

Acting



# Creating a Character

- To create a character an actor uses imagination, intelligence, vocal technique, facial expressions, body language, and an overall knowledge of the filmmaking process.





# Actors as “Commodities”

- The power of some actors to draw an audience is frequently more important to a movie’s financial success than any other factor.
- Because of this, some observers regard screen actors as mere “commodities,” cogs in the machine of promotion and hype designed only to generate revenue.





# Actors and the Camera

- Experienced screen actors know that the essential relationship is between them and the camera, not the director--not even the audience.





# Closer to the Audience

- Through composition, close-ups, camera angles and movements, and other cinematic techniques, movie actors always come closer to the audience, and appear larger, than actors on stage.





# Communicating Emotional Meaning

- Screen actors have enjoyed a certain freedom to adopt individual styles that communicate emotional meaning through subtle, and highly personal gestures, expressions, varieties of intonation, and mannerisms.





# Denis Diderot

- In his book, *The Paradox of Acting* (1765), Diderot concluded that actors should not feel the emotions of the characters they portray.
- To move an audience, actors must remain unmoved by the characters.
- Actors should explicitly imagine how their gestures and expressions will look onscreen.





# Early Screen-Acting Styles

- The people on the screen in the very first movies were not actors but ordinary people playing themselves
- First screen actors adopted 19th century theatre acting, which consisted of exaggerated gestures, overly emphatic facial expressions, and bombastic mouthing of words.





# D.W. Griffith

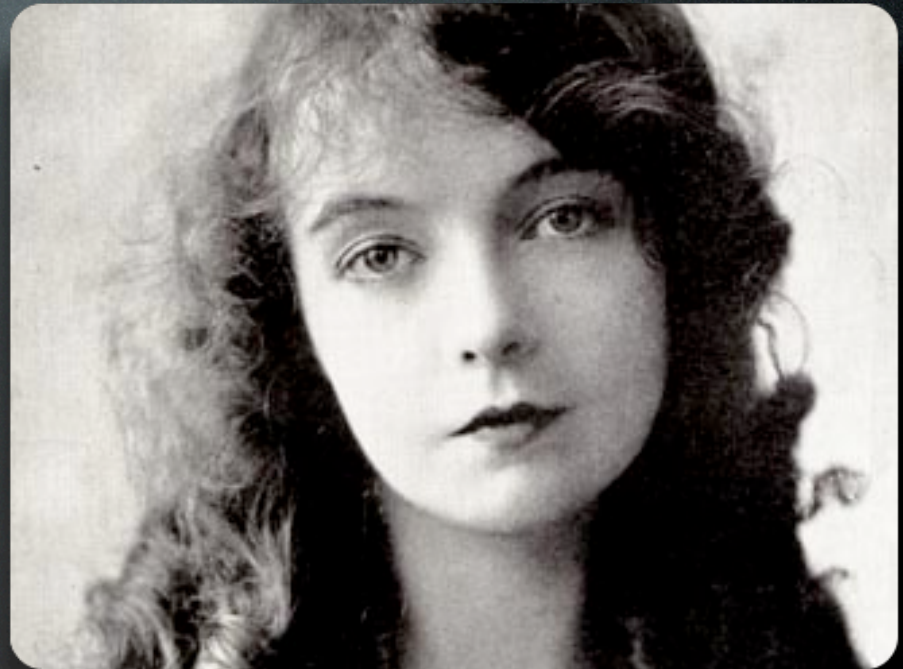
- American film pioneer D.W. Griffith needed actors trained to work only before the camera and by 1913 had recruited a group that included some of the most important actors of the time.
- Because movies were silent, Griffith worked out more naturalistic movements and gestures for his actors rather than training their voices.





# Lillian Gish

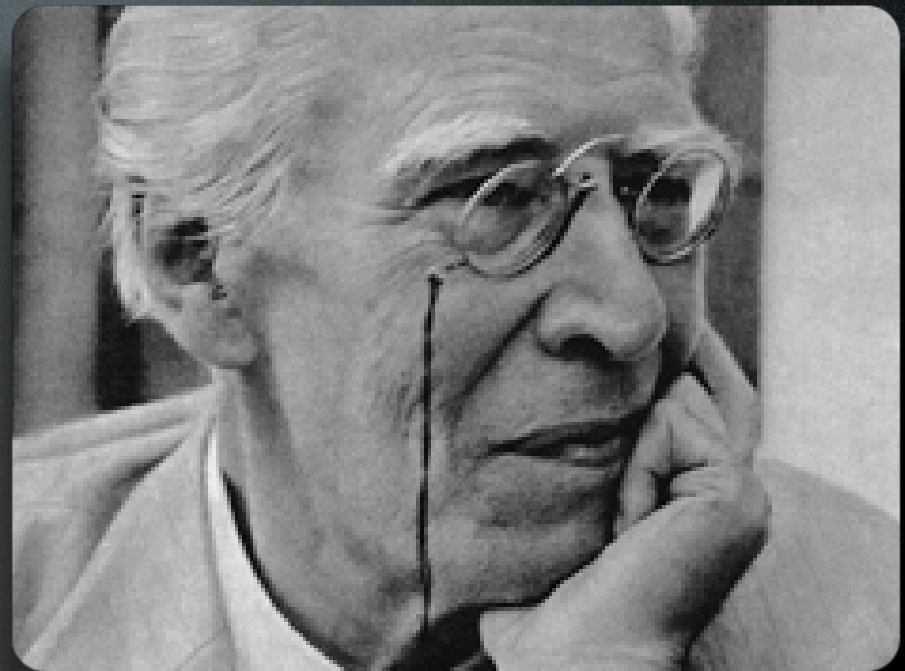
- Under D.W. Griffith's guidance, Lillian Gish invented screen acting.
- Griffith encouraged Gish to study the movements of ordinary people and tell stories through her face and body.
- Griffith urged her to watch the reactions of movie audiences, saying, "If they're held by what you're doing, you've succeeded as an actress."





# Konstantin Stanislavsky

- Stanislavsky cofounded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898 and developed the Stanislavsky system of acting.
- Stanislavsky trained students to strive for realism, both social and psychological, and to bring their own past experiences and emotions to their roles.





# Elia Kazan and Lee Strasberg

- In 1947, directors Elia Kazan and Lee Strasberg founded the Actors Studio in New York City.
- Popularized a naturalistic style known as method acting loosely based on Stanislavsky's ideas
- Method acting encourages actors to speak, move, and gesture not in a traditional stage manner but just as they would in their own lives.





# Influence of Sound

- The earliest sound recording for movies was hampered by badly written dialogue, poor quality recording, unnatural speaking style, and limited camera mobility.





# Golden Age Studio System (1930s-50s)

- Actors' images were more important than talent for studios
- Studios could change an actor's name, could force actors to undergo plastic surgery, and make actors appear in specific movies.





# Screen Acting Today and Casting

- Today, various acting styles are used by actors or none at all.
- Expected revenue, race, and age are generally major factors in casting.





# Types of Roles

- Major Roles: principal agents in helping to move the plot forward
- Minor Roles: Also move plot forward, but do not appear in as many scenes
- Character Roles: represent distinctive character types: judges, doctors, etc.
- Extras: appear in nonspeaking crowd roles and receive no screen credit



# Analyzing Acting

- Appropriateness
- Inherent thoughtfulness
- Expressive coherence
- Wholeness Unity





# Analyzing Acting: Appropriateness

- Does the actor look and act naturally like the character he or she portrays, as expressed in physical appearance, facial expression, speech movement, and gesture?





# Analyzing Acting: Inherent Thoughtfulness

- Does the actor convey the character's thought process or feelings behind the character's actions or reactions?
- In addition to a credible appearance does the character have a credible inner life?





# Analyzing Acting: Expressive Coherence

- Has the actor used the first two qualities (appropriateness and inherent thoughtfulness) to create a characterization that holds together?





# Analyzing Acting: Wholeness and Unity

- In spite of the challenges in most film productions, has the actor maintained the illusion of a seamless character, even if that character is purposely riddled with contradictions?

