

Summary

"WAG -footballer's wife and girlfriend" prepared with the use of theatrical improvisation techniques

As an actress, I've always been fascinated by the process of creating characters and bringing them to life on stage. This art requires a delicate balance between two contradictions - the script given in advance and the freshness of improvisation. The concept of theatrical improvisation includes the spontaneous creation of dialogues, actions and character choices. It is a process that encourages independent thinking and an authentic reaction to given circumstances and makes each improvised performance unique. In a play based on a script, the actor receives specific lines to deliver, set in a strict context. This can lead to a routine and a schematic approach to playing the role on stage. However, improvisation can avoid this, having the opportunity to consciously experiment with the volatility of emotions, gestures and reactions to the action and stage partners. Thanks to this, you can animate the character in a complex and multi-layered way and avoid homogeneous "playing" the role.

Modern theatrical improvisation is not a chaotic activity, but a dynamically developing field of art, governed by its own, systematized rules, corresponding to the latest achievements of psychology. It has only been present in Poland for several years, also thanks to my contribution to performances, festivals and practical workshops. The improviser must remember the basic principle of "being here and now". The basis here is active listening and observing stage partners. This skill is especially valuable in building reliable relationships between characters. It requires a high level of mindfulness, but thanks to this, one of the key effects of improvisation is its ability to support creativity and spontaneity.

There are various techniques and hands-on exercises that can be used to incorporate improvisation into the role-building process in a scripted performance. Most of the exercises focus on non-verbal communication, body language, and the dynamics of power and status. This is accompanied by the exploration of various choices and reactions, both one's own and stage partners, which opens up new possibilities for character development, and actors can better understand their own physicality and relationships between their characters. What's more, skilfully used improvisation can help actors use their own experiences and emotions in an unconventional way, opening up completely new possibilities. It also changes the way you work with costumes and props.

In this doctoral dissertation, I have attempted to explore the possibility of using selected theatrical improvisation techniques to effectively build a role in a scripted performance based on my own experiences. It is the first such work in Poland. For this purpose, I analysed the process that I went through while working on the role of Woman A in the play entitled "WAG - footballer's wife and girlfriend" by Gemma Doorle (whose text, with the consent and approval of the author, I translated into Polish) and at work with another actress who is not an improviser on a daily basis. This role is embedded in a specific cultural context, which I also learned and described.

By systematizing issues related to improvisation itself and analysing the benefits and challenges of including theatrical improvisation in the process of creating a role in a scripted performance, I was able to gain a deeper understanding between these two seemingly contrasting approaches. Thanks to this, I can say with full awareness that improvisation can be a valuable tool in building a role, as well as, in a broader context, in the everyday work of a theatre actor.