Warner's *Hamlet*, Ian Holm's *Hal* and *HV*, Ian Richardson's *Chorus*, Trevor Nunn's first production there, *Revenger's Tragedy*, Malcolm McDowell as a spear carrier – to say nothing of Diana Rigg's *Viola*.

Now Diana Rigg, you must understand (especially if you're from a younger generation) was an extremely serious National Sex Icon to us chaps at the time because of her powerful, decisive and overall drop-dead gorgeous portrayal of Emma Peel in *The Avengers* series. Male knees buckled when watching her – THAT's what you call talent!

Well, the magic moment that remains with me still – one that I managed to "dine out on" for several months following – drawing deep envy from other men and a second glance from women who would not normally have given me a first glance – was this: *Diana Rigg called me "Darling"!*

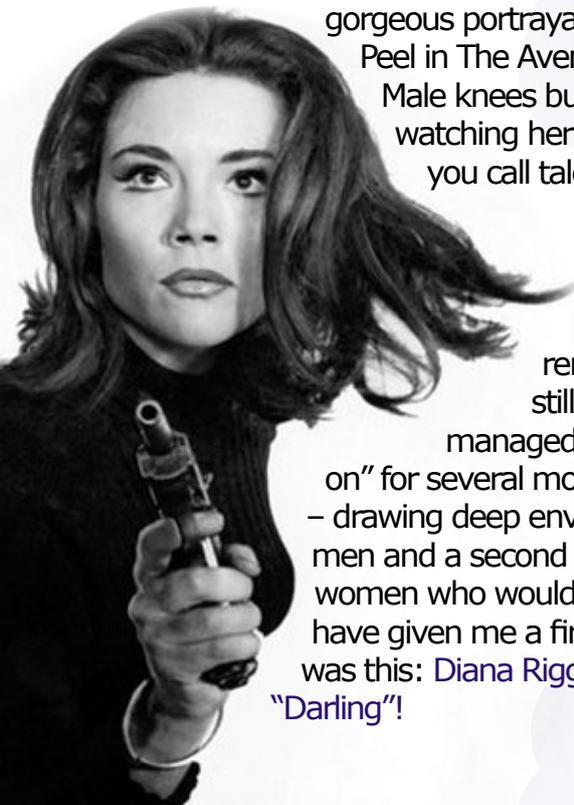
Isn't that just – awesome!! But why? Why did she do this?? Well, let me think about that a moment – meanwhile, on to this issue of the NTP Newsletter – in which we continue our series high-lighting the work and background of some of our more successful playwrights – in the hope of picking up some tips, good practices and encouragement to help improve what we do ourselves. Colin Wilson shares his background and experiences this time round..

Diana Rigg called me "Darling"!

I'm also offering an article, perhaps the first of a few, on aspects of Copyright, an issue of perpetual importance to all of us.

Ian has drawn some very useful information out of one of his reader team on what exactly the team look for when assessing our contributions. This can only help us with our writing. Ian's introduction to this issue looks at the wonderful world of panto, which I know concerns many of you.

Regular slots include my own Michael's Musings contribution, this time developing further a recent interest in Meyerhold, which I can see developing into a future discussion on the myriad and often fraught relationships possible between writer and director. In addition we kick off with Ian's State of the Union address, and will end up with our roundup of latest publications and productions.





From the Desk of Ian Hornby



The world of theatre is a bit quiet at the moment - don't ask me why, it just happens now and again. Maybe theatre groups have set their programme for next season and are having the summer off. If only we could predict these peaks and troughs.

So I turn my eye on the pantomime season again. We're really up against the amateurs here - a great percentage of theatre groups write their own, and some aren't that bad either. That's because they know the locality and they know the locals, so anything topical can be added with ease. Whereas the likes of you or I might add a line like "Go and see <local celebrity> at the <local lap-dancing club>," and expect the performing group to fill in the gaps, the self-pen brigade can answer their own questions.

When writing a panto, pick your subject carefully. The likes of Samuel French will no longer accept a Cinderella or a Robin Hood - they have plenty on their books already, so to stand a chance with them you need something original. We at NTP don't feel that way at all. We believe that people have certain expectations when they go to see a panto. A trite example would be that you can't get to the end of Cinderella and have the glass slipper not fit. The audience already knows it's going to fit, and I guarantee they'll feel cheated if it doesn't. But I'd also argue that a situation where "Drama Group A presents the pantomime Dick Whittington" and "Drama Group B presents the pantomime My Mother Lives in a Greenhouse" it's a fair bet the crowds will flock to see A and largely ignore B. Why? Because they know the story. They know good will triumph over evil and that their kids will cheer the heroes and jeer the villains. They know Cinders' slipper will fit.

And they know they'll have a laugh and a sing-song and maybe some sweets and an ice cream. It's a whole community feel-good thing.

So, as far as NTP is concerned, stick to tradition. That's not to say you can't update. I offer as an example my own dubious outpouring. I've got a Cinderella (the most popular pantomime ever - Cinders, not mine!) And I've got a Robin Hood. I also did one called Abanazar's Revenge that has a whole collection of traditional characters but - faced with trying to give a final outing for members of a youth group I ran, before they disappeared off into higher education - we have Aladdin, Dick Whittington, Prince Charming, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and Princess Balroubadour pitting their wits against Abanazar and the Evil Queen, with a dame and a couple of genies thrown into the pot.

All traditional characters with a well-trodden basic storyline (Aladdin) but with many new twists.

*"It's a whole
feel good thing.."*

Where was I? Oh yes, my latest. I decided to do an Aladdin (the second most popular panto) but to throw in a series of gags about computers and modern technology. For example, when they want to escape from the cave they use the escape key. Geddit? And

when they can't get into the palace they use...? I'll let you guess. Kids are encouraged at the outset to jeer and cheer every computer reference. To marry the old and the new together I've picked the title Aladdin dot com.

I dislike writing pantos, basically because there's only one story - boy meets girl, love at first sight, villain spoils the party, goodies solve the problem, villain vanquished, wedding/finale.

We then populate it with different characters, and even some of those are "stock". In a non-panto we'd be saying you need to come up with originality, but that's only partly true with pantos. I have a checklist of what's in every panto:



- Principal boy - a leggy girl in a tunic (but everyone - apart from the kids - knows it's a girl)
- "Dame" an older, probably ugly/overweight man dressed as a woman (not as a drag artist - everyone - apart from the kids - knows it's a man)
- An "evil" villain with an evil laugh and plenty of dastardly plans
- Love interest for the Principal Boy - syrupy-sweet "princess" or similar
- Jokes that make you groan
- Topical and/or local gags/content
- Fool(s) - as in comic cops, guards, etc.
- Fool/hero, as in Wishee-Washee (Aladdin), Buttons (Cinderella) and so on.
- Slapstick/food fights, etc.
- Monster/ghost
- Singalong songs
- Finale/wedding scene and walkdown
- Audience feedback ("oh, yes it is/oh, no it's not") and/or participation
- Children (they're OK, but I couldn't eat a whole one)

Did I miss any?

These can be so formulaic you could use the above list to have a good go at writing one. But would it be any good? Probably not, because you need to add that spark, that something that makes you a creative writer.

Oh yes, you do!





The minefield known as Copyright is of enormous importance to writers, and there are many aspects to it. I'm proposing to include a number of articles on this issue in forthcoming editions of the Newsletter. Do let me know if there are particular concerns you have and I will see if I can find something that will address it.

Email Anti-Theft: The Battle Against Copyright Infringement

by Mila Levkovsky

Imitation is not always the highest form of flattery. Any creative individual will cringe at seeing his or her work displayed with another person's name in the credits. In the fast-paced field of graphic art, design the dilemma is even more prominent. Artists in all mediums are seeing their work knocked-off by less talented people.

Ideas are easy enough to steal when the advertisement you designed is circulated in an online publication, or when a popular web site features the logo you spent hours to perfect. While digital theft is most prevalent in the recording and visual arts, it permeates all creative realms. For writers, protecting words published on web sites and in emails remains a challenge.

Digital files and Copyright law

Since its inception in 1790, the Copyright law has undergone numerous amendments in order to adapt to the changing technologies. With one goal in mind, to protect the creator's original work, the law still struggles to guard the efforts of writers, photographers, graphic designers and other creative individuals. The advent of the internet and electronic mail has made protecting original material from theft an even more daunting task. In the digital world, stealing someone else's work is as easy as hitting "file, save" or using that handy right-click button on your mouse.

Though the Copyright law legally protects an author's original work, internet criminals still easily get away with theft of original content. Over the years, solutions have been innovated and adapted in order to provide protection for creative professionals in the realms of Internet

and electronic mail.

Preventing unintended content theft and distribution

Discouraging and disabling theft of original work is vital for a writer's or a designer's success. In an effort to put a stop to copyright infringement, designers, writers and developers have devised several ways to help protect their creative efforts.

Though some methods might be industry specific, others can be layered for added protection. Because the copyright law can be easily ignored or bypassed, staying up to date on the latest ways to ward off thieves can be vital not only to your online presence, but also to your career.

Watermarks offer basic protection for visual art

Whether you are featuring graphics or photos on a web site or sending images through email, the potential for theft in such a situation is high. Virtually any visitor has the ability to save your artwork to his or her hard drive and distribute it freely thereafter. Some creative professionals have found watermarks to be a viable solution to prevent pilfering of their work. A semi-transparent logo or sign featuring the copyright holders' name or business clearly marks the digital property as his/her own.

This technique, though fairly simple, can be rather effective in deterring many pesky copy-cats (1). A graphic with a watermark is virtually useless to a thief, making the theft blatantly obvious. Watermarks, however, don't come with a theft prevention guarantee. Those who possess advanced image editing skills and some

time on their hands can succeed in removing or minimizing the appearance of the watermark.

Digital watermarks: an invisible layer of defense for writers

Due to the nature of written content and files, authors of written work must look to more innovative approaches at keeping their work protected for copy-cats. Digital watermarks provide this sort of invisible defense.

Printed documents often have watermarks that are invisible at first glance, but become detectable when the paper is held up to light. Digital watermarks work in a similar fashion, providing a more discrete alternative to watermarking graphics and documents.

This type of watermarking is especially useful for writers, since it is the only way to add a watermarked layer of protection to word documents (2). Some digital watermarking software allows the creator to "fingerprint" their work, which can track distribution of the secured files.

Preventing unauthorized email distribution

There is a great demand for email communications for creative professionals. Sending portfolios, artwork samples and design ideas are common when working with new and established clients. But by sending your work without email anti-theft protection, you are leaving it virtually defenseless to copyright infringement.

Anti-theft software prevents the recipient from altering and distributing content beyond the original creator's intent. In addition to disabling copy and edit functions, email anti-theft software allows the author to set the expiration time for a file, as well as disallow printing. Writers can rest assured that the story sample sent to a prospective publisher won't be forwarded to another author. Graphic designers can send high quality mock-ups to clients without the fear of another contractor working off of the original design.

An email anti-theft application can provide peace of mind that your artwork or written piece will be armed against theft even when it leaves

your computer. Conquering unintended content distribution via email is winning half the battle in the digital world; for writers it is an essential solution to preventing thievery since words cannot be easily marked like images. With digital watermarks, email anti-theft provides an added, dependable layer of protection.

Combined technologies for ultimate protection

For writers, photographers and designers alike, realizing the power of publishing their work on the internet means getting added exposure and ultimately attracting new clientele. Though copyright protection legally exists, much of the time this law is difficult to enforce in a highly interactive medium like the Internet; a photographer's images can be displayed on another site without him or her ever finding out.

Taking advantage of watermarking protection and email anti-theft software can take the headache out of preventing misuse and distribution of original content. So create that watermark for your original photos, employ digital watermarking technology to track distribution of your files around the internet and utilize email anti-theft software when sending creative projects to potential and existing clients.

End Notes:

- 1.) For help on adding watermarks to images in Adobe Photoshop, visit Sue Chastain's tutorial How to add a text watermark over a photo in Photoshop 5.5 or higher: <http://graphicssoft.about.com/cs/photoshop/ht/apswatermark.htm>
- 2.) More information about digital watermarking options can be found in Doug Isenberg's Digital Watermarks: New Tools for Copyright Owners and Webmasters: <http://www.webreference.com/content/watermarks/>

About the Author

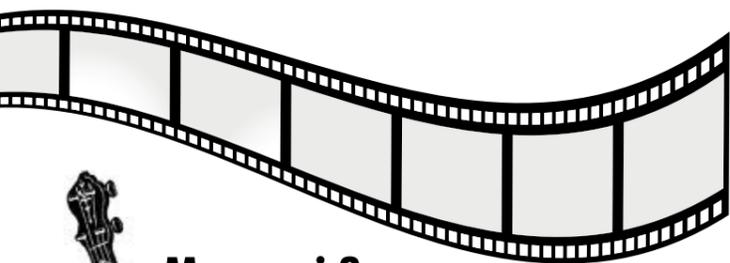
Mila Levkovsky is part of the marketing team at Essential Security Software (ESS), the leading provider of email anti-theft software for small business. ESS has developed a premier content protection and user rights management solution that enables small business owners and individuals to securely distribute sensitive email messages.

Now for the next in our series highlighting NTP members, who have a significant success in terms of publications and productions achieved. I find myself becoming increasingly impressed and respectful of the wide range of experience, talent and background stories of the NTP writers I have so far met as part of this series. This time round, in response to a series of generalised prompts from me, playwright Colin Wilson had the following information and insights to give Newsletter readers:

The Writer In Writing *by Colin Wilson*

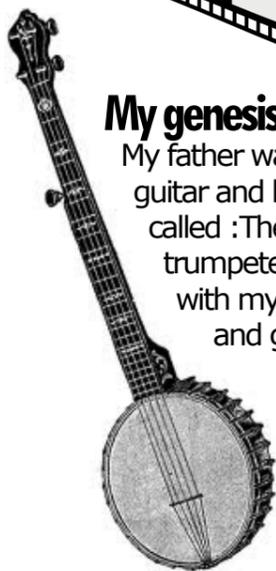
My roots?

These lie in films as I started off trying to become a film actor with J. Arthur Rank. I met actor Christopher Lee when he was living in Brighton many moons ago and he pulled strings to get me into Rank.



My genesis?

My father was a musician. He played guitar and banjo and had his own band called :The Melody Makers. American trumpeter, Grisha Farfel, first played with my father before leaving to fame and glory with Billy Cotton.



My father encouraged me to become an "artist". I was always acting on stage when at school and writing. I was told by an English teacher that my descriptions in essays were average but my plots and especially my dialogue was "outstanding". He convinced me to become a playwright.

Any Baggage as a writer?

Marrying and doing a job I hated - quantity surveying - to make ends meet. Learning to act and write paid no bills. Early concerns included at first writing plays no one read nor performed. Now I enjoy writing for itself. If no one reads it, I still get satisfaction that I have written from start

to conclusion and performed all the parts in my mind. That is my reward.

My career?

Quantity surveying, management, building. I am a Chartered Builder and Chartered Manager. When I relocated from Sussex, England to the Cayman Islands I started my own building consultancy "JEC Building Consultants". I sold it after eleven years to start a TV station in 1992 "CITN-Cayman 27". I sold it in 2006 and commenced writing full time as both a playwright and a screenplay writer. I have now at the age of 68 started a five day a week newspaper print and online called iNews Cayman designed to fit on the Apple iPad.



My skills?

Writing dialogue and character building. I enjoy keeping the audience guessing and taking them into different directions. I write many genres - drama - modern and historical - thrillers and comedies including a musical with some musician friends. Also adaptations for the screen and stage of other people's works. I enjoy research but I hate editing and rewriting although I know it is essential.

I won the CNCF Award for the Best Play in 2005 for an original play based on a real life Caymanian who was my wife's father. It was called "Walter's War" and it has been televised ever since for Remembrance Day as it told the story of a distinguished family through the eyes of the youngest daughter (aged twelve) in one of

the second World War years around Christmas.

It has been published by NTP under the title "Walter's War" and transformed to an island off Scotland. I am heavily involved in the Cayman National festival called Pirates Week, and have written, staged and directed the landing Scenario watched by ten thousand spectators for over 25 years. I instigated, wrote, staged and acted in "The Trial of the Pirates" for nearly 30 years - a spoof, politically satirized, mock comedy trial at the end of Pirates week.

My Interests?

Writing (I belong to a writers circle that has improved my story writing and poetry skills), theatre, films and especially music. Music all genres including now rap that I once hated. I love especially country and celtic music followed by the popular classical pieces. My favourite singers are Sarah Brightman, Don Williams and Lisa Carlisle. The latter I have had the pleasure of meeting and bringing to the Cayman Islands two years in a row where she is very popular. Both concerts here this year were sold out in a few days. I have staged her appearances in Cayman on three occasions now. If you have not heard this lady you should - she is sensational. She appeared in Manchester at the beginning of May and undoubtedly has future gigs booked elsewhere.

I first started adapting Sexton Blake novels and the Dr Fu Manchu (Sax Rohmer) stories into plays when at school. Then I wrote a play based on the Nativity that was staged at School. My first full length original play was called "Girl in a Wheelchair" - a thriller, staged in Cayman and fifteen years later restaged under a new title "Cry in the Night" and abridged. It has been published by NTP. I have been involved all my adult life as an actor, a director, producer, stage manager, and sound engineer in the world of theatre in addition to writing.

My Future?

I am driven to continue writing because my mind buzzes with plots from witnessing events on the news and in real life. Reading history and listening to song lyrics sets my mind racing with ideas I have to get down on paper. I have three unfinished works on the go at the moment. One

screenplay and two stage-plays. I cannot foresee the day I will run out of steam. Although I have only six published plays to my credit I have written many, many more.

Any Tips?

Keep writing. Join a circle of writers. Listen to the criticisms. Always get a group of people together to do a read through of your plays. Read lots of plays. Known and unknown. Being a writer it irks me to see the same "old" plays being continually performed at the expense of new ones. There is room for both. Whilst I watch a lot of television and films there is nothing like live theatre.

Marketing is something I am very poor at. I am hiring someone to market my plays as I am hopeless at it myself. You HAVE to do it. You might have written the greatest play ever. If no one knows it is lost for all.

My top ten favourites?

This is so difficult. I have LOTS. I list ten but they are not necessarily my only top ten and in no particular order.

- "O Mio Babino Caro" - Puccini, sung by Lisa Carlisle
- "Jinnah" - movie about the life of Muhammad Ali Jinnah starring Christopher Lee
- "Dracula" - by Bram Stoker
- "Death of a Salesman" - stage play by Arthur Miller
- "The Story of Judith" - from the Apocrypha. A MUST read even if you are not religious.
- "The Words I Love You" - song written and sung by Chris de Burgh
- "Time to Say Goodbye" - sung by Sarah Brightman & Andrea Bocelli
- "Dream Lover" - stage play by Ian Homby (because it was the very first play by Ian I directed and he said it was his least popular!)
- "The Winslow Boy" - play by Terence Rattigan
- "Jane Eyre" - by Charlotte Bronte

I hope that will do.

Colin Wilson

(Ed: It will do very nicely Colin, many thanks!)

What do NTP readers look for?

by A Reader (Anon)

Ian has asked me to have a go at saying what we look for when assessing a play, so here goes. Now I've made mention of a few things about consistency, but there are times when plots and dialogue and actions are not consistent. That's fine if it's deliberate, but when it's accidental it shows the writer hasn't checked the work properly.



Presentation

First of all it has to be easy to read. Plain and simple fonts and good layout don't tell us anything about the quality of theatre but can tell us a lot about the writer, such as how much care they've taken over putting it together. If it looks neat it's easy to read. There's nothing worse than trying to get a good feeling about a play if it makes you tired to read it.

Similarly spelling and grammar is important. At best it's irritating to see spelling and punctuation errors all over the script. Again it doesn't affect the quality of the theatre, but it makes us wonder how much care has been taken over the play itself if the author can't be bothered to check it and get it right, especially when today's computers help you so much.

Plot

Mistakes in the plot can't often be forgiven. If one of the characters says something or does something that's said or done differently somewhere else, it hasn't been checked well enough, unless it's a deliberate plot point. But more important is consistency. Characters will change as and when a play's being written, so a writer has to go back once they think it's finished and make sure the plot and characters are consistent. For example, if one character suddenly has a violent outburst late in the play which is completely out of character, the author has to go back and see if there should be any underlying suppressed violence earlier on.

Whatever you do, don't pad - we can spot it a mile away. If your play's too long, prune it. If it's too short, think of it like pastry - if you stretch it then it will be thin and fragile - stretch it too far and you'll be able to see the holes. If you want to make it bigger, then add more. More in terms of depth and width - the length will then happen on its own.

Don't be happy with just one plot theme. If you were writing a kidnap play for example, and there's not enough in the kidnap to fill the length, what about exploring the attitudes of the police or the neighbours and friends? This would be parallel plotting but adds a lot to the body.

Dialogue

Again it needs to be consistent and of the

time. If someone speaks in proper English at the start, they should speak the same way throughout, unless there's some deliberate reason not to. Spoken lines need to be real language too, and that's not always proper English. People usually say 'can't' and 'won't' in conversations, not 'can not' or 'will not' which sounds stilted.

Market

New Theatre Publications sits in a few identified markets, such as amateur dramatic societies, festivals, towns women's guilds, farmers and so on. They mostly have different requirements and we always look to see if the author has produced something suitable for those markets. Festivals tend to want challenging and thought provoking one act plays. Amateur Dramatic usually wants full length plays, with comedies being more popular than straight plays.

Cast

We have to assess whether the play can be cast easily. I know NTP has published lots in previous newsletters about making casts flexible and not being too fussy about people's ages and appearance, and I have to agree. If a play is good it drags the reader into its plot and we can see the action taking place in our minds. We like to form our own personal images of what the characters look like and their accents and so on. Directors will want to do the same, so make it all as flexible as you can.

Set

Again, be flexible. If we see a set that is too complex, or perhaps there are lots of set changes, it will affect our decision because we know theatre companies either can't afford them, don't have the

capabilities to make and move them or won't want to be bothered. Same with props. And lighting and effects.

USP (Unique Selling Point)

This is a marketing term and means you have something different. If you don't, why should people want to perform your plays? It doesn't have to be a plot point - it could be a characterisation or a setting. The worst thing a reader can feel is "I've seen all this before", particularly when we can't quite remember where. The best plays are when we say "that's new, I've not seen that before."

Edit and Review



How many times have we said don't get spouses or friends to give their opinions. They know you too well and will be polite and tell you it's great. Better to get someone who doesn't know you at all to take a look. Try the local drama group or writers' circle and stress you want honesty. Never send in a play which has not been reviewed beforehand. You're wasting our time and your own.

Best of luck.

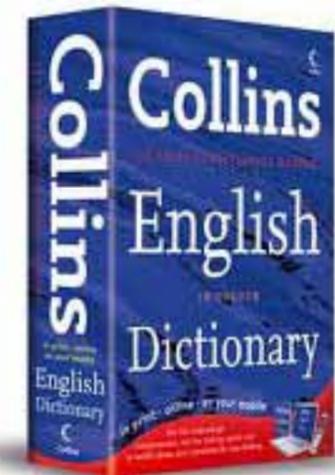
Michael's Musings

Meyerhold – on Directing and Acting (Part 2)



(Meyerhold came into his own as a Theatre Director in the early 20th century, rebelling against the “stultifying naturalism” of Stanislavski and his forebears. Expressionism, symbolism, constructivism were some of the ways in which the essence, poetry, deeper meaning of drama could be rediscovered – Meyerhold being only one of a number of directors trying to expand the new theatre arts into greater social power and meaning. His career was greatly boosted by the Russian revolution and its demands for new forms, new audiences, new meanings. In the 30s however, revolutionary innovation gave way to Socialist Realism and Meyerhold ended up charged with the sin of Formalism and his brave attempts at creative defiance saw him end up dying in an interment camp in 1942. However the death of Stalin did lead to Meyerhold’s official reinstatement in 1952.)

You may remember that last time round I summarised Meyerhold’s two models for cooperative art such as theatre, and went on to find myself largely in agreement with him in my own approach to directing plays. In this follow-up article, I want to diverge a little on to a fascinating topic that Meyerhold refers to as Plasticity. At first I thought this had something to do with the 3D sculptural creative art I sometimes applied myself to as a child – and to a degree there is a conceptual link in the word.



Plasticity is one of those words for me that one comes across from time to time and never really knows what it means! “The quality or state of being plastic” says my dictionary – big deal! Or “the quality of being displaced within a molecular sphere

of action”. OK, by deduction from its context within the writings of Vsevolod Meyerhold, it comes to refer to the gestural element of acting, the movements made by the body of the actor to accompany his speech. There seem to be two ways in which an actor can employ plasticity:

- gestures that correspond to the words and their pronunciation (Meyerhold uses Salvini in Hamlet or Othello as an example of such an approach to gestures)
- and plasticity that exists “aside from words”.

This is where it gets interesting!

“Two men are holding a conversation about the weather, about art, or about apartments. A third bystander observing them, if he is more or less sensitive, can decide quite accurately who these men are – friends, enemies or lovers – from their conversation about subjects which do not reveal their personal relationships. From the way these two conversing men move their hands, take certain poses, lower their eyes, an observer can decipher their relationship, because in talking about the weather or art these two men use gestures which do not necessarily explain their words.”

Meyerhold claims, perhaps rightly, that this is part of the director’s task. The director, of course, needs to be sensitive and to hear the inner music of the playwright. He follows “the dictates of the author” and is “absorbed in the author’s theme” – and “he will propose to the actors plastic movements which will enable the spectator to hear this inner music”.

Playwrights have always had to walk a knife-edge when putting their vision down on paper. Some schools of thought get extremely uptight at the idea of playwrights spelling things out in any detail, claiming this is strictly the director’s job and the playwright shouldn’t interfere. It is true

that it can be extremely irritating to a director to have very specific acting instructions spelled out in a script which don’t necessarily amount to the substance of this inner vision. All too often, such instructions comprise the external detail of the play’s first production. This may have been bigger budget and better resourced than those that follow, and subsequent productions can fall flat on their face vainly trying to follow these detailed but inappropriate instructions.



Such directors believe, quite rightly in my book, that actors will find different and personal ways to capture the playwright’s inner vision exactly, ways that are much more in tune with what they themselves bring to their parts with their own very specific interpretation, while still remaining in overall tune with the actual resources supporting the production.

Different editions and translations of the classics will vary in the level of detail presented. Chekhov dialogue is often considered the tip of the iceberg only, and his succinct acting instructions certainly don’t take away the director’s need to hear the inner music lurking beneath the waters. Someone once said that a Chekhov character says one thing, means another thing, feels a third thing and is thinking a fourth thing!

“Gestures, postures, glances and silences depict the truthful relationship among people.

“Words do not tell the whole story.”

A pattern of movement is needed on the stage which will force the spectator into the position of being a keen observer... Words are for hearing, movement for seeing. In this manner the spectator’s imagination is aroused by two sensations”. This means that the spectator is more involved as a result – and this increased

involvement is to me a sure sign of a better quality play, and indeed production.

Another interesting aspect to plasticity on stage refers to the whole art and science of body language. There are some very interesting books on this subject and it is a huge topic. Basically we do betray our feelings by the way we present our bodies to other people. Most of us are not in control of the detail we present, and fortunately for us, not many people are that expert at reading the signs we present and “seeing through us”. I certainly believe a director should be up on this body language, at least the basics as they apply to a character’s responses to other people. Actors too, of course, though a good actor should be able to tune into his own instinctual sub-conscious body language adapting it to the character he plays.

Playwrights – and especially screenwriters – can find themselves in a very strange position. They create the whole world of the play and the people who inhabit it, and then find themselves systematically excluded from the act of its staging



Michael's Musings

Meyerhold – on Directing and Acting (Part 2)

continued...

But where does the playwright stand on this? To what extent, if at all, do we indicate conflict in a character between verbal and physical delivery? Without being accused of doing the director's job for him! I propose to develop this relationship between the two roles in a future issue.

For now, let me end with two stories. Playwrights – and especially screenwriters – can find themselves in a very strange position. They create the whole world of the play and the people who inhabit it, and then find themselves systematically excluded from the act of its staging. Their presence, when grudgingly permitted, is an embarrassment.

Just sometimes this is valid. As a director of a first-time play from a new author, I was aware of the fact that the lines were over-written and stilted, but the rehearsal schedule was far too tight to do anything about it. What I didn't realise was just how hard this would make them be to learn. Actors need psychologically to be free to get angry with themselves in order to get on top of such lines. Our lead actor was having an unaccustomed hard time with this new playwright's lines, and started jumping up and down angrily in mid rehearsals, saying something like "How the f*** can I learn c*** like this!!". There was a sudden loud crash from the gods, a groan, rushing feet and a door slam. The author had snuck in, completely unannounced, to see how things were going! When I caught up with him on the opening night, he was pale and withdrawn, in spite of my congratulations to him for an entertaining play!



On the other hand, the famous and talented Jack Rosenthal related an experience when he was present during rehearsals of a TV play of his, and found himself standing – totally ignored - between director and actor, while one of these said to the other "I think what the author means here is..." and the other contradicted this with, "No, no, don't you think he means...". Jack Rosenthal didn't dare to say,

"I'm right here, and I can tell you exactly what I mean"

– and his anxious hopping from foot to foot went completely unnoticed!

Ah well – in the next life, playwrights will have it perfect! And thank-you Vsevelod for your fascinating insights!

About the Author

Michael is the brother of Peter who can have his slot this time: "I hate Martin Amis et Al" by Peter Barry - "Dark and troubling, distressingly funny. It is one of the best debut novels I've read - a massive talent. Exciting, original and dangerous" Now major attention in The Australian: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/rejection-slips-trigger-a-killer-reaction/story-e6frg8nf-1226049227799> exposes this massive talent on a global scale.

Some recent productions...

The Road Hill House Murder	(David Morrison)	Stafford
Robin Hood	(Ian Hornby)	Kefalonia, Greece
Conference Pairs	(Ian Hornby)	Swansea
A Hint Of Old World Charm	(Michael Park)	Vacaville, California
Hello, Is There Any Body There?	(Ian Hornby)	Rockingham, Perth, Australia
Calling Time	(Derek Webb)	Swansea
Amazing Grace	(Rena Pope)	Chandlers Ford
Lord Arthur Savile's Crime	(Chris Pitt)	Brighton
God Bless America	(Geoff Buckingham)	Singapore
Bum Deal	(Paul Beard)	Stockport, Cheshire
Fairway to Heaven	(Diana Raffle)	Rye, East Sussex
Dish of the Day	(Christine Woodhead)	Romford
The Worst Day of My Life	(Alan Richardson)	Catworth, Cambridgeshire
The Worst Day of My Life	(Alan Richardson)	Beaconsfield
Alter Ego	(Tom Casling)	Durham
Three Short Plays	(Geoff Saunders)	Harlow
Abanazar's Revenge	(Ian Hornby)	Leatherhead
Situation Vacant	(Ian Hornby)	Tipperary
Jack	(Peter Bridges)	Erdington, Birmingham
Off Work III	(David Titchener)	Erdington, Birmingham
Three Short Comedies II	(David Withey)	Alnwick

Recent publications:

Now That I've Found You	John Stuart
Whatever	John Stuart
Like Lego Bricks	Colin McBain
Things Aren't Always What They Seem	Sylvia Ann Jenkins
Alter Ego	Tom Casling
Tipp the Taxi Driver	Tom Casling
Calling Time	Derek Webb
The Arrival of Dead Dick's Box	Maxine Smith
The Hex Factor	Ian Hornby
Midsummer Madness	Jeffrey A Lee
A Gladiator in the House	John Waterhouse
Business is Business	Mike White
Jaffa Cakes	Paul Francis
Walking on Water	Kara May
Claude is in the Garden	Maxine Smith



Reminders!

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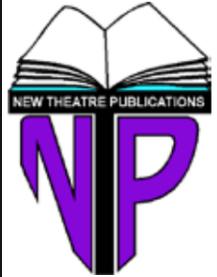
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Finale

Oh yes, Someone asked why?? Why on earth should a highly talented NSI like Diana Rigg want to call humble little me "Darling"? I'd better explain I suppose.

ASMs had a multitude of added-value tasks to do at the RSC – for example taking parties of 60 Japanese tourists on a backstage tour after the show (funnily enough, the point at which I began to lose my fear of speaking in public!). Another task was dealing with the company backstage phone.

The Green Room was massive, probably taking 50 or more at a time – eating, drinking coffee, learning lines, chattering, playing bridge (I got roped in – out of desperation - theirs! – to make up a fourth with Michael Jayston, Ian Richardson and Godfrey Quigley on occasion).

I answered the phone in passing one day – then following through, placed myself in the open doorway of the Green Room and practiced my stentorian ASM's voice: "Phone call for Miss Rigg". A voice from the far distance floated back to me over the hub-bub: "Thank-you darling".

That's why! As I say, a memory to be treasured!

Curtain.

That's all for now. Happy - and regular - writing!

Michael

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“... I answered the phone in passing one day – then following through, placed myself in the open doorway of the Green Room...”

