

Contents

Acknowledgments	x
About the Author	xi
Nous Pathetikos	1
Why do you want to be an actor?	2

Part I Hits

1 Auditorium X	5
Double stalemate	6
Turning point, peripeteia	10
Turn around	12
i, mine	14
2 Speculations	15
Actors' fears	16
Crying	18
Child's play	22
Exposed	23
With-out me	30
3 Black Out	34
First time at the theater	35

Part II Experts in Being?

4 The Actor: A Creature of Fable	41
Why do you want to be an actor?	42
5 The Causa Corpora	48
The kiss of Olympia	49

	Machine against man	50
	The actor's trump card	52
6	The Gift of Acting	58
	Skipping	59
	Prejudice	61
	Subject-based thinking versus stage experience	64
	Master and servant	67
	Bodies on stage	74
	Innocence of becoming	76
	Language and speaking	79
	Digesting speech	81
	Counterwords	83
	The Other, the others	84
	Affect versus thought	87
	Thinking and acting	91
	Repetition	93
7	The Gift of Death	103
	Tu es mort	104
	Theater as a symbolic death	105
	Point of no return	109
	Felicity – a salto mortale	111
	Our friend Touchstone	115
8	Finale and Punctum	119
	Why do you want to be an actor?	120

Acknowledgments

Special thanks are due to the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) for generously funding the translation of this book, which was originally written as part of the FWF research project “Generating Bodies. Corporeal Performance” (TRP 12-G21/2010–2013). I am currently undertaking research within the framework of the follow-up PEEK project, “Artist Philosophers – Philosophy as Arts-Based-Research” (AR 275-G21/2014–2017). I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the philosopher Arno Böhler, the instigator and director of both these FWF research projects.

My heartfelt thanks go to Laura Radosh, who, with careful attentiveness to the polyphonic layers of my book, has provided an English translation with a skill and sensitivity that do justice to the various philosophic and artistic references at play. This was surely no small feat. The translation was commissioned and supervised throughout by Alice Lagaay, without whom this book would not be available to English readers now. Alice’s philosophic and multilingual competence, her dedication, and the infectious enthusiasm of her spirit made working on this project a real pleasure, for which I am immensely grateful to her.

About the Author

Susanne Valerie Granzer. Professor and actress. Starring roles at National State Theatres in Europe (Vienna, Basel, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, and Berlin). Parallel to her professional work as an actress, she studied Philosophy at the Goethe-University Frankfurt and the University of Vienna and received her PhD in 1995. In 1988, she received a call for a full professorship in the central artistic subject “Acting” at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, Max Reinhardt Seminar. Together with the Austrian philosopher Arno Boehler, she founded in 1997 the Viennese art factory GRENZ-film and in 2005 the philosophy festival “Philosophy on Stage” based on their artistic research. Website: <http://personal.mdw.ac.at/granzer/wp/>.

OPEN

Nous Pathetikos

Abstract: *Actors and the Art of Performance opens with a cascade of contradictory motives for becoming an actor. These motives converge in the particular fascination of theater, in which ethics are realized in the aesthetic.*

Valerie, Susanne. *Actors and the Art of Performance: Under Exposure*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
DOI: 10.1057/9781137596345.0004.



Why do you want to be an actor?

This is a played-out, bland question, overused and much abused, a colorless, powerless, boring question of no worth. It is heard too often, posed too often, answered too often. Full of inescapable, preprogrammed clichés, not even productive stuttering provides a way out. It is a question best left unasked. Such is the crux of the matter.

Or is it not an indispensable, essential, exciting question? Is it not a question that begs to be asked again and again, a disturbing, disquieting question, one that turns up the heat, knows no answer and has many answers, none of which suffice, and yet which despite it all, naive or not, embarrassing or not, promising or not, sprout up like polyphonous weeds.

Why? For the love of playing the play. Because it is fun. Because it is thrilling, or for the love of the spectacle, for the love of mimicry, out of obsession. Because it just took hold of me. Out of curiosity. To play great roles, leading roles: Hamlet, Don Carlos, Antigone, Lady Bracknell. Not Emilia, but evil Iago, and then perhaps demented King Lear. Or Joan of Arc? Oh, definitely, and then wild Medea. To play the entire canon of the classics and, of course, what is in vogue now too. To be famous, to become a star. To change the world, not just interpret it. To give people something out of a passion for fantasy, for the imaginary, for imagination. For the love of abundance. For the love of lies, not those that make your nose grow longer, but the ones that play with truth. Out of a fascination for masquerade, a fascination for transformation, both of which are irresistible. To be someone else, to create another being, to be many. For it all never to end. To be free. To fly. Openness immemorial. Openness without ideologies or theologies, openness as possibility – as the vacant space within us, kept open not out of destructiveness, but as a form of affirmation.

“To make believe,” was the answer given by Kate Falk from the New York Wooster Group, when asked why she acts in the theater.¹

¹ “Theater morgen, Gespräche über die Kunst im Global Village.” *Treffpunkt Kultur* ORE. Production: GRENZ-film (production team Arno Böhler and Susanne Granzer), ORE, 1998. All translations by Laura Radosh unless stated otherwise.

Why? To remain true to that which disconcerts, to not become jaded. To not grovel, not conform. To keep your eye on the prize, even if it is blinding. No boorish posing whatever the form – neither the dramatic, nor the postdramatic kind. No getting all worked up about what you always knew. No matter how old or how young you are, not to adhere to any rules that cannot be thrown overboard. To hold disdain for conventionalists and conformists, whether their comfort zone is on the right or on the left, and to hold disdain for the poison of resentment and for every self-appointed lord, no matter what his kingdom. To maintain a deep-seated aversion to standardized utilitarianism. To resist ogling the acceptable. To oppose the dictatorship of the highest possible number. To be different and live differently. To maximize, not minimize, risk. To stand against the times, to be untimely, whatever that might mean. And above all to be neither a hamster in a wheel nor an administrator of being, nor a careerist, nor a singer of the swan song of a late culture.

Maybe to become a fabled creature of truth?

Calm down. Get a grip on yourself.

Why?

As G.W.F. Hegel says in the famous preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “The True is... the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk.”²

² G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27.



Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/version4>