

## ACTING

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 movement, gestures, and the manner in which they relate to other characters.

The actor is generally dependent on the director for guidance. Knowledge of filmic devices such as close-up, editing and camera techniques can help the actor, but acting ability is most essential if performers hope to succeed in their craft. 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 which 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.

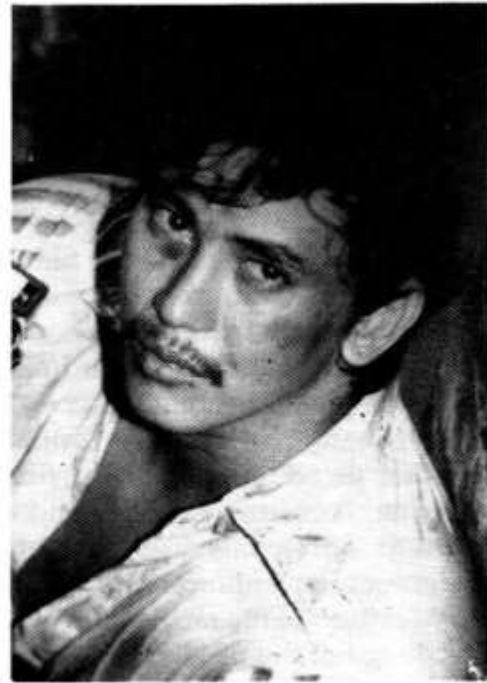
Filipino actors, it is widely believed, are intuitive and sensitive performers. Though seriously handicapped by the lack of professional training, these actors often rely on their own skills to enable them to project ideas and emotions effectively, demonstrating a wide range of talent in the process. 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 *sar-swela* and the *sinakulo*. 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. For the longest time, typecasting has prevented actors from developing their acting talents.

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

**ACTORS PAR EXCELLENCE.** Multiawardees Vilma Santos, Christopher de Leon, Nora Aunor, below, and Bembol Roco, Hilda Koronel, and Phillip Salvador, opposite page, are six of the finest thespians in contemporary Philippine cinema. (Mario A. Hernando Collection)





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.

Directors like Lamberto Avellana and Gerardo de Leon brought about a greater awareness of the distinction between film and theater. They demanded more realistic scripts with three-dimensional characters, which required a more complex interpretation than what actors had been exposed to. Soon, a new breed of actors emerged. Stars who dominated an entire era with their sheer good looks and mestizo or mestiza features were now replaced by a new generation of actors in the mold of Charito Solis, Rosa Rosal, Robert Arevalo, Vic Silayan, Leroy Salvador, and Tony Santos. At Sampaguita, Lolita Rodriguez and Rita Gomez were portraying roles through an acting method that equated acting with "internalization" rather than with stock physical gestures and movements.

In the 1970s, another generation of actors emerged. These actors were shaped by a new batch of better-trained, more knowledgeable, 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 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.

Laurice Guillen became part of the efforts to professionalize acting in local cinema. Guillen, with husband actor Johnny Delgado, was 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 has become the only "formal" training ground for local actors.

Other directors such as Marilou Diaz-Abaya are known for putting their actors in a workshop before production starts 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 have been relegated to doing second-lead roles and making occasional appearances that do little justice to their enormous talent.

The Actors Guild, also known as the Katipunan ng mga Artista ng Pelikulang Pilipino (KAPP), and the Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) both endeavor to enhance the growth and development of the acting profession. • J. David and J. Dormiendo. With notes from P. de Castro III, B. Lumbera, N.G. Tiongson