

## ACTING IN FILM

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Acting is the art of creating a character in the film medium. The person who fulfills this aspect of film production is the actor. The actor and the film character are separate; in performance, however, the two merge and are perceived by the viewer as one.

The performance of actors is judged by their ability to effectively portray a given character. Thus, good actors make the audience believe in the characters they portray through the creative use of voice, facial and body movements, gestures, and the manner in which they relate to other characters. Acting requires both instinct and intelligence. Instinct is important for the actor to give a unique interpretation to what is demanded by the role. More important is the intelligence to be able to understand and bring humanity to the character he is portraying.

The actor is generally dependent on the director for guidance. Although film has many techniques for masking incompetence or errors in acting, or enhancing the performance (such as editing, camera movement, composition, and others), acting ability, nonetheless, is essential if the actor wishes to be truly successful. In musicals and action films, singing talent and skills in martial arts, respectively, may also be necessary.

According to generally acceptable standards, there are four factors to a screen actor's performance. The **physical dynamics** of a character refers to the actor's physique, movements, physical features, and personality traits that can be used to help the actor delineate a character. The **inner spirit** of the character refers to the actor's ability to reveal subtle emotions and shadings of a character. The **cinematic control** of the character refers to the proper use of the film medium or the actor's ability to create a character without resorting to overplaying or underplaying. The **truth of the character** refers to the effective revelation of character. Filipino actors, it is widely believed, are intuitive and sensitive performers. Though seriously handicapped by the lack of professional training, these actors often rely on their own skills to enable them to project ideas and emotions effectively, demonstrating a wide range of talent in the process. A remarkable number of able performers from every generation of screen professionals have achieved eminence through their own skills and talents, and through exposure to different roles given to them by producers and directors.

There was a time in the history of Philippine cinema when the aesthetics of film acting was limited to the portrayal of traditional roles as found in the *sarsuwela* and the *drama*. Actors who had performed on stage first necessarily brought with them into the cinema such conventions of stage acting as larger-than-life facial and body movements, stereotyped reactions, and conventional gestures. Also retained in the process was the one-dimensional characterization of traditional dramas. This simplistic characterization was perpetuated in film, forcing many performers to do typecast roles of heroes or villains.

This type of acting was further enhanced with the rise of radio soap operas from the 1940s to the 1960s where voice acting and highly emotional rendition of memorable lines defined good drama and therefore a credible performance. The popularity of the melodrama as Filipino entertainment was evident in the tearjerkers that showcased the talents of the most popular actors and actresses from the 1950s to the 1960s. These included the likes of Carmen Rosales, Rosa del Rosario, Anita Linda, Tita Duran, Pancho Magalona, Leopoldo Salcedo, Carlos Padilla, and Armando Goyena, followed by the generation of Rita Gomez, Marlene Dauden, Lolita Rodriguez, Charito Solis, Eddie Rodriguez, Dante Rivero, Vic Silayan, Robert Arevalo, and Eddie Garcia. For the longest time, typecasting prevented actors from developing their acting talents in the realistic mode. But it is to the credit of many of these actors that they were versatile enough to develop internalized acting when the newer directors called for it.

The development of stars into actors was attempted by a number of big studios during the 1950s. At Sampaguita, for instance, the acting coach of female stars was Rosa Mia, while Van de Leon and Lucas Paredes guided actors in the delivery and interpretation of their roles. Those who were being built up as major talents were given additional courses in social graces and grooming and were exposed to many social functions outside the studio. At LVN, the major stars were under the personal tutelage of the grand matriarch Doña Sisang. The same setup was implemented at Premiere and Lebran.

In the 1970s, another generation of actors emerged. These actors were shaped by a new batch of university-trained and independent-minded directors. Lino Brocka, who trained in theater, and Ishmael Bernal, who studied filmmaking abroad, were at the forefront of the emerging cinema. Displaying maturity and sensitivity to their material, they insisted on sincerity and truthfulness of characterization. Brocka discovered and developed new talents like Hilda Koronel, Christopher de Leon, Jay Ilagan, and Bembol Roco. Bernal, on the other hand, transformed Vilma Santos and Nora Aunor into the





Jaclyn Jose in  
Brillante Mendoza's  
*Ma' Rosa*, 2016  
(Photo courtesy of  
Brillante Mendoza)

country's best thespians. Later, Brocka would add to his list of discoveries such names as Phillip Salvador, Gina Alajar, and Mona Lisa, whose careers were successfully revived by their mentor. However, the 1970s also saw more television dramas gaining popularity and therefore defining what constitutes good acting in the eyes of the *masa* (masses). Like traditional acting before it, the standard of such acting was exemplified by *Gulong ng Palad* (Wheel of Fortune), starring Marianne de la Riva and Ronald Corveau, with the young Romnick Sarmenta; *Flordeluna*, starring Laurice Guillen, Dindo Fernando, Herbert Bautista, and the young Janice de Belen; and *Anna Liza*, starring Julie Vega.

Armed with a theater background, Laurice Guillen became part of the efforts to professionalize acting in local cinema. Guillen and husband actor Johnny Delgado were instrumental in the training of fellow actors in the 1980s through the Actors' Workshop, which they founded. Although the Actors' Workshop is not a formal acting school, it succeeded in putting method into the largely untrained raw potential of screen thespians. Using the "Being Method" developed from Stanislavsky by American acting coach Eric Morris, the workshop, at one point, became the only "formal" training ground for local actors. The Actors Guild—also known as the Kapisanan ng mga Artistang Pilipino sa Pelikula at Telebisyon—and the Film Academy of the Philippines both endeavored to enhance the growth and development of the acting profession.

Other directors, such as Marilou Diaz-Abaya, were known to put their actors in a workshop before production in order to orient them. Cases like these are rare, however, and most directors today still rely on the raw talent of their stars to portray roles that have been

identified with their screen image. A good number of the country's better actors, like Bembol Roco, Jaclyn Jose, Gina Alajar, and Michael de Mesa, for that matter, became relegated to doing supporting roles and making occasional appearances that do little justice to their enormous talent.

But the rise of the independent filmmaking scene has opened new possibilities for these artists to flex their acting muscles. Certified actors who have been able to still show what it really means to be an actor with small indie movies that showcase their talents include the likes of Anita Linda, Eddie Garcia, Gina Pareño, Joel Torre, Ricky Davao, Cherry Pie Pichache, Jaclyn Jose, Mark Gil, Gina Alajar, Michael de Mesa, Cherie Gil, Isabel Lopez, Julio Diaz, Ronnie Lazaro, and Mylene Dizon. To this day, icons like Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos continue to reap accolades not only for themselves but for the country.

There is also a new generation of performers, many of them from theater, who stood out from the independent movie scene to show that they are there for the art and not merely for the prize that comes with the celebrity status. Examples of these actors are Coco Martin, Alessandra de Rossi, Sid Lucero, Angel Aquino, Irma Adlawan, Eugene Domingo, Shamaine Centenera-Buencamino, Nonie Buencamino, John Arcilla, Lou Veloso, Pen Medina, Soliman Cruz, Hazel Orencio, Angelica Panganiban, Mercedes Cabral, Joem Bascon, Sue Prado, Joey Paras, Ina Feleo, Mara Lopez, Ping Medina, Alex Medina, Karl Medina, Victor Medina, and Angeli Bayani.

Acting as an art and a craft evolves and matures as it responds to the changes happening not only in local cinema but all over the world. The Filipino actor is right there—ready to match his foreign counterpart with as much talent as well as unwavering passion. ✨