STUDIA UBB DRAMATICA, LXX, 2, 2025, p. 203 - 207
(Recommended Citation)
DOI:10.24193/subbdrama.2025.2.12

# *The Last of the Mohicans*

**András HATHÁZI**[1]

**Abstract:** The problem which we are confronted with nowadays seem to be the same as when cinema first appeared. If we replace Artificial Intelligence with cinema, we observe that one hundred years ago we asked the same questions with the same concern. Has nothing changed in the world? No. In its essence, not a thing! But for about two hundred years, we have had the opportunity to think about the world in a different manner. In 1831, János Bolyai published his work *Appendix*, in which he created a new world out of nothing. Since then, it has been scientifically proven that the visible world is only a possibility, not the only reality, since every observed phenomenon appears as the observer wants to see it. Then why can't we think differently? All the theories we bombard actors with, impact, energy, presence, communication theory, are meaningless. Theater studies are a joke from the perspective of an actor's work, since they have nothing to add to this practical existence. So Artificial Intelligence may be an exciting toy in the hands of directors, set designers, and dramaturgs, as it can gather an enormous amount of material in images, text, and various effects, but it will have no impact on acting.

**Keywords:** acting, thinking outside the box, nothing has changed in the world.

[1] DLA, Hungarian Theatre Department, Faculty of Theatre and Film, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Email: andras.hathazi@ubbcluj.ro

©2025 STUDIA UBB DRAMATICA. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

When I registered for the conference *Film, Video, Digital and AI in Theatre Stages*, held in Cluj-Napoca, I sent the following text to the organizers:

> "Essentially (if there is an essence at all…), humans have never changed. It still takes the same amount of time to understand a joke, fall in love, and experience human relationships as it has at any time in the history of *Homo sapiens*.
> Theater (or at least the phenomenon we call as such) is basically about humans. (That is, if there is essence in theater.) And humans are represented in some form by actors.
> It seems, thus, that actors are humans themselves.
> Artificial Intelligence was created by humans. It is not defined exactly what it means, whether it has substance (whatever that may mean), but one thing is certain: it is a tool. A path to something. Like theater. Like acting.
> If Artificial Intelligence (like all theatrical effects) sometimes dazzles or even misleads in the hands of directors, then what can acting do with it? Does acting bring Artificial Intelligence closer to humans? Does it improve acting? Does it change humans in any way?"

I still believe this, which is why I won't waste much of our time.

The conference call for papers encourages those interested to submit writings on theater-related topics.

For me, there is no theater without actors.

This paper is about actor training.

I would like to point out two ideas from the conference call for papers:

1. Theater must face up to and work with new contemporary technologies.

and

2. Let us consider the challenges together that these technological changes bring to the artistic fields of theater and performance.

All right, let us face it and think about it, but can we step outside our current system of thoughts, or are we just repeating the same theories over and over again in a different form? Because the questions raised in the conference call seem to be the same as when cinema first appeared. (Or in the case of fine arts, when photography first appeared.)

Let's just replace Artificial Intelligence with cinema and read the questions raised as follows:

Now that cinema appeared, what are the major technological changes that surprise, delight, or influence us in connection with the performing arts?

How do moving images affect us, and what is their contribution?

Do the effects of film disturb theater and its reception, or not?

Should we fear new film technologies and the era of moving images we have entered?

What directions are contemporary theater and technology taking under the influence of cinema in the different genres of performance, from drama and comedy to dance theater, concert theater, documentary theater, and other types of stage performances?

Now all this seems ridiculous.

But a hundred years ago, we asked the same questions with the same concern. Has nothing changed in the world?

No. In its essence, not a thing! Although *Homo sapiens* appeared on Earth about 300,000 years ago, and cultural phenomena such as speech and music developed among their means of communication about 50,000 years ago, they are still racking their brains about the same questions. Where did we come from? Where are we going? What is the meaning of our existence? The same fears, hopes, beliefs, and delusions have accompanied us throughout our history.

This is why Buddha, Socrates, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, or the market woman who begins to philosophize desperately about the meaning of existence when we want to buy her goods for less than her asking price can be our contemporaries.

But for about two hundred years, we have had the opportunity to think about the world in a different manner.

In 1831, János Bolyai published his work *Appendix*, in which he created non-Euclidean geometry. He created a new world out of nothing. Since then, it has been scientifically proven that the visible world is only a possibility, not the only reality, since every observed phenomenon appears as the observer wants to see it. (So, science confirms that only the present moment exists.)

If I want to see people who think like me in this room, then that's what I'll see. If I want to see people who disagree with me, then that is what I'll see. And I will see every manifestation of my environment as confirmation of my particular view. So, I will always be right, because the world is the way I want to see it. Meanwhile, I found out nothing about the world except what I thought about it.

The world is really unknowable in an absolute sense (of course, what is absolute?), but it can be approached in many different ways. In actor training, however, we explain the phenomena in the same way as before Bolyai. We do not try to apply multiple points of view, but rather divide the same one into smaller and smaller parts. (Like in medicine, where an ophthalmologist knows now almost everything about the smallest components of the eye, but has little idea how these relate to the whole: the human body?) For us, the actor still plays a role. We still think that the actor's goal is the role. We still move only on the visible surface, not willing or not being able to look beyond our knowledge.

The situation is similar when it comes to ourselves. Everything we say about ourselves is just an image we have formed based on specific life experiences. We are neither good nor bad, neither beautiful nor ugly, neither smart nor stupid. We are actually all of these things together, and it all depends on what triggers us when we come in contact with something or someone.

And if we only think about all this, then why can't we think differently?

And that's just one side of the coin, our point of view. Because whatever might happen to us, however we appear, those who observe us can only give their own interpretation, draw conclusions about us based on their own points of view, experiences, and thoughts. Because they are stuck in their own thoughts.

That is why all the theories we bombard actors with, impact, energy, presence, communication theory, are meaningless. The more an actor knows, the less they can connect. Because they are no longer paying attention to the fact that they are a living human being, but are trying to achieve what Erika Fischer Lichte or what Patrice Pavis said. They are not in the moment in which they exist, but want to be in the moment in which they should be. But that does not exist, because it is only in their heads!

We are in our own heads either way. After all, we interpret what we are currently experiencing. But if, instead, we are preoccupied with what should be here now, then the game is over, life is over. Acting disappears, leaving only the grandiose theory about it. Depending on what's cool right now!

I suppose I should now explain and justify my statements. Scientifically.

I won't.

On the one hand, because theater studies are a joke from the perspective of an actor's work, since they have nothing to add to this practical existence, and on the other hand, because I have been doing this continually for the past fifteen years with absolutely no results whatsoever.

So, with regard to the questions raised, my experience is that Artificial Intelligence may be an exciting toy in the hands of directors, set designers, and dramaturgs, as it can gather an enormous amount of material in images, text, and various effects, but it will have no impact on acting.

Or if it does, then only insofar as it affects humans themselves as natural beings. And then more and more obese, screen-addicted aspiring actors who avoid personal relationships, are emotionally neglected, unable to pay attention to two things at once, struggling with attention deficit disorder will grapple with the same theory that actors are having difficulties with right now. And they don't understand why what they are doing is wrong.

Thank you very much for this opportunity!

***ANDRÁS HATHÁZI**, actor, director, writer, university professor at the Faculty of Theatre and Film of the Babeș-Bolyai University, where he deals with the actor's art and theatre improvisation. He obtained his doctorate in 2003 from the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest. His work consists of more than 100 theatre and film roles, dozens of theatre, puppet theatre and film directions, articles on the actor's art, plays and screenplays. He wrote four books and translated David Zinder's* Body-Voice-Imagination (Test-Hang-Képzelet, *2009). His work has been honoured with more than 50 individual and joint awards at national and international level.*