

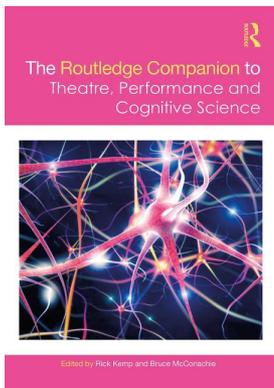
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## **The Routledge Companion to Theatre, Performance, and Cognitive Science**

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### **From Banana Phones to the Bard**

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FROM BANANA PHONES  
TO THE BARD

## The developmental psychology of acting

*Thalia R. Goldstein*

Acting is uniquely human. There is no theatre of chimpanzees, or drama for reptiles. But acting is not a monolithic skill. There are a large number of cognitive, social and emotional skills that are recruited and required in order to act. While some of these skills may be uniquely human and some are shared with other species, all evolved from animal origins. In this chapter, I explore a variety of developing psychological capabilities and their associations with the skills necessary to act and perform theatrical works. I briefly discuss how each skill develops both ontogenetically (i.e., during the child's lifespan) and phylogenically (i.e., how it developed through evolutionary means and what purpose it serves). I also examine whether these skills are increased by affiliation or exposure to engaging in theatre. Finally, I propose a coordinated framework of what it takes, cognitively and emotionally, to be an actor, and how each of these achievements is built upon (or not) in development. My goal is breadth, not depth. Any single skill discussed in this chapter is the topic of extensive research in psychology. Some skills also have large research histories on their connections to play, pretend, imagination, drama and theatre. But as theatre is a complex, intricate, human, cultural endeavour, so is developmental psychology. Matching semantic terms and descriptions is a first step to creating a dialogue between the two fields.

What are the skills required to act? Each acting teacher, theorist and performer may have a different list, and even within those lists, requisite skills may differ depending on role, play, venue and mood of the individual day. Although we do not have a systematic analysis of what happens, psychologically, in acting, and there have been very few experimental studies of the acting classroom (see Chapters 15 and 27), there are some candidate psychological abilities. These are present in every child, and many may have their bases in pretend play, a universal milestone in typical development (Weisberg, 2015). Broadly, psychological skills are typically divided into cognitive skills and social-emotional skills. 'Cognitive' skills include thought processes, such as learning, memory, language and problem solving. 'Social' skills involve engaging with others, understanding of others, behaviour towards others and understanding of self. 'Emotional' skills involve control and understanding of personal behavioural and emotional states. While each type of skill affects all other skills—development does not happen as isolated abilities—each skill is approached here more or less independently for ease of theorising.

The skills presented are not meant to be a complete catalogue of the psychological skills used while acting (and this chapter does not discuss physical or vocal skills), but without these capacities, performance would look very different than the kind of naturalistic, emotional enactment we expect actors to develop and train for performance in Western plays and films. These abilities are presented in the order of preparation for performance: first, the cognitive skills that set the scene, then the social skills to understand character and culture and finally the emotional skills to create and present a work to an audience. All of these capacities change over development: newborns have no concept of separating a fictional world from daily life, for example; toddlers are highly emotionally deregulated; watching young children lie can be quite humorous, as they cannot do so convincingly; and an in-depth understanding of other people's emotions is still incomplete even in adolescence.

### **Real and pretend: cognitive skills**

Cognitive skills allow actors to understand scripts and characters, and to think about the task of acting itself. To begin, theatre cannot exist without an understanding of fiction. Acting requires a cognitive quarantining of the real world from the world of the play, a split of real and fictional, self and character. A lack of this ability to quarantine is dangerous. Even very young children (as well as dogs and kittens, playing) understand quarantine, and engage in play-fighting and soft biting (Smith, 1982). At its most basic level, understanding the reality-fictional boundary begins at the age of 12 months and develops from there. An assumption is often made, but not (yet) supported empirically, that pretend play and acting are psychologically similar. Both involve quarantine (Leslie, 1987), imaginative creation and a separated character. But pretend involves demarcated behaviour (Lillard and Witherington, 2004; Ma and Lillard, 2013, 'What Makes'), while acting is not behaviourally tagged (Goldstein and Bloom, 2011). Pretend play involves over-exaggerated emotions, behaviours and actions. For example, children quickly learn when people are pretending to smile when they do not need to, or when it is incongruous with the situation being pretended (Ma and Lillard, 2006). In much of contemporary acting, the behavioural goal is naturalism or realism.

Pretense does not need to be taught. Even in cultures where pretend is discouraged or banned (Carlson, Taylor, and Levin, 1998), children still begin pretending around 12–18 months old. In fact, a lack of pretend is considered an early symptom of later developmental disorders (Jarrold, 2003). While most developmental textbooks and theories claim pretend play ends around the ages of 6–8 years, other research has found children continue to engage in pretend play through age 11 years or even later (Smith and Lillard, 2012). The nature of play changes and shifts over time. Children begin by using real objects in their world, as well as themselves as literal players, such as pretending to brush their own hair with a plastic hairbrush, or playing 'mommy' with a realistic baby doll. But over the preschool years, children begin to engage in symbolic substitution, using props and objects that may not be as characteristic of the real object, and themselves as characters further from their own lived experiences. At its most advanced meta-representational level, pretend play involves children undergoing transformations into animals or characters, or playing multiple characters in one pretend play session, using 'air' as props (e.g., imagined fish and pole while fishing, possibly a precursor to mime) (Hanline et al., 2008).

Research across psychology, anthropology and sociology has found that pretend play is associated with a variety of other developing skills, including social understanding (e.g., Youngblade and Dunn, 1995), executive functioning (e.g., Carlson and White, 2013; Taylor et al., 2009) and language (e.g., Bergen, 2002). However, whether pretense causes

such gains still requires more careful research (Lillard et al., 2013). The young of many other species play as a way to learn important skills, such as hunting and fighting (Bekoff and Byers, 2011). Evolutionarily, play may be the best recourse for learning critical survival skills (Sandseter and Kennair, 2011) as well as cultural norms and rituals (Legare and Harris, 2016; Tomasello, 2016). But pretend play is different from acting. Acting is sustained, and typically involves narrative, plot and arc. There is a goal of final or formal performance, which pretend play lacks (Weisberg, 2015). Pretend play seems more likely to be a way for children to learn or explore new ideas (Henricks, 2015; Gopnik and Walker, 2013; Weisberg et al., 2013). Acting may build on skills and constructs in pretend play, but it is not pretend play.

As part of pretend play and playing a character in a show, actors must engage in a more basic cognitive task: task switching between the needs of the play and audience, and the needs of the self as performer. They must engage in meta-representation of the world of the play and the world outside the play. This ability, whether in pretend play or a theatrical play, relies on a developing executive function. Executive function is the ability to resist acting impulsively, select where to focus attention and adapt to changing circumstances (Diamond, 2013). In rehearsal and performance, actors must be able to keep in mind their lines, the emotional state of the character, their behaviour, their movements around the stage, the placement of the audience, and so forth. Children develop their executive function beginning in pre-school, and continue to gain through adolescence and adulthood. This ability underlies most higher-order cognitive skills leading to better school readiness (Blair, 2002), academic success (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014), job success (Bailey, 2007) and even physical health (Stautz et al., 2016). There is some evidence that pretend play, and particularly engaging in high-fantasy pretend play (i.e., less realistic and more fantastical content), can help train and is associated with higher levels of executive function, particularly the ability to task switch (Berk and Meyers, 2013; Carlson, White, and Davis-Unger, 2014; Thibodeau et al., 2016). Without executive function, almost any task in acting would become impossible. Obviously, these types of planning and attention functioning are critical for evolutionary development, as they allow animals to adapt to changes in the environment. The focus of executive functioning for creative pursuits and art, however, is uniquely human.

Another set of cognitive skills necessary to act, which build on executive functions but are more cognitively complex, include memory, language and the ability to lie. Any engagement with scripted work is going to require memory and language abilities, core cognitive capacities that progress over development. However, most actors would not consider memory to be a distinct skill that makes them better at acting, but rather a skill required in order to engage with scripted work. There is extensive research on actors' cognitive techniques to best remember their scripts, as well as how these techniques can be used to help older adults increase their memories. (See Noice and Noice, Chapter 27, 'A Theatrical Intervention to Lower the Risk of Alzheimer's and Other Forms of Dementia' in this volume.) The basic findings from this body of work are that it is the embodiment of concepts – a focus on goals, objectives and tactics, rather than just focusing on memorisation – that causes higher levels of learning. However, this work does not investigate the developmental trajectory of memory for lines within children's pretend play or acting. Children's memory, as one would expect, gets better over time, correlated with their improved executive functioning (Zelazo et al., 2003). At the same time, children have a better memory for rhymes and songs than even adults (Király et al., 2017)!

More than memory, interpretation and understanding of the meaning of language—its subtleties and exact definitions—is central to performing. It is also the area in which educational theatre and curricula-integrated drama is most well researched, with the strongest evidence for transfer (where experience within theatre and drama leads to skills outside of

theatre and drama). In a large meta-analysis (a study of studies), children who participated in drama over a range of ages were found to have higher levels of verbal skills across a wide range of verbal outcomes, including reading comprehension, vocabulary level and writing, than children who did not participate in drama (Podlozny, 2000). Verbal development enables understanding of scripts, how best to perform both the words on the page and, critically, the subtext, or meaning underneath the lines. Yet children's understanding of metaphor develops slowly and similarly to their understanding of lying, as both are forms of representational language (Winner, 1997). Children comprehend the non-literal use of language, whether lying, metaphor or sarcasm, at around eight years old (Demorest et al., 1983). As young children cannot understand non-literal text, they might have difficulties interpreting scripts.

There is no question that all forms of language are a singularly human ability. Language requires representation, as words do not usually sound like what they mean; only onomatopoeic sound words such as 'crash' and 'bang' have that distinction. While there have been a few animals who can understand language (such as Koko the signing Gorilla [Patterson, 1978], or dogs who understand commands [Kaminski, Call, and Fischer, 2004; Markman and Abelev, 2004], no other animal produces language or communicates through spoken or written phrases).

Finally, lying as a cognitive skill is directly related to meta-representation and shares several important cognitive qualities with acting. When lying, the liar's goal is to convince the people watching them that the emotional and behavioural experience they are having is real. But a major difference between lying and acting is that lying involves only the liar knowing that what is happening is not true, while in acting, both audience and actor understand that what is happening on stage is part of a play (Goldstein and Bloom, 2011). Lying requires three separate cognitive components: an understanding of the liar's own beliefs and desires (also perhaps necessary in acting), an understanding of the beliefs and desires of the other person (similar to understanding a character) and the ability to engage in the type of behaviour that will make the other person believe what the liar is telling them (the actual performance of acting). Even semantically, we often confuse the terms lying and acting in everyday use.

There are multiple other animals (and even plants) in our evolutionary line that engage in deception. When discussing the evolution of lying, however, the question is whether 'lying' requires conscious and purposeful deception of others, or if automatic deceptive behaviour can be considered lying (Whiten and Byrne, 1988). One might argue that camouflage or mimicry (e.g., a stick insect that looks like a stick) is a form of deception, but is not lying (Wickler, 1968).

Children learn to lie slowly and in steps, depending on the type of lie. Antisocial lies develop early, at around the age of three, although it takes a long time for children to be able to lie without giving away their lies (until at least seven years old) (Talwar and Lee, 2002 'Development of lying'). Prosocial lies (e.g., white lies), which are more culturally imbued, develop later, although children still cannot back up false statements with additional false statements, engaging in 'semantic leakage' in which they just cannot help but tell the truth (Xu et al., 2010; Talwar and Lee, 2008 'Little liars'; Talwar and Lee, 2008 'Social and cognitive correlates').

Lying depends on a theory of mind (the ability to understand another's beliefs, desires or intentions), so much so that training a child on theory of mind will then cause them to try out lying (Ding et al., 2015)! However, theory of mind is a cognitive capacity more central to social abilities. Thus, I now turn to the social and emotional skills that allow actors to produce characters, and how the development of such skills allows or prevents children from being able to act.

### **Self and other: social skills**

Actors must understand and interact with others, understand themselves in social contexts, portray facial, vocal and physical states read by an audience and understand the emotions, goals, intentions, beliefs, personalities and backgrounds of their characters. Psychologically, before an actor can engage socially, the first step to perform a character is the separation of presentational self from authentic self. This can occur either through a separation of real world from pretend world, and then further character creation within the pretend world, or as a decision to perform the self for presentation (such as comics and hosts who are not inhabiting a character, but are inhabiting a performative self). Actors must understand themselves before they can portray someone else: they must understand that they exist as a separate self from other people, and how to control their physical and vocal self in order to portray states and traits to others. This begins developmentally around the age of 18 months: when toddlers can first begin to recognise themselves in the mirror (Amsterdam, 1972). Being able to recognise oneself in a mirror means you see yourself as a unique individual, a 'self' separate from the world around you, that remains consistent in appearance over time (Asendorpf and Baudonnière, 1993). However, this ability is not unique to humans. Chimpanzees (Gallup, 1970), bottlenose dolphins (Reiss and Marino, 2001), magpies (Prior, Schwarz, and Güntürkün, 2008) and elephants (Plotnik, De Waal, and Reiss, 2006) all recognise themselves.

Beyond mere recognition, creating an identity, a sense of self as part of the larger culture, is a developmental progression that continues through adolescence and into adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966). Beginning in adolescence, individuals go through an exploration process, in which they reevaluate past goals and explore other options for future goals, before committing to an identity going forward. Both elements of exploration (i.e., looking at the various options for identities) and commitment (firmly deciding the facets of identity they want to create) are required for healthy understanding of self (Dunkel and Anthis, 2001). While animals may have a basic sense of self as an individual within a group, we do not know if animals have a sense of self as a distinct personality or identity.

All individuals inhabit different roles in different areas of their lives, and some may feel more or less authentic to an actual self (Sheldon et al., 1997; Goffman, 1978). While acting, it is psychologically unknown whether a separation between self and character is necessary, but at the very least, an actor who cannot separate the character he or she is portraying from his or her own life at all is going to have trouble acting. Even with psychological separation, it is possible that the actors' self-perceptions of their personalities change as a result of engaging with the personality of a character (Hannah et al., 1994). The supposed merging of self and other when acting is regularly part of interviews with actors. Audience members, child and adult, believe this merging is happening (Goldstein and Bloom, 2015 'Characterizing characters'; Goldstein and Bloom, 2015 'Is It Oscar-Worthy?'; Goldstein and Filipe, 2017). Yet we have very little systematic research. The idea of blending or changing of selves may be unique to humans, evolutionarily. While other animals can deceive, the act of putting on a presented personality, consciously, for the enjoyment of an audience, is uniquely human.

As children gain a firmer understanding of the self, they also begin to understand, orient and react to others. Acting requires an understanding of the character being portrayed, deeply enough that a whole portrayal can be constructed. This requires a psychological way of thinking about others: a theory of mind. Theory of mind is the ability to understand another's beliefs, desires and intentions (Wimmer and Perner, 1983). This is related to the concept of cognitive empathy, which is the ability to understand what someone else is

feeling (Strayer, 1987), as well as emotional empathy, which is the matching of someone else's feelings (Shamay-Tsoory, Aharon-Peretz, and Perry, 2009). But theory of mind is separate from compassion and sympathy, feeling badly or sorry for someone else (without necessarily matching what they are feeling) (Davis, 1983; Coplan, 2011). Parallel developments of executive function, arousal regulation and language in preschool-aged children underlie broader social orientations and the development of appropriate responding to others (Blair, 2002). Acting requires creating meaning out of behaviours—understanding and expressing the subtext of a script. A better understanding of the real social world and people, therefore, should produce a better understanding of a play's social world and characters (although there is not psychological research to support such a statement).

Fiction generally has been theorised as an abstraction and simulation of the social world (Mar and Oatley, 2008), and actually embodying and interpreting such simulation may allow actors to practice and gain social skills. In fact, research with 8- and 14-year-olds has shown that a year of acting classes (as compared to a year of visual arts or music classes) can increase empathy and theory of mind (Goldstein and Winner, 2012). College-aged actors also show higher levels of theory of mind than psychology majors (Goldstein, Wu, and Winner, 2009) and professional actors recall higher childhood orientation to other people than lawyers (Goldstein and Winner, 2009) and self-report higher levels of empathy (Nettle, 2006). The idea that actors have higher social skills than non-actors has received theoretical support (Levy, 1997; Verducci, 2000; Metcalf, 1931), while the opposite conclusion of actors as selfish and narcissistic also persists (Dufner et al., 2015; Young and Pinsky, 2006).

Yet acting requires more than theory of mind about the characters' current state or an emotional matching with a character. Understanding characters requires a broad view of human desire, belief, intention and behaviour, beyond momentary emotions and intentions. Good actors (as compared to bad) may have a broader understanding of personality, how personalities work within situations and both immediate and superordinate goals. Comparatively, non-human primates, our closest evolutionary relatives, have a relatively impoverished view of conspecifics (i.e., other primates of the same species). While even very young children (perhaps as young as 18 months) can form 'representational' awareness of another's beliefs (i.e., that others may have a false belief about the status of the world; Baillargeon, Scott, and He, 2010; Onishi and Baillargeon, 2005), non-human primates cannot do this. Chimpanzees can only track what another chimpanzee knows about the world through where they have looked and what they have seen. Rhesus macaques show the same specific ability. This means that apes and monkeys can represent true beliefs in others, but not false ones (Martin and Santos, 2016). It is this distinction that may be critical for pretend play, fiction, theatre and even language. And while children's understanding of false beliefs in others may be developed by age 5 (Wellman, Cross, and Watson, 2001), a full understanding of how others' behaviours are representations of their inner states continues to develop over the lifespan (Kuhn, 2000).

Once actors have a clear understanding of themselves, the character they must portray and the other characters in the play, they must then discern how to present themselves to be read by an audience – the understanding of self as a social skill. This requires behavioural control and emotional control and regulation, as well as physical and vocal control.

### **The truth of acting: self-regulation and emotion regulation**

How does an understanding of a character become a fully realised portrayal? Through physical, vocal, behavioural and emotional regulation and change. Actors must be able to regulate (the psychological term for both internal and external control) themselves in two

ways: managing their own emotions and behaviours to become a character, and managing the character's emotions and behaviours to engage in portrayal. While theorising about the nature and strength of this regulation from the perspective of acting theory is beyond the scope of this chapter, there are a few theoretical possibilities that lead to different psychological predictions. In the most extreme cases, the actor has to completely suppress his or her own emotional state and up-regulate the emotional state of the character in order to fully experience and therefore portray the character, using whatever methods (e.g., sense memory, imaginative 'as if,' dissociation; Hull, 1985; Hagen, 2009; Thomson and Jaque, 2011) she or he can employ. On the other end of the continuum, the actor needs to be aware of his or her current emotional state and where it intersects with the character, but actual emotional experience of the character is unnecessary. Somewhere in the middle, then, is both some down-regulation of the emotional and physical state of the actor and an up-regulation of the emotional and physical state of the character.

Emotional and self-regulation may be the factor that precludes children from being able to act well. When children are determining their own topics and emotional contents of pretend play, they can simply play how they are already feeling (Fein, 1981). But acting has external requirements of script and scene. Actors must change their emotional state, and within the world of a play, from scene to scene, frequently must do so rapidly. In interviews, actors often speak of the emotional challenges of acting, and discuss feeling exhausted or worn out by the end of a performance (e.g., Gross, 2014). Even for an actor who is operating only with physical and behavioural regulation, with no emotional attachment to their performance at all, the task of making the audience believe that the character is undergoing the emotional events of the play is difficult. Adding in emotional connection to the material makes it more difficult.

Children's emotion regulation develops from being other-oriented (i.e., dependent on a caregiver to help with regulation) to self-oriented (Cole, Martin, and Dennis, 2004). Individual abilities in self-regulation show continuity throughout the lifespan (Rothbart et al., 2011), and as cognitive skills develop, children are able to engage in more complex (Shields and Cicchetti, 1997) and adult-like emotion regulation techniques. The use of different regulation strategies, dependent on situation, also develops through middle childhood (Saarni, 2000), but adolescents are still developing their abilities to control their emotions and emotional behaviours, as well as learning to use more healthy and adaptive strategies (Zeman et al., 2006).

Previous work focused on lifetime strategies of emotion regulation have concluded it is more healthful to engage in cognitive reappraisal (i.e., reframing) of emotional experiences, rather than suppression (i.e., non-expression) of emotional experiences (Gross and John, 2003). When children and adolescents are enrolled in acting classes, they show lower levels of suppression of emotions (although not higher levels of cognitive reappraisal) than children and adolescents in visual arts or music classes (Goldstein, Tamir, and Winner, 2013). It may be that as children and adolescents create symbolic events in acting classes that cause them to have emotions, they can learn to modify those emotions in the symbolic experience of the play, which then transfers to the real world (Bretherton, 1989).

There is some causal evidence that engaging in drama games and play leads to better emotional control and self-understanding. Goldstein and Lerner (2017) found that for four-year-old children enrolled in Head Start preschool, eight weeks of guided dramatic pretend play games (i.e., Spolin-type warm up games) led to better levels of emotional control, when compared to engaging in either block play activities or story time. In another study, DeBettingnies and Goldstein (under review) found that ten-year-old children who engaged in Spolin-like drama games increased their self-concept, when compared to ten-year-old

children who spent time in a study hall. However, these results were specific only to those children who began with the lowest level of self-concept. It may be that drama games help emotional control and self-awareness, but only if the participants have lower than average levels of functioning (e.g., as children from lower-income households often are [McClelland, Acock, and Morrison, 2006]).

Tying these areas together, emotion regulation is dependent on social skills such as emotional understanding, and cognitive skills, such as executive function. Each set of skills develops in conjunction with other skills, leading to a coherent whole.

### **Development and evolution: a coordinated framework of acting**

When a child picks up a banana, puts it to her ear as a phone and says ‘hello, Gramma!’ how similar are the cognitive, social and emotional skills she is using to those needed by the West End actor who steps to centre stage and begins ‘To be, or not to be – that is the question’? In the same way that all humans develop a set of cognitive and social skills such as understanding of the self, understanding of others, language and memory to reach adulthood, so do actors refine and develop their required skills over a lifespan. But until psychology has a firm grasp on the cognitive, social and emotional skills necessary to become a talented adult actor, it is hard to pinpoint which skills in childhood are most conducive to being an actor, and whether children can act well and similarly to adults, given enough experience and ability with these skills. In developmental psychology, social, emotional and behavioural abilities are coordinated and a global level of ability in these skills is often associated with positive impact on development (Durlak et al., 2011). A child who is gifted in one area (e.g., cognitive) will often also be gifted in other areas, such as social and emotional development (Reis and Renzulli, 2004).

Beyond ontological development, it is important to remember that it is hard to provide strong evidence for evolutionary theories (Buss, 2005). However, humans are the only species to create theatre. The evolution of meta-representational skills, linguistic skills and pretense seems to be uniquely human. Many species are social. Dogs, apes, monkeys, fish and even some snakes and birds all live socially. Therefore, the skills that make humans socially adept, understanding others’ intentions, engaging with behaviours of others and managing their own behaviour to fit the social patterns of others, must either have come from common ancestry with many other species, or, all of these examples of social groups and social skills are evidence of convergent evolution (van Schaik and Burkart, 2011).

Can any child with a standard set of cognitive and social abilities learn how to act? Theoretically, yes. Acting requires sets of skills. First, cognitive, to understand the language and symbolism of a play, have memory for lines and understand the representational nature of fiction. Then, social, to understand the people of the play (after all theatre is about people). And finally, emotional, to create a performance. All of these must be brought together with vocal and physical control, to create a presentation of emotional life to be read as real by an audience. Each of these areas includes multiple interrelated skills, including theory of mind, meta-representation and behavioural regulation. None are sufficient for acting, and with perhaps the exception of the ability to understand language, none may be necessary either. But some combination of some of these skills *is* necessary for acting. As interdisciplinary conversations between psychology, cognitive science and theatre and the humanities move forward, distinguishing which skills, when and how will be a primary task to allow for conversation and understanding of what it means to act.

Acting training and theatre classes, of course, go through their own developmental progressions. Acting teachers, through training and instinct, learn to adjust their classes to the developmental abilities and levels of the children in front of them, without necessarily knowing about the psychological capabilities that go into the classes. Drama games for early childhood classes look very different from drama games for adolescent actors, which are then also different from complex scene study and character study (Spolin, 1986). Having access and understanding to the multiple levels of developmental complexity and knowledge within acting is important.

To conclude, one question completely unexplored by this chapter is the psychological difference between a bad actor and a good one. Is it simply training? Underlying capabilities such as executive function or imitation? A combination of time, place and social skills? Ability to dissociate from the current world and engage in the world of the play? Certainly, someone who cannot remember lines, does not understand the character or cannot express emotion onstage is at the far end of the continuum of a 'bad' actor. Yet characteristics that make up a great actor, other than 'believability' or 'expression,' are under-defined. While giftedness in math or reading may be relatively easy to isolate, psychology does not have a definition of what meta-representational talent (for example) could look like. Without working knowledge of how good acting happens, it is hard to pinpoint which developmental processes may lead to being a good actor. This field is ripe for study, definition and experimentation. Theorists and practitioners interested in children's developing skills, and how such skills are applied to theatre and theatre-adjacent activities throughout the lifespan have a fertile field to work in. In whichever area of theatre people are interested, they can find a psychological concept to explore. Because in the end, theatre and psychology are interested in the same questions: 'Why do we do the things we do?' and 'What makes us human?'

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