

Glaubwürdigkeit – Das Wesentliche wirken lassen, bis es wirkt

Ein Transferangebot aus dem Schauspiel-Coaching

Zusammenfassung *Darstellerische Glaubwürdigkeit ist menschliche Glaubwürdigkeit. Diese hat mehr mit Sein als Schein zu tun, ist kein So-tun-als-ob. Glaubwürdige Persönlichkeiten wirken wie glaubwürdige Schauspieler durch sich selbst und aus sich selbst heraus, in lebendigem Kontakt mit dem Gegenüber. Die Voraussetzung dafür ist Vertrauen in die eigene Identität durch Verwurzelung in authentischer Erfahrung, denn jede Performance entwickelt sich aus dem individuellen Sein, unabhängig von Inhalt, Form und Methodik. Das Resümee meines zwölfjährigen Coachingalltags im Spannungsfeld wirtschaftlicher Effizienz und künstlerischer Überzeugungskraft beschreibt meinen Coachingansatz, der Glaubwürdigkeit und Wesentlichkeit in den Mittelpunkt stellt. Mein hier erstmals vorgestelltes Glaubwürdigkeitsmodell und dessen Methoden existentieller Wesentlichkeit bestehen auch den Transfer zu anderen Zielgruppen.*

Schlüsselwörter *Selbstvertrauen Schauspielkunst Film- und Fernsehproduktionen*

Credibility – Creating Credibility Through the Essential

A transfer of experience from acting coaching

Abstract *Credibility as an actor means credibility as a person. It has much more to do with reality than appearance and isn't just about pretending. Credible personalities convince in the way credible actors do: They draw from within and create a living connection with others. The most important prerequisite is trusting in your own identity by being rooted in authentic experiences, because every performance develops from inside a person regardless of the content, form, or methodology. This summary of twelve years of everyday coaching, which took place in the tense relationship between economic efficiency and the artistic power of persuasion, describes my personal coaching approach, where credibility and materiality are at the center. The credibility model I present here for the first time and its method of existential materiality have proven to be valuable for other groups as well.*

Keywords *Self-confidence Acting Film and television productions*

1 Introduction

In March 1999, a producer approached me with the offer to act as an internal acting coach to prepare the newly formed lead-actor ensemble of an established ARD early-evening series for their roles and to provide support for their acting during filming in consultation with the directors. I agreed without having any idea of what exactly I was getting into.

A few years prior, after spending nearly ten years in New York, I had returned to my hometown Berlin. I had escaped the narrow confines of West Berlin when I was 21. My fascination with human nature motivated my intense drama studies, and the desire for something vibrant had been the reason for my leaving. Homesickness brought me back. "Working where things were really happening, and being paid by the people with the money" was the perfect culmination to my years of education in the US. I was now jointly responsible for ensuring a smooth flow during shooting and ensuring quality acting as well as the correct dramaturgical interpretation of the script.

I worked for twelve as an in-house acting coach on a project-related basis with over 30 well-known German television productions. My clients included children, teenagers and adults, trained actors, amateurs, stars and young talent in main roles as well as secondary and temporary roles across all genres and formats. I gave my best to others with loyalty and passion – until the actress in me re-awakened and I began to shoot in Germany and internationally. At the same time, I continued to develop my methodological approach and also received systematic professional coaching training at the artop GmbH institute at Humboldt University Berlin.

Professional film acting is about "being" instead of "performing" in dramatically heightened situations. In this essay, I describe the structural requirements and phenomena of the film and television industry, describe the position of

actors in it, and provide an insight into role preparation and everyday coaching on set. Credibility, authenticity and generosity were central concepts that worked together with other factors in my daily coaching with hundreds of actors.

What's the difference between good and passable acting? Providing precisely defined requirements is not enough to bring out that certain something. To be credible, the essential aspect of humanity has to be activated and not merely quoted. This requires the focused willingness to dive in, let oneself be touched and expanded, to emerge and to be vulnerable; it means abandoning pseudo-expertise. This in turn requires a certain degree of inner security and freedom that goes beyond poses, effects and PR campaigns.

But is this authenticity relevant for other target groups such as management? I offer a perspective on this: The essential as an opportunity, method and way to achieve inner security and natural self-awareness in authentic contact with oneself and others. This report concludes with the credibility model I developed, which places my experiences in a systematic context.

2 Structural requirements of the film industry and the situation actors are in

The film industry produces intangible economic goods whose financial and artistic success includes high investment costs, far-reaching decisions, and risks that are difficult to calculate. Producing something of substance involves great commitment on the part of those involved, complex alliances, and circumstances that are difficult to foresee. Every project has its special dynamics and is radically oriented toward results. And every decision and every day of shooting is costly.

Directors and lead actors shape the mood on set, which also depends on products and production. The ways directors stage and make decisions differ greatly as do their relationships and openness to actors and the team. For actors, every role has the potential to increase their market value – in an occupation where there is no guarantee that there will be another job and no long-term security. Salaries are stagnant, state social and retirement care is deficient, the gap between well-paid and poorly-paid actors is huge, and women earn less than men.

Film and television actors come to the set prepared and ready to shoot. In most cases, they are able to adapt to the interplay with colleagues who have different mentality, the director's staging instructions, and the circumstances on site in a flexible way that looks good on camera. Thorough preparation for roles and shooting is essential; nobody wants to waste costly shooting time because of lack of preparation. Any attention from the director is highly valued by actors.

Reputation plays a central role in the film industry – people like to talk about their colleagues. Acting success, interesting encounters as well as a lack of timely feedback accompanied by high personal effort and individual insecurities are also closely intertwined. The need for attention, community, and recognition shape a lot of personalities; so it's good if people get along and actors leave a good impression on the team and colleagues.

Whether it's in cinema, television, film or series productions, in main or secondary roles – the audience doesn't care where and how an actor learned their craft, what demands they place on themselves, or how they prepared. What counts for the audience – in the context of their visual habits and personal taste – is sympathy, credibility, notoriety and of course outward appearance. Each of these aspects can work in favor of or against the actor and has an influence on the casting decisions and the overall success of the production – it also has a personal effect on the actor who is constantly existentially dependent on being in demand and cast.

3 The art of acting

Konstantin S. Stanislavski established the modern art of acting in the spirit of naturalism at the end of the 19th century with the Moscow Art Theatre (Stanislavski 1952). He understood the interaction between inner experience and physical expression and believed the actor's job was to animate their role with the wide spectrum of their own being and experience. He experimented and worked for 30 years as a theater head, director, actor and pedagogue. After a guest performance of the Moscow Art Theatre in New York in 1923, Richard Boleslawski and Maria Ouspenskaya stayed and founded the Laboratory Theatre. As both a school and a theater company, it attracted

Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, and Harold Clurman.

Inspired by the growing interest in his lectures on his work involving the natural perception of the actor, Harold Clurman, along with Lee Strasberg, founded the Group Theatre, which included Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler, and Robert Lewis. The group methodically developed socially critical pieces according to naturalist principles with passion (Clurman 1985). With reference to Stanislavski, the previous Group Theatre members developed their own methodological approaches that continue to be the undisputed foundation of the art and craft of acting today.

Strasberg, head of the legendary Actors Studio, is considered the official founder of method acting (Garfield 1984): Based on perceptual sensitization, the actor learns to employ their own personal experiences and emotional memories in a focused way for their own acting (Easty 1981). Adler studied with Stanislavski for a short time. Credibility and the imagination of the actor were at the center for them (Adler 2010). "Acting is doing": Meisner developed his Meisner technique at the Neighborhood Playhouse in a goal and action-oriented way for the immediacy of acting (Meisner 1987). Lewis, who directed and taught at the Yale School of Drama (Lewis 1980), studied with Michael Chechov, who had left the Moscow Art Theatre in 1928 and was a proponent of a physical approach that went beyond the individual (Petit 2014).

Stanislavski's ideas are the foundation of the modern art of acting. They are timeless and independent of fame and glamor, providing the tools and the foundation of professional training as an actor – complemented by vocal, articulation, and physical training and other topics. Quality acting is not about reciting dialogue or following the director's instructions as precisely as possible, nor is it about learning by rote or being able to cry on cue. Quality acting means the actor uses their own personality as an artistic tool to bring a fictitious figure to life credibly in a way that fits with the requirements of the script and the director.

Acting is human behavior within dramatically condensed reality. When performing, actors don't live in ordinary life; they live in a dramatically condensed form of ordinary life. A day like any other is not just a day like any other – it's a day like any other where something extraordinary happens. So when working on staged reality, it is less about documentary fidelity and more about dramatic condensation, about existential being: The first time... The best time... The last time. This principle of combining the ordinary and the extraordinary is something beginners have to learn.

Camera technology, craftsmanship and handling language are of course all extremely important, but they are not at the center: We feel the spark, our interest is ignited, and our lives are expanded. Convincing actors touch us because credibility touches us – this is true in real life as well as with the kind of credibility involved in fictitious circumstances. The audience doesn't decide to believe – they just believe. Credibility is art not kitsch; it's possible at any time and happens or doesn't, is appreciated or not. Credibility is precious.

4 Preparing for shoots and coaching on set

The reasons for production hiring an acting coach are clear: time and money savings, fidelity to the original, quality of performance and dramaturgical continuity, conflict prevention, and additional security through a contact person on set. The smooth functioning of children, teenagers, and untrained actors in main roles or emotionally difficult scenes has to be ensured for the sake of all the participants and the commissioned production. This also means ensuring professional working behavior under time pressure and changing circumstances that are difficult to predict, all under heightened scrutiny.

What exactly does this actor or this ensemble need from me in the specific context of this production – in terms of content and form, concretely and at the moment – to perform their best, or even to go beyond their best? The coaching process is oriented toward results and is broadly varied. As an internal assignment from an organization in everyday German film and television productions, it requires collegiality, flexibility, and stamina that go far beyond coaching: It requires dealing with the most diverse requirements and expectations from production and the team-dependent power and communication dynamics with simultaneous self-organization as an additional team member.

I initiate the conditions for the first encounter in a relaxed atmosphere and ensure openness, lightness, concentration and substance in an attentive resonance with the actor and their potential. I show exactly who I am and listen carefully. This makes the actor feel comfortable doing the same. We work in a wide space with a sign on

the door that reads: "Everything is okay the way it is." I also take an "inventory" to understand what the actor is really concerned with about the project. We approach this with unbiased questions – simply and directly.

For reasons of time, when coaching I keep the analysis of the script, which I've done ahead of time, regarding the genre, dramaturgy, and role of the figures, precise and short. We soon turn to the relevant facts, such as those of a familiar, occupational, or historical nature. Using these facts as an anchor along with an unbiased exploratory attitude, we research and expand the personal relationship with the character and explore the character's motives and their humanity. This process occurs throughout the entire preparation.

The character's primary existential goal is a central aspect of preparing the role. Stanislavski described the primary goal as the backbone of the character. "What the figure wants or needs more than anything else in the world" is often unclear to them. There are also obstacles to achieving their primary goal, which provides the character with a wealth of dynamism for action. We "absorb" both and find active intentions for each scene.

Relationships such as family bonds invite clichés: Since they are established by the plot they can simply be asserted. In a two-person scene, there are really four people involved: two actors, and two characters. What interpersonal role do similarities, differences, tradition or love, sexuality, appearance, education, or finances play? What attracts and what repels? I help the actors to give fictitious relationships substance through substitutes from their own life or with the help of their imagination and creative techniques.

What someone says is not as important as what they mean when they say it: Language, thoughts, occasions and intentions all belong together and are connected. Rock-solid fundamental convictions also shape the character's view of the world. Thoughts, words and sentences emerge in the moment from a very specific inner and outer context and different mental attitudes. We may come up with the words to say in certain situations, but we often don't know how we would say it.

We play, improvise, do variations on the original, and explore scenes and chains of events as well as their transitions, backgrounds, actions, twists, decisions, rhythms and tempos. Principles about the craft and camera work are also presented when they are needed. The key stimuli and actions in the scene are supposed to be internalized as much as the dialogue so the actor can perform intuitively in the character while following their impulses. The actor can always focus on the moment in their acting again as if it were happening for the first time.

Discovering a role is a kind of artistic detective work and requires a dramaturgically intelligent analysis as well as a deep understanding of the material and its characters. Through highly specific questions and individual tasks, I support my counterpart to develop a personal relationship to the character, to explore circumstances that shape daily life, to develop patterns for action and physicality, and to open spaces of resonance beyond language without becoming lost in arbitrariness. The actor inhabits the character physically, mentally, and spiritually "until things click." This process takes minutes if it has to be reduced to its absolute essentials.

The art of acting is the art of condensing. Presence touches people through openness, vulnerability and the controlled loss of control. Attitudes, thoughts, desires, fears, and expectations are shown through glances, pauses, small gestures, and body language. Regardless of the external circumstances, the more secure one is internally, whether it is because of instinct or experience, the more one can venture in terms of emotional openness and vulnerability. The more insecure one is internally, the more invulnerability tends to be asserted.

The relationship between the coach and the actor changes as soon as the shooting starts. Generally the director and other actors become the reference-points now. The more inexperienced the actor, the more complex the role and scenes, the more support they need. This can be about attitude when acting, comfort with the text, inspiration, motivation, moral support or emotional results, and/or involve being an additional attentive eye behind the camera.

Time is money. I follow the action along with the director on the monitor with headphones. Whether it's a Hollywood director or a director for a series: The relationship with the director is based on trust that can only be gained through professional preparation and specific work on set. In contrast, I can concentrate completely on the acting. I have to decide within seconds whether a pointed criticism on my part regarding the potential for improvement in terms of staging is appropriate or wanted. Less is more here.

Clear, solutions-oriented communication without arguments about who is right or wrong is the end-all-be-all. The

quality of the set coaching is determined by the ability to offer the actor the best possible intervention that can be adopted immediately and to do this at the right time and quickly. Corrections have to get at the heart of things, relate to the other actors, animate the desire to act, and be repeatable – and all of this has to take account of the genre, format, script, role, scene, and the wishes of the channel and production.

5 What stands in the way of credibility?

All that glitters is not gold. Anyone can call themselves an actor; the professional title isn't protected, nor is the title of acting coach. Credibility, however, like love, cannot be bought and is not negotiable. Judge for yourself: Watch a film and pause a moment – it doesn't matter whether it's an emotional scene or not: Take some time. Does the situation or atmosphere touch you? Does something draw your attention? Do you look at the surface, or do you look at the background because of boredom? Do you see smeared makeup and a nice car, or do you feel the pain of a woman who is leaving her husband?

Aside from all their passion for the profession, actors are existentially dependent on recognition. This goes hand in hand with widespread uncertainty about their own identity especially in the face of the rejections and dry spells that are always a part of the job for everyone. The longing to be "a perfect fit" is accompanied by the danger of powerlessness and insignificance. Acting with presence always requires a bit of freedom and courage. It requires confidence in oneself and in the face of uncontrollable circumstances, the readiness to let go of preparation and dive off the cliff in order to be visible, tangible and experienceable through authentic expression – an actor can't be satisfied with clichés.

Actors often make purely intellectual decisions about how their character ticks, feels, and behaves. Even if they feel well prepared to answer questions about the character quickly and consistently, they lack conviction when acting; The answers don't transform into credibility; the acting doesn't "ignite," is constrained, predictable, or off in some way. Presence, performative depth, and physical vitality unfold beyond ideas and concepts only after the actor has got to the heart of the character, scene, or relationship and integrated it into their acting.

Should've, would've, could've... – Overthinking weakens or prevents attentiveness and the ability to take action. The focus shifts to the space of half-hearted possibilities. "Practice is more important than research": Experiencing the essence of a scene in its emotional and physical resonance, just trying out different things instead of talking often requires effort. Admitting one's own truth has nothing to do with resignation but with the courage to become tangible and therefore vulnerable. Not everyone is ready or able to look into their own being. But that's where everything starts – it's where the power to act emerges.

Lack of motivation expresses itself sometimes in the fact that an actor doesn't take responsibility for their role or doesn't love it because they are annoyed that the role is too small, the pay is too little, or there have been changes to the text. Or they are annoyed about being typecast or getting too little guidance from the director who, because of time constraints, might be satisfied with a first take and offer no comments. The actor may have taken the role because they needed the money, without agreeing with the conditions. Beyond being thwarted internally by the whole affair, the actor also harms themselves in their work.

Acting, inspired by the richness of human nature in the sense of Stanislavski, is a matter of internal attitude. Status-thinking, self-complacency, small-mindedness, pseudo-expertise, and the arrogance of mediocrity have no place here: Basic artistic values are tendentially distorted at all levels of the industry, are disputed and judged superficially, and are all too often thrown around frivolously. Resignation and half-heartedness are part of the atmosphere – in contrast with the US industry where the belief still holds that talent and ability will at some point prevail. This might sound naïve, but it nourishes and expands the soul of the profession, gives it dignity and meaning.

6 Credibility through essence

What works? What really works? What works behind reality? To develop a character from within, we have to be ready to engage in a creative encounter with unknown facets of our personality. This is a process that is oriented toward what works behind reality. The more inner strength is present, the more risk can be taken, which shows itself in the courage to be human and therefore imperfect. Creativity is freed here, carried by a truthfulness that

makes a convincing impression. Complex characters can be reduced to their essence this way.

Saying what cannot be said is something poetry does, but it also fits acting. What's important here is not some particular technique but talent, individual skill, and sensitivity to the perception of what is essential and special behind the words, fed by the actor's own authentic being which does not judge or comment. Inner wealth, abundance, and complexity can emerge from oneself. Simplicity and truth are not what is difficult. What is difficult is the unfamiliar.

Just like the characters we embody, we are more than just words and reason. We are more than what is reflected on the outside. Our rational language isn't adequate to express our sensations. Our entire world is built on reason, but it's only a small part of our being. The greater part of our self is concealed in parts of the brain that largely determine our emotions and behavior. We don't talk about what is really going on based on a clear inner attitude, but this is something that still becomes clear from the subtext. We don't need to do anything except not stand in the way of the essential.

An inspired working environment is possible anywhere, anytime; neither the coach nor the client is dependent on an ideal setting. By fully accepting the changing conditions on the film set, we can radically focus on the essential and the present, the possible and the actual in a solutions-oriented way. Being able to use the current situation in an uncomplicated way as the starting point for coaching creates trust and strengthens the client's personality, responsibility, and talent. We can activate dramatic credibility under any circumstances if it has been prepared for in an orderly way.

Credibility requires a feeling for one's own identity. Of course, the actor doesn't need to have experienced for themselves what the character is experiencing: They have to be able to convincingly translate the psychological dimension of the event from the perspective of a character. How to present the character's primary goal? The more essential the personal relationship of the actor is to the character, the greater the likelihood that they understand the existential drive of the character. This relationship can arise from the imagination, a current state, an experienced or heard story, or even a wild mixture of all of these – but it always has to be the actor's own at the core. Added to this is the ability to trust and build upon the right inspiration.

My work with the actor is also centered on this idea of the essential with regard to efficiently making the actor aware of the richness of their being. Connected with authentic experience and courage about their own potential, this can ultimately be translated in an unlimited way into complex tasks, expanded, and modified to find the right form for the occasion. The only prerequisite is a willingness to do so. This is what my credibility work for actors is all about.

Credibility exists beyond language.

Credibility is conscious, unconscious, and essential understanding.

Credibility works through itself and out of itself.

Credibility is lived in the moment and becomes effective through contact with oneself and the outside.

Credibility is not diminished by the doubt in the eye of the other.

Credibility is rooted in authentic experience.

Credibility is more about reality than appearance.

7 Let the essential work until it's effective – a proposal

Credibility in acting has much more to do with reality than appearance; it's not just pretending: transferring this idea to other target groups, whether it's people in situations of change or business managers, offers excellent and varied opportunities and practical applications, if we focus on what works behind reality, existential knowledge of and trust in oneself, and the universal as a bridge to the world. Therein lies the potential accessible to anyone, anytime to strengthen and focus on their essential identity in the sense of self-empowerment: Existence is already happening, we don't have to rethink it.

Self-confidence, responsibility, orientation, and contact: Strengthening one's personality is not only important in acting coaching. Integrating one's own "primary goal" provides strength, direction, lightness, and perhaps even

dignity. Recognizing one's own values and actions retrospectively from decisions already made, and being able to let this knowledge have an effect leads one to recognize: "Yes, this is me." But this is also followed by the recognition: "But I am much more," just as exhaling follows inhaling. Being able to separate facts, interpretations, and judgments and "absorbing" values, responsibility, and achievements strengthens one's own identity and supports the development of one's own potential.

Performative ability is a necessary foundation for acting, but it isn't an art itself (Stegemann 2017). This principle is transferable to other areas because the application of method in acting does not guarantee credibility per se, just as little as the application of coaching methods, which nearly anyone can use anytime for any actor, does not constitute professional coaching (Bachmann 2015).

Even in the face of a lack of external resonance, one can trust in one's own vitality and authentic potential: Feeling oneself and others, appreciating oneself and others, finding form and language, standing in the midst of life, and developing oneself are the core of my credibility work, for which I have developed my method over the past twelve years in the profession.

My credibility model, which I am presenting here for the first time, understands credibility as the ability to consciously choose what is existentially essential and to experience, apply, and use it even beyond language. It has proven to be a long-term success regardless of the target group or occasion. The following core thoughts are at the foundation of the model: To be perceived as credible, I have to be credible. This means an active and passive "Yes," based on resonance with essential experiences and essential existence, have permeated oneself and are embodied.

I act on the basis of a consistent "Yes": I accept responsibility for myself and my decisions.

- I choose roles for myself and perform as well as possible, fill them as well as possible.
- I accept responsibility for my decisions and can take care of myself.
- I always use my resources in a targeted way to my mind, with exactly the energy the task requires.

I allow this "Yes" to work through me: I am in authentic resonance with myself and with my counterpart.

- I feel well, am in the right place, and in the right role: The people and my work environment are suited to me.
- I am in resonance with myself, my values and resources, my insecurities and my potential.
- I meet others without a mask on and at eye level.

I act on the basis of the greatest possible security: I know the facts, and I refuse to judge.

- I can separate facts and interpretations.
- I have researched things well and prepared myself as well as possible.
- I know my industry and am up to date and in dialogue with colleagues.

I allow security to work through me: I trust in myself.

- I have the essential in view, let go, and am open for the unexpected.
- I trust in contact with the essential in my creative process.
- I trust in my preparation and my vitality.

In individual coaching and seminars, I work with salespeople, contractors, scientists, artists, and business managers (in seminars in cooperation with business management). Here is a concluding word to managers, which applies to others as well:

To trust in employees, you have to trust in yourself first. To appreciate employees, you have to appreciate yourself first. Self-confidence and trusting in oneself develop through learning that it pays to trust in oneself. Appreciation and being able to value oneself and others are only possible through one's own experience, the understanding that we have value, are valuable, and can value ourselves.

In his 2012 book "Radical Leadership," Reinhardt Sprenger writes: "Only people who like themselves and like others can really organize and support the performance of others" (p. 262). This motto is something I can attest to given my personal and professional experience.

Heike Hanold-Lynch is an actress, coach and lecturer. She studied drama for nine years in New York, with Sanford Meisner among others, and works in front of the camera for film and television in a variety of genres, with Stephen Daldry, Wes Anderson, and Sam Garbarski and others. She has assisted on sets with over 30 film and television productions in Germany as the responsible acting coach. Christiane Paul was the first German actress to receive an international Emmy Award for her collaboratively developed role with Hanold-Lynch. Hanold-Lynch also works as an artrop-institute-certified systemic coach with managers and people in public life. She provides coaching, seminars, and lectures on request. (www.hanold-lynch.de).

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