

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Stage Actors and Acting

Acting is widely acknowledged to be the central art of the theatre and has a long and vibrant history. With more than a thousand entries, this is the first encyclopedia of stage actors and acting around the world. More than a hundred renowned international contributors provide biographical, historical, and technical information about actors both familiar and more obscure whose work has been crucial in the development of acting methods and traditions from classical theatre to the present day. Entries on key directors, theorists, and teachers and on the elements and genres of acting provide insights into the history of acting as an art and its current practice. Including a chronological list of actors that spans the past two thousand years and many diverse countries and cultures, this encyclopedia offers a fascinating and unique overview of stage acting that will be of interest to anyone who attends or practises theatre.

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Preface

One of the most alluring and yet frustrating aspects of theatre studies is that it is virtually impossible satisfactorily to capture and preserve for posterity the contribution of the central figure of the theatre, the actor performing on stage. The moment the performance has ended, it is a memory only. Stage performances are, of course, readily available to us now via HD transmission and DVD, but anyone who has seen a production live and then watched it on screen will know how in the transition much of the sharp edge of the acting can be blunted, the physical and tactile immediacy of the actor's presence reduced and the physical space that actors use to fill and enlarge their performances nullified by the two dimensions imposed on us by the screen. Of all the arts, acting on stage leaves behind it the fewest traces and documentation will always be inadequate.

Nevertheless, an understanding of the actor's contribution to live performance on stage is crucial to a full appreciation of how the theatre makes its lasting impact. The intent of this encyclopedia, which should be of interest to actors, students of acting and theatre, and to theatre-goers in general, is to provide a wide range of information about acting on stage, from biographical, historical, geographical, and technical points of view. It is arranged in a simple A–Z dictionary format, but the entries have been selected according to clear criteria. The heart of this encyclopedia is composed of almost one thousand entries on actors who have made their mark by achieving iconic status on their national stages and sometimes internationally as well. While note is often made of these actors' major achievements in film, the focus is almost exclusively on the work on stage. Some directors have found their way into the selection of entries, principally those whose work with actors and whose theoretical writings are indispensable to a complete comprehension of acting as an art. A companion encyclopedia on stage directors and stage direction will be forthcoming. Entries on the most influential acting trainers and teachers can also be found here, as can entries on those critics, playwrights, and theoreticians who have expanded our understanding of acting. The entries are not, however, confined to significant individuals. The cause and art of the actor has often been furthered by theatre companies that have considered the most important part of their brief to be the nurturing of ensemble and of actors as members of a community; there are entries on the most noted and widely admired and imitated of these companies. Last, but far from least, this encyclopedia also covers the process of acting itself. The reader will find several entries that explore the dynamics and elements of acting and define acting through various genres of theatre.

To determine precisely which genres can be best appropriated in the discussion of acting requires fine distinctions. In the theatres of Europe and North America, for example, there are fairly rigorous divisions between actors whose primary media are the spoken voice, the singing voice, and the dancing body. While good acting is as fundamental to the successful performance of ballet, modern dance, and opera as it is to spoken drama, the artists from these different genres are trained in very different circumstances compared with actors in the spoken theatre and regard their work as being very specific to their art. In this

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encyclopedia, all material relating to theatres that stand within a broadly defined Anglo-European tradition is drawn from spoken theatre, with some attention paid to the musical in the United States. In Asia, however, the three elements of speech, song, and movement are not conceived of in such exclusive categories, and actors are expected to master and unify a wide range of expressive physical and vocal means. To focus solely upon actors in spoken drama would mean limiting the number of Asian actors so radically that Asia would be almost unrepresented; hence, there is greater emphasis in entries from Asia on the arts of singing and dance than in the Anglo-European entries. But nowadays in America and Europe, these distinctions are becoming fraught. As theatre broadens its foundation from the performance of linear, plot-driven drama to the representation of less narrative, illusion-based actions, the boundaries of the actor's art become more porous. While, by and large, most of the material in this encyclopedia relates to acting as, in the words of Clive Barker, the 'transformation of one human being into another . . . conditioned by considerations of time, space and character which are not those of the person undergoing the transformation', contemporary theories of performance often challenge this as the sole meaningful definition of acting. As one way of trying to establish what stage acting is, this encyclopedia includes entries on acting in other media such as film, cabaret, television, or multimedia, in the hope that they will outline those boundaries towards which the work of the modern stage actor often gravitates but does not fully occupy.

The reader will find a multitude of names in these entries, far too many to be adequately indexed. The index, therefore, has been confined to the names of stage actors, directors, and acting teachers and theorists. When the names of individuals who have entries written about them appear in other entries, these will not only be indexed but the name referenced will appear in SMALL CAPS within the entry. This encyclopedia, whose more than one hundred contributors stem from thirty-seven different countries, covers an extraordinary range of languages and cultures. All titles of books and films are given only in English. As for plays, if a play is widely performed – such as *Seagull* or *Mother Courage* – the title will be given only in English. Titles will be given in the original language when the title is less well known and the play title appears in an entry on an individual or company from the country where the play originated. Names in the Russian entries are transliterated according to the Library of Congress style. However, as this might cause some confusion to readers unfamiliar with Russian, whenever an internationally known figure from Russian theatre, such as Stanislavsky or Meyerhold, is referred to in non-Russian entries, the more familiar spelling will be used. Brief bibliographies at the end of many entries and the general bibliography at the end of the book suggest further reading in the field of acting and acting history.

This encyclopedia has been long aborning and there are many who deserve thanks for helping the whole project get off the ground. First and foremost, I would like to thank Queen Mary University of London, whose award to me of a Distinguished Visiting Fellowship in the autumn of 2007 gave me the opportunity to conceive and plan out the entire volume. Vicki Cooper of Cambridge University Press has always been tremendously supportive of the encyclopedia ever since she first heard of the idea, almost ten years ago now. I would also like to thank Fleur Jones and Christina Sarigiannidou for their invaluable help in preparing the manuscript. I have benefited greatly from the advice and occasional admonishments of my Editorial Board; many members of the Board were selfless in devoting considerable amounts of time to recruiting contributors and often editing their entries. I am deeply grateful for their work. Much of the research conducted for this encyclopedia would not have been possible without the generous assistance of several libraries and archives, among them the British Library, Museo Nacional del Teatro, Madrid, Institut del Teatre, Barcelona, the Senate House Library University of London, Centre de

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