Training strategies towards performing emotions on film: an integrated approach

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The study contains human participation and as such, Research Ethics Clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. Approval number: 04535872 (HUM026/0722). We identified several South African film actors who follow the skills development process we discuss in the article. We contacted these actors, via email and telephone, to request their voluntary participation in the study. Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire pertaining to their

experiences of the manifestation and presentation of their character(s)' emotional life on screen. Their reflections are incorporated in the article, with their written consent. Their names and surnames are mentioned in the article, with their permission.

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Abstract

South African film budgets do not allow for extensive preparation and rehearsal periods. South African film actors prepare their portrayal of emotion as part of their performance scores in isolation and are expected to present their already crafted performances while the camera is rolling.

However, the actor must be able to produce an emotion at will. They must navigate the onset and conclusion of the emotion whilst effectively portraying it to the camera that is capturing the moment on film. The (film) actor's physical manifestation of the character's emotion is the means through which audiences gain insight into characters (Baron and Carnicke 2011:174). The actor needs to embody these elements to signify the character's emotions (Gosselin et al 2005:244) quickly, upon demand, and with the required filmic verisimilitude.

This article offers a five-phase process, that draws on various embodied performance pedagogies (such as Emotional Body, Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies and Lessac Kinesensics), as well as from relevant scholarship in the field of Emotion. This process facilitates and brings forth required embodied emotions in actor to character development in a way that reinforces verisimilitude and can be effectively strategised away from the actual filming moment. It is structured to be safe in its approach, effective in the emotionally embodied delivery, and acknowledges both cultural and idiosyncratic diversity in the actors in the service of the character to be portrayed.

Key words: Film acting; Actor training; Performing emotion

Introduction

In its simplest form, acting can be described as "the ability to behave absolutely truthfully under imaginary circumstances" (Meisner and Longwell 1987:136). Acting as an extra-daily activity, manifests, through conscious and unconscious means, a character in a communication moment that comes into being between an actor and an audience (Lutterbie 2011:73). To achieve this, acting requires complex skills that must be developed and honed through training. Most actor training programmes prepare the actor and character's body (including the voice), the actor and character's consciousness and reason, the actor's manifestation of the character's emotion, the actor's memory and imagination (as these segue into character creation), the actor's mindful awareness during performance, inter-actor communication (in preparation and then during performance), and the impact of audience responses from moment to moment during the performance. The actor draws from these skills to develop and manifest the character's behaviours, as gleaned from the text[1], expressing the character's sense of self and intent within the character's environment (Kemp 2012:154).

The narrative that is represented to an audience is fictional, not 'real'[2]. The fictional reality emerges through the dynamics of 'recognition' – the audience recognises through the actor's embodiment, the character's behaviour as (potentially) believable and identifiable (Munro, Pretorius and Munro 2008:44) within context. This sense of 'likelihood' is reliant on two dynamics, namely, the recognition by the viewer (to determine the equivalence between what is being observed and what can be related to 'real life'), and the coherent demands of the

[1] Not all theatre performances rely on text. For the purposes of this study, however, text-based performances are of importance.
[2] To be sure, the *act of representation* in a space is real, but the *narrative* itself is constructed, and therefore, in these circumstances, not real. As such, the actor is real, but the character is constructed.

selected genre or medium. The effective dramatization of reality enables verisimilitude. Stam and Miller (2000:158) posit that verisimilitude varies between genres. Certain guidelines, expectations, norms, and regimes form part of each genre and of each medium, determining how actors could effectively codify the character's behaviours for the demands of the narrative moment within the medium or genre. This article focuses on film acting and concomitantly the training of film actors, specifically regarding the safe embodiment of emotions within the South African film acting context.

Film acting

Film acting does not, in principle, differ significantly from theatre acting (Carnicke 2012:184). The expressive performance details of acting are evident in both media and differences could be minute (Comey 2002:10), yet necessary and important. Perhaps this concept is best summarised by Barr when he states that [theatre acting and film acting] "call for the same ingredients, but in different proportions" (Barr 1997:6). The unique demands of film as a specific medium influence the film actor's performance in various ways:

- Comey (2002:18) explains that film Figures can reveal anything, from distant galaxies to microscopic details. The camera offers the opportunity to capture the embodied manifestations of the most intimate thoughts, feelings, reactions, and inner life of the film actor-as-character enabling film audiences to perceive the slightest shifts in the actor's performance of the character's behaviour.
- Unlike the theatre actor, the film actor's performance takes place in the absence of an audience[3]. There is no immediate feedback loop between the audience responses and

[3] Although the film director and camera may substitute for the film actor's audience, the film actor, unlike the theatre actor, is not affected by the immediate response of an audience during performance. (Indeed, often the presence of the director and film crew, as 'technical recorders' become potential hindrances to the acting moment).

the film actor's moment-to-moment creation of a performance. While the film actor may affect the film audience, the film audience does not affect the film actor (Auslander 2008:68)[4].

- Films are shot out of sequence, which "disrupts and fragments the actor's experience of a role" (Carnicke 1999:77). The film actor must maintain performance continuity even though two consecutive scenes may be filmed weeks or months apart, and not necessarily in successive order.
- Film actors have very little rehearsal time. The film actor is often notified of an on-camera performance less than twenty-four hours before shooting, which limits the film actor's available rehearsal time. Film budgets often do not make allowance for adequate rehearsals (Bettinson 2015:6), as is the norm in the South African film industry.
- Despite the lack of conventional theatrical preparation time, the film actor is required to be thoroughly prepared to deliver an authentic performance on command (Carnicke 1999:77).

Globally, these factors place unique demands on film actors to successfully execute their performances while the camera is rolling. A differentiation exists between skills development, character and score development (within the preparation phase), rehearsal, and the actual performance phase[5]. In countries with low film budgets[6] film actors are particularly challenged by the lack of rehearsal time. This limited rehearsal time impacts the way character development occurs. This article uses the South African acting situation as a specific example, and therefore draws extensively on that set of circumstances, throughout. South African actors

[4] However, an argument can be made that film audience expectations across time have changed, and therefore a film actor modulates the performance according to these expected changes.
[5] Aligning with the trajectory that Stanislavski offers (see Carnicke 1999).
[6] Netflix used to pay between $ 40 000 and $ 70 000 for an African film while paying between $ 100 million to $ 250 million for international blockbuster films (Poe 2021).

must circumvent these challenges to optimize work opportunities in the constrained film environment. De Waal-Smit (2019 email from C De Waal-Smit to the first author; unreferenced) explains that the South African (film and other) entertainment industry is a relatively small industry that cannot support a wide range of actors in regular productions for extended periods of time. Consequently, it is imperative for South African actors to be versatile performers in a variety of genres and media. Many actors are required to perform in front of the camera during the day and perform or rehearse on stage at night, navigating the demands of the various genres.

Film acting in South Africa

Actor training in South Africa focuses primarily on theatre acting. Prominent South African tertiary institutions[7] who offer a degree in Drama provide limited Camera Acting training[8]. As a result, many skilled and talented actors who are predominantly theatre trained, are not sufficiently skilled to make the necessary performance shifts or transitions required for acting in front of a camera. Training to equip actors with the skills they require to perform effectively in front of a camera, often lacks.

A South African approach to film actor training must equip actors with skills to individually overcome the challenges imposed by/encountered in the film industry. For the actor, in general, the purpose of a rehearsal period is to gain an embodied understanding of the character they are to portray in performance. From this embodied understanding, they then create their

[7] The University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, University of the Free State, The University of Pretoria, Tshwane University of Technology.
[8] These tertiary institutions may offer Camera Acting as a subsection of a subject. At the University of Pretoria one of the authors teaches Camera Acting as part of a subject called TNP310: Performance Studies. Various informal private camera acting training opportunities exist. A discussion on these opportunities falls outside the scope of this article.

character in relation to the other actors' development of their characters. During the rehearsal period, the actor explores and determines an exact sequence of events and expressive behaviours. As the actor gains fresh insights and encounters unanticipated obstacles (thus engaging in a process of exploration and refinement), they shape their performance score (Lutterbie 2011:181,185). A differentiation should be made between preparation and repetition which usually happen primarily during rehearsal (see below). Within theatre practice, preparation and repetition co-exist within rehearsals. Although theatre actors may experience a lack of sufficient rehearsal time[9], South African film actors hardly have any rehearsal time before a performance commences (Bettinson 2015:6-7). Within film the balance between preparation and repetition shifts. Preparation primarily takes place in the actor's own time with limited repetition in the rehearsal process. Within the context of low budget films, preparation is solely taking place within the actor's own time with no repetition during rehearsal. The purpose of rehearsals is to finalise the technical demands between performers and crew. Actors are usually granted a single rehearsal in which they familiarise themselves with their character's actions *on set*. The rehearsal is followed by a 'marking' session – a process in which actors execute their actions on set in a mechanical fashion so that the technical crew may eliminate any possible technical problems before the scene is filmed.

Due to the context provided above, South African film actors mostly create their characters and shape their performance scores in isolation and present their already formed characters to the director during performance. This practice severely constrains the actor from thoroughly investigating the contexts responsible for the character's behavioural responses. The actor's presentation of the character's emotion forms part of these responses. To contribute to filmic

[9] According to Blair (2008:57-58), the standard rehearsal period for a regional theatre play in the United States in 2008, was three-and-a-half weeks – a period Blair (2008:58) considers to be insufficient "for allowing the actor to get the work into her body."

verisimilitude, the actor must present behaviour that can be read as the authentic emotion of the character. Therefore, a system needs to be in place that prepares and empowers the actor to embed action responses that call forth authentic emotion safely, quickly, efficiently, on demand, and with limited external stimuli. This article investigates practices informing the South African film actor's preparation for portraying the character's emotional life on film.

Preparation to action

Preparation is a continuous embodied inquiry and application of skills that enable the individual to act appropriately when a particular situation rises. Taylor (2016:48) postulates that a period of embodied preparation enables the actor to reach an optimal, psychophysical state in which they are simultaneously responsive and ready for action, while experiencing a relaxed alertness. Through embodied preparation, the actor will be ready to adhere to the technical specificities of the performance, while accessing spontaneity in performance (Blair 2008:52; Zarrilli 2009:49-50). Such a process of inquiry and preparation for the film actor should be continuous and include the development of typical acting skills as well as eliciting an embodiment of emotion. The film actor does not have the opportunity to habituate their character's emotional responses through rehearsal and repetition. As such, developing and maintaining the skills to embody emotion effectively and safely within context is paramount for the film actor.

Skills development

We argue that the film actor should draw from embodied skills introduced in the training phase and further developed through active preparation so that their manifestation and presentation of a character, may be readily accessible. The actor's presentation of the character's emotions

forms a key part hereof as the actor's "use of emotion … serves to enliven the dramatic text and animate the relationships that are reflected in it" (Meisner according to Shirley 2010:203). The embodiment of emotion through psychophysical means enables the actor's performance of applicable emotional patterns with accuracy and speed (Kalawski 2013:182). This skill enables the film actor to circumvent obstacles associated with the actual (on camera) performance time. Skilled film actors continuously engage with these embodied emotional strategies during active preparation (including character creation and score development) in the absence of a director. We posit that emotional effector strategies through embodied practices therefore add a valuable layer to film actor training, especially in countries such as South Africa where film budgets are limited, provided that these strategies are informed by a critical understanding of the complexity of the embodiment of emotions.

Contextualising the theories on emotion

The purpose of this section is to contextualise the embodiment of emotions as it pertains to actor training. We acknowledge that from an essentialist approach, emotions can be perceived as a human trait. This perception may align with Frijda and Parrott's (2011:406-15) offering that emotions are biological processes. Damasio (1999:282) pre-empts the concept of emotion by describing it as: "a specifically caused transient change of the organism state". Damasio continues that when the individual becomes consciously aware of (and interprets) these transient changes in the body, the feeling of emotion occurs. Kemp (2012:164) explains that a person's fear reaction, for example, activates certain physical responses, such as a racing heart, a dry sensation in the mouth, contracting muscles, and perspiration. The feeling and interpretation of these physical responses is limited to human experience. Parrott (2012:247) states that there are similarities between human and animal emotions. Humans and animals

share primitive sensory-motor behaviours which drive, determine, and stimulate complex emotional repertoires in various species. The similarities in emotion do not refer to emotions that are alike, but that emotions share particular underlying sensory-motor components. Parrott (2012:247-48) uses the German prefix 'ur'[10] to describe these similarities and explains that the term 'ur-emotion' indicates the shared commonalities between the otherwise different emotions of a variety of species.

Parrott's ur-emotions link to what most neuroscientists and psychologists refer to as primary emotions (McConachie 2014:189). Primary emotions enable systems of response and behaviour that are informed by millions of years of evolution (Vainik 2011:42-43) and provide a means for human survival and procreation (McConachie 2014:189). Obvious and subtle emotional states continuously manifest in the human body through neurological and chemical processes. Certain behaviours associated with the expression of emotions are under voluntary control, while others are involuntary or automatic (Kalawski 2013:181). Mechanisms under voluntary control include breath, facial expression, dynamic body attitudes, and vocal responses (Roseman 2011:434-35). Automatic behaviours include heart rate and blood pressure (Bloch, Lemeignan and Aguilera-T 1991:141) amongst others. Rosenberg and Ekman (2005:63) argue that, due to the evolution of emotion as part of human survival, each emotion has a different embodied pattern of response. Central to the argument we make here, emotions are experienced subjectively and can be observed (and interpreted) only when the embodied pattern of response manifests externally (Gosselin, Kirouac and Doré 2005:257; Bloch 2018:46; Roseman 2004:441).

[10] The prefix 'ur' can refer to 'underlying' such as in the German words *urform* and *ursatz*. It can also refer to 'primeval' as in the German word *urzeit*, or 'primitive' as in the word *urtrieb* (Parrott 2012:247).

Through a constructivist lens, emotions are perceived as being idiosyncratically shaped by the individual's life world which includes their socio-cultural paradigms. This perception aligns with the opinion of scholars such as Hufendiek (2016), Feldman Barret (2018) and De Leersnyder (2019). De Leersnyder (2019:205) contextualises this process as "emotional enculturation."

McConachie (2008:94) frames emotions influenced by culture and identity as secondary. These emotions may include feelings such as jealousy, guilt, embarrassment, and pride (Damasio 1999:51), which can be referred to as higher order emotions as they draw from both the feeling of emotion and from the thinking about the situation that stimulates the biological process. Damasio (1999:52) offers a third category of emotion called background emotions. He defines these as continuous internal states "engendered by ongoing physiological processes or by the organism's interactions with the environment". Kemp (2012:165) refers to emotions that recur frequently or are sustained over substantial time periods as moods or background emotions. Examples include calmness, tension, malaise, and well-being (Damasio 1999:51).

We are of the opinion that emotions are both a trait of the human species and idiosyncratic due to body/brain plasticity – which, in itself, is species-specific. We align ourselves with Hufendiek (2016:75) who argue for "clear prototypical features of emotions". Ratner (2006:1) explains that "biological processes – hormones, neurotransmitters, autonomic reactions – underlie (mediate) but do not determine emotional qualities and expressions." The biological processes or prototypical features are shaped by what Mesquita, Vissers and De Leersnyder (2014:5) refer to as culturally demarcated "display rules". These "display rules" determine the accepted "quality", "intensity", and "behavioral expression" (Ratner 2006:4) of what is observed and interpreted.

It is the capability and capacity of humans to navigate the intersection of the "prototypical features of emotion" (Hufendiek 2016:75) and the cultural display rules (Mesquita et.al. 2014:5) that pave the way towards embodied strategies to navigate the expression of emotion. Rix (2001:208) explains that in the application of these embodied strategies, when the actor embodies "... the physical characteristics of an emotion, the body begins to feel that emotion: the limbic system, sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems begin to respond as if there were a stimulus creating the response". The actor can therefore embody the controllable elements of the pattern of response to signify the character's emotions (Gosselin et al 2005:244). Fluency in such embodied strategies, potentially, offers the South African film actor the opportunity to access the required character emotions during their individual preparation phase, circumventing the limitations of the rehearsal time, lack of audience response, disjointed shooting sequences, and the technical requirements of the film capture moment, amongst other obstacles. The film actor can then rely on their planned, structured, rehearsed, and embodied preparation to manifest (and experience) the character's emotions during the performance phase of the particular moment to be filmed at a particular time, in a particular filmic and technical context.

Existing pedagogies towards expression of emotion

The manifestations of character could have a negative effect on the actor's emotional well-being (Rix 2001:208). Actor training approaches that foreground ways to elicit the manifestation, expression and experience of emotion through psychophysical means (rather than techniques through which actors recall lived experiences) limit the potential negative impact emotional manifestation can have on the actor. Several approaches within actor training

exist that offer ways to elicit the manifestation, expression, and experience of emotion through physical and physiological means.

Alba Emoting**,** originally developed by neurophysiologist Susanna Bloch, is a purely physical approach to physiological arousal (Rix 2001:207). Emotions manifest physically through a particular breathing pattern combined with a specific facial and postural/body attitude[11] (referred to as *Effector Patterns*) and a given subjective experience. Emotion can be embodied and felt when voluntary facial expressions, dynamic body attitudes and movements and breathing patterns are deliberately applied (Bloch 1993:125). Bloch (according to Beck 2010:143) identifies joy, sadness, fear and anger as part of an individual's primary emotions. Bloch adds two elements of love – eroticism and tenderness – in her description of 'basic emotions' "since they have specific and universal differentiated Effector Patterns, and because both fulfil the characteristics (of primary emotions)" (Bloch 2018:54). According to Bloch (1993:122), one of the core functions of the actor is to recreate emotions during performance.

Inspired by Bloch's (1993:125) emotional *Effector Patterns*, Bond created an "evidence-supported somatic method" that draws from "physical and physiological aspects of emotions…." towards "emotional awareness and regulation" (Bond 2018:ix). Bond's method is known as *The Emotional Body*. Bond (2018) acknowledges the complexity of emotions due to both idiosyncratic and socio-cultural contexts and offers these physical and physiological actions (read as prototypical features) that, when applied, may lead to a somatic pattern that may be experienced and or perceived as an emotion within a specific context. Although Bond is from the Bloch lineage, *The Emotional Body* method introduces breathing patterns, building

[11] We include the term posture as it is used in certain scholarships. Posture refers to the orientation of the body but could be perceived as a fixed position. The dynamic body is in continuous motion. To support this notion, we prefer the term body attitude.

upon by physical expressions using numerical clusters, thus leaving the interpretation of the experience elicited by the patterns open. Wordlists offering potential emotions experienced when executing the patterns are provided, foregrounding socio-cultural display rules and idiosyncratic interpretations (see, for example, Bond 2018:104). The progression of the process usually starts with breath, followed by facial expression and the dynamic posture/body patterns[12].

Heavily drawing on Baharata's sanskrit text *Natya Sastra*, and further influences from Ekman and Artaud, Schechner created nine *Rasaboxes* (Neuerburg-Denzer 2008). Bowditch, Cole and Minnick (2023: n.p) define *Rasaboxes* as "an interdisciplinary approach for training emotional expressivity through the use of breath, body, voice, movement, and sensation." They advocate for an embodied experience and understanding of *Rasaboxes* (Ibid 2023: 2). We offer that an understanding of *Rasa* should ideally include a personal and cultural knowledge of Rasa found in the Indian performing arts aesthetic.

Perdekamp, a German actor/director, developed an approach referred to as *PEM*. This approach draws*, inter alia*, from Damasio and Ekman. Perdekamp contextualises *PEM* as psychophysical and bioenergetic. PEM aligns somewhat with Bloch's effector patterns, but possibly more with Bond's Emotional Body, as Perdekamp acknowledges the socio-cultural shaping of emotions. *PEM*'s segue into manifestation of emotion is through physiological patterning of six emotions. Unique to this approach is the linking of these emotions to specific

[12] One of the authors received initial training in *Alba Emotimg* and is an *Emotional Body* apprentice.

organs, culminating in the expression of the emotion in a spatial orientation[13] (Slinn 2019; Yekanians 2019)[14].

According to Shafir, Tsachor and Welch (2016:1), the motor elements of *Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies* (L/BMS) provide a means through which emotion can be elicited and regulated. The qualities of these motor movements can be described according to *Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies*' (L/BMS) definition of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space (Tsachor and Shafir 2017:5). All four of these L/BMS tetrahedronal elements (Adrian 2018) can deliberately be applied to embody intent and emotion in context[15].

Through the L/BMS lens, movement (motion) and emotion (e-motion) are interrelated. Emotion is affected by a change in Body sensing, perception, attitude or movement, and vice versa. One's voluntary choice of body attitude and movements will affect one's emotions (Tsachor and Shafir 2017:1-2). Actors, directors, and dramatists recognise and exploit the fact that body movements and attitudes signify certain emotional states (Atkinson, Dittrich, Gemmell and Young 2004:720). Shafir et al (2016:1) conducted a study to analyse and validate the dynamic motor elements of the Body through which emotion can be expressed and found that a unique set of motor elements may be associated with a specific emotion.

Within the L/BMS pedagogy, Effort refers to a person's inner attitude towards a motion factor. L/BMS distinguishes between four Effort elements or motion factors, each with two polar

[13] Which may align with L/BMS. See below.
[14] We do not have embodied training in *Rasaboxes* nor *PEM*; as such we do not apply them in our praxis.
[15] One of the authors is a Certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst.

opposite qualities. These are weight, space, time, and flow Effort[16]. A person can express their inner attitude, through combinations of the motion factors, in the context of the specific task they execute (Adrian 2008:113). As "the inner attitude of an individual… radiates outward changing the visible shape of the body", Shape within Space manifests (Adrian 2018:11). For example, the combination of light weight Effort and rising Shape movements may embody and signify happiness, while the combination of sinking Shape and passive weight sensing embodies and indicates the prototypical features of sadness (Shafir et al 2016:8-9). The actor's task is to select the motor elements that best suit the character and the situation, so that the actor may signify, through the selected behaviour patterns, the character's emotions. The manifestation of these motor elements is influenced by the actor's personal uniqueness, socio-cultural paradigms and specific circumstances, which includes characterisation choices. Varieties in actions and movements will thus occur.

Kemp (2012:186) offers that there are congruencies between L/BMS, Alba Emoting and Ekman and Friesen's research on facial expression. Frank (2005:239) explains that Ekman and Friesen (1978) designed a "comprehensive system to identify visible facial movements'" called the *Facial Action Coding System* (FACS). In our longitudinal engagement and commitment to emotional safety within actor training, we combine these approaches with scholarship to explicate the way in which the embodiment of emotion can be taught to actors. The actor must be able to produce an emotion at will. They must navigate the onset and conclusion of the emotion whilst effectively portraying it to the camera that is capturing the moment on film. The (film) actor's physical manifestation of the character's emotion is the means through which audiences gain insight into characters (Baron and Carnicke 2011:174). The actor can embody

[16] Effort factors exist on a continuum of opposites. An individual's movement can lean more towards one end of the continuum than the other or can be executed with equal attention to both affinities (Adrian 2008:113).

these elements to signify the character's emotions (Gosselin et al 2005:244) quickly, upon demand, and with the required filmic verisimilitude.

Combining pedagogies towards embodied strategies to elicit and express emotion

We are of the opinion that no singular approach can serve (film) actors in training. Striving to contribute to film actor training in South Africa, our continuously developing training approach to the film actor's physical manifestation of inner emotions relies on L/BMS, and Emotional Body[17] (stemming from Alba Emoting) while also drawing from the work of Ekman and Friesen (1975); Gunes and Piccardi's Bimodal Face and Body Gesture Database (2006), as well as the research on emotion and emotion recognition conducted by Atkinson et al (2004). Furthermore, our training draws from *Lessac Kinesensics* (LK)[18], in acknowledging breath as a central element of the live body (Lessac 1997:24-25). LK is an approach committed to facilitating knowledge and skill building regarding the "human's bodymind in behaviour" (Munro 2017:3), resulting in a holistic and synergistic pedagogy guiding participants through movement, bodyvoice and speech explorations.

Bloch (2018:103) identifies the breath patterns associated with fear, anger, happiness, sadness, and tenderness. Bond refers to numerical clusters 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b to allow for socio-cultural display rules, as well as idiosyncratic and contextual differences in expression and interpretation (2018). Bloch, Bond and LK form the basis from which we teach breath as a manageable element of emotion to aid the film actor in the psychophysical elicitation of emotion. Breath affects the movement of the body and is, in turn, affected by it. Breath thus

[17] The authors are trained in these approaches and thus have an embodied understanding thereof.
[18] The first author is a Certified Lessac Kinesensics trainer, and the second author is a Lessac Kinesensics Master Teacher.

steers the dynamic interaction between the environment and the embodied being (Munro 2017:21). Inhaling and exhaling can occur through the nose and through the mouth and both inhalation and exhalation patterns and rhythms are associated with the signifying of different emotions (Bloch 2018; Bond 2018). Lessac (1997:24) states: "[S]omewhere between the fundamental acts of inhaling and exhaling lie the harmonics of crying and laughing, fear and joy, anticipation and astonishment, gentle blowing and whispering, sobbing and sighing, disappointment and ecstasy!" Mastering breath patterns and rhythms as prototypical signifiers of emotion can greatly aid the actor's interpretation of emotional moments. Each ur-emotion roughly correlates with a particular breath pattern. These respiratory patterns are under voluntary control. The actor's embodiment of a breath pattern associated with a particular emotion may result in the actor's experience and expression of that emotion. Thus, the film actor, having identified the required emotion for the film moment, can both prepare breath patterns for the emotion (as actor) and then embed them into the character's breath pattern actions for that emotion.

Emotional facial expression specifically applies to the film actor since the film actor is often framed in a close-up (head and shoulders) or medium close-up (framed from the waist upwards) shot. The film actor's display of emotion will therefore especially be recognisable on their face. A person can control their facial expression to express or conceal emotion (Ekman and Friesen 1975:7-11). In our film actor training we draw from the controllable elements of facial expression defined by Ekman and Friesen (1975), Bloch's (2018) identification of the basic emotions and Bond's inclusive method (2018) which allows for a nuanced and idiosyncratic expression of emotions. Facial expressions manifest as part of the individual's patterns of response. The elements of emotional facial expressions can be separated for training and study purposes, however "facial expressions of genuine emotions generally include several facial

movements that occur simultaneously" (Gosselin et al 2005:245). Thus, film actors would draw on the required emotional responses and build the correlating facial behaviour patterns to meet the needs of the filming moment.

Emotional expression extends beyond facial expression and film actors rely on the dynamic interactions of the entire bodymind. All forms of nonverbal communication contribute to an individual's expression of emotions (Atkinson et al 2004:717) and therefore the body is the locus of emotion (Shafir et al 2016:2). Within this context, we primarily draw from the tetrahedronal aspects of L/BMS as shared above, supported by the dynamic postural/body patterns offered by Bloch and Bond.

Our training further addresses the intensity of the film actor's expression of emotion. Emotions vary in intensity and this is reflected in one's behaviour (Bloch 2018:52) within context. As previously stated, film actors mostly present their characters' emotion to align with close-up or medium close-up camera shots. This reminds of the levels of communicative behaviour (Bester 2019) that provides guidelines regarding the use of body into space in relation to genre and context. The levels of communication, which developed from the Structural levels originally found in *Lessac Kinesensics* offer five levels: intimate, conversational, social, heightened and extravagant (Bester 2019:107-16). Due to the levels of communicative behaviour that is primarily present within film, in most cases, it is not necessary for the film actor to express emotion to its maximum intensity.

Another important factor in signifying emotion, is duration (Kemp 2012:165). According to Ekman (2020:36) "[D]uration […] distinguishes emotions from other reflexes and moods". Emotions such as fear, anger, disgust, and surprise occur rapidly, have heightened moments of

intensity and diminish rapidly. Sadness and background emotions occur and diminish gradually. The duration of an emotion is context driven. Irrespective of the level of intensity or duration, the embodiment of emotion causes biochemical flooding in the body (Rix 2001:215). Bloch (2018:124) warns that the actor can potentially remain in the emotional state they experienced. A process through which the effects can be neutralised or released, and emotion regulated, forms part of our training. Bond, following Bloch, offers strategies such as, "consciously achieving zero" (2018:49) as well as an emphasis on restorative practices. Drawing on L/BMS and LK we have created many explorations that contribute to (returning) equilibrium and equanimity.

Our training follows a developmental, and initially somewhat compartmentalised, five phase trajectory. As a safe segue into emotions, knowledge and embodied skills found in somatic movement and bodyvoice approaches, specifically Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies and Lessac Kinesensics, are shared with the students in *phase one*. During this phase they also engage with various acting approaches, drawing primarily from Stanislavski's system (following Baron and Carnicke 2011) enabling them to develop a range of behaviours that expresses the actor's understanding of the character's intent within that character's fictional environment and secondarily from the Meisner technique (Meisner & Longwell 1987; Silverberg 1994) and from Michael Chekhov's (Dalton 2020) approach to actor training. In *phase two*, we share relevant discourse regarding the complexity of emotion with the students and we funnel the training process to focus on the students' idiosyncratic perception, manifestation and interpretation of various emotions. Here we draw on Plutchnik's wheel of emotions (Mondal and Gokhale 2020). The students self-reflect on what emotions they allow themselves, or are socialised, to sense, feel and express. Following this we guide them through a process of discovering how they manifest the emotions that they allow themselves to engage

with. We refer to Body, Breath patterns and rhythm, vocalisation, facial expression, motion factors (Effort), Body into Space (use of kinesphere) and Shape. We discuss their habitual intensity and duration of the emotions that they express. Our aim with this phase is to acknowledge socio-cultural display rules and promote inclusivity. During *phase three* we draw from Bond's *Emotional Body* method in combination with *Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies* (Tsachor and Shafir 2017), moving through Bond's mechanical, inductive and integrative (Bond 2018:40-41) processes to ensure that the students are capable of manifesting the prototypical features of emotion (Hufendiek 2016) and returning to equanimity and equilibrium. We invite the students to verbalise what emotion or variations of emotions they have experienced within Bond's numerical clusters. In *phase four*, we again foreground the students' idiosyncratic manifestations. We discuss, compare and contrast their experiences of prototypical Effector Patterns (Bond and Bloch), the offerings from Tsachor and Shafir, and their own idiosyncratic embodied manifestations. This process emphasises the constructivist element of emotion and honours the socio-cultural while acknowledging the essential prototypical features of emotions. We conclude this phase with explorations of the idiosyncratic manifestations of emotions implied in text-based characters within the levels of communicative behaviour, specifically geared towards film acting. In *phase five* we provide the students with a process to follow so that they maintain and improve their skill level and apply these skills during active preparation for a specific role, in such a manner that will serve their character creation to contribute to filmic verisimilitude. This phase serves as the culmination of all the knowledge and skills that they have acquired through their actor training as alluded to earlier. In this process we facilitate knowledge and skills creation and preparation through the following trajectory: a continuous process of embodied practice and expressions of ur-emotions as well as various other emotions using the Plutchnik wheel as guide. In this practice we advise that the actor should acknowledge, investigate and manifest their

idiosyncratic patterns and preferences, followed by embodied manifestations of emotions that fall outside their idiosyncratic patterns. This may be informed by Body into Space and Effort attributes not typical of the actor themselves. Perhaps this can be referred to as the actor's work on themselves. With regards to the specific film, we ensure that they are comfortable with analysing the film text to: understand the character within and through their life world; to determine what behaviour patterns are typical to the character; what are the emotions that the character will express or suppress; how the character's manifestation of emotions will be shaped by the socio-cultural paradigm; and other idiosyncrasies of the character and their life world. We facilitate their understanding and creation of a character's emotional arc. We deem a clearly demarcated emotional arc crucial for the film actor to circumvent obstacles due the non-linear shooting. Once the character's emotions and the emotional arc have been determined, we advise that the actor prepares the manifestations of the characters through what Bond refers to as mechanical and inductive process (Bond 2018). We strongly advise against stepping into the integrative phase. This is followed by the memorisation of the character's dialogue[19]. This process is then carried over into the actor's professional performance journey and the specific films that they may work on.

Efficacy of the process in practice

Following the training or skills development process discussed above, film actors must continuously engage with the process offered in phase five to maintain and hone their skills[20]. The actor's ongoing active preparation of their embodied effector strategies may circumvent challenges posed by the film medium. Although film actors must (often) perform their

[19] Although our five-phase approach is continuously under development and iterative scrutiny, the trajectory stayed the same over time.
[20] Should the actor fall into habitual patterns, they are advised to revisit phases 1 – 4.

performance score out of sequence, in the absence of an audience and after limited rehearsal time, they will be able to draw from their embodied knowledge in the moment of performance. Rix (2001:211) explains that the performance moment "... is the 'magic moment' when the individual's genuine emotion emerges […] from the practiced pattern". Several South African film actors who follow the process that we offered above, have been commended for their performance of 'genuine emotion'. Izel Bezuidenhout, Jacques Bessenger and Elani Dekker[21] commented[22] on the efficacy of the process:

Izel Bezuidenhout claims: "I use it often in films for various characters". Three prominent South African films in which Bezuidenhout portrayed characters' emotions through psychophysical induction include *Flatland* (2019), *Wild is the wind* (2020) and *Nagvrees* (Night fear*)* (2021). Bezuidenhout's work received respectable reviews. Lodge (2019) states in the Berlin Film Review that she efficiently portrayed *Flatland's* ragged activist by fully emerging herself in the demands of the material while her role in *Nagvrees* is described as "short-lived yet effective" (Splingmovies 2022) (See Figure 1).

[21] In this particular example the three actors could be seen as belonging to the same socio-cultural paradigm. However, in our teaching practice we facilitate a diverse range of actors.
[22] Through personal correspondence.

Figure 1: Izel Bezuidenhout experiencing the integrative phase in character[23] in the film *Nagvrees* (used with permission from MNet)

Award winning actor, Jacques Bessenger, continuously engages in the embodied strategies towards the induction of emotion. He states that he does not consciously apply the induction process directly before an on-screen performance but realises retrospectively that he had induced emotion psychophysically. Bessenger states: "I do it automatically to cry… I implement it and realise that that's what I did in hindsight". Films in which Bessenger displays heightened emotion include *Krotoa* (2017), *Stiekyt* (Stand Out) (2022) and *Blindelings* (Blindly) (2023). Bessenger has been described as "a doyen in the industry" (Thangevelo 2023); "one of South Africa's best actors" drawing audiences in with his "fantastic subtle expressions" (Theart 2022) and "a master of his craft" (2023 email from L van Nierop to the first author; unreferenced). Van Nierop (2023) states that Bessenger's performances are authoritative, carefully curated, entirely convincing, energetic yet subtle and multi-dimensional. Figure 2 is taken from *Blindelings*.

[23] We deliberately do not name the emotion that we observe in the various Figures, as interpretations are subjective and contextual.

Figure 2: Jacques Bessenger experiencing the integrative phase in character in the film *Blindelings* (used with permission from 17 Film Street Media and The Film Factory)

Elani Dekker explains that she found value in our five-phase approach towards embodying emotion and started implementing it shortly after she was introduced to the process. While initially anticipating the process to be mechanical, Dekker states that once she engaged with it she "felt it!". Dekker found it especially useful when she performed in *Liewe Lisa* (*Dear Lisa*) (2019) where the breath patterns in particular assisted her in manifesting emotion and in *Toorbos* (*Dream forest*) (2019) where the psychophysical induction of emotion contributed to her portrayal of confrontational scenes. Lodge (2019) describes that Dekker carries the film (*Toorbos*) with her "fine, quiet performance (and) guileless poise", a performance hailed by Young (2021) as "luminous and intriguing". A screenshot of Dekker's performance forms Figure 3.

Figure 3: Elani Dekker experiencing the integrative phase in character in the film *Toorbos* (used with permission from The Film Factory)

Conclusion

This article argued that embodied strategies which draw from psychophysical/embodied actions under voluntary control, to elicit emotions, may aid the film actors in preparing to portray emotion on film. The argument applies specifically to South African film actors, since South African film budgets do not allow for extensive preparation and rehearsal periods. South African film actors prepare their portrayal of emotion as part of their performance scores in isolation and are expected to present their already crafted performances while the camera is rolling. This outcome may be applicable to countries with similar profiles regarding limited film budgets and minimum preparation and rehearsal time. The training approach providing embodied strategies to the induction of emotion discussed in this article provides film actors with techniques they can continuously and actively engage in so that they may perform emotions instantly and with ease. The approach is a culmination of various existing approaches,

that we have an embodied understanding of, based on human congruent elements of emotion under voluntary control and is transferable to film actors globally.

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