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| Title | Don't play the visual, play the emotion! |
| Authors | Dzhyma, Nataliia |
| Publication date | 2014 |
| Original Citation | Dzhyma, N. (2014) 'Don't play the visual, play the emotion!', Scenario: A Journal of Performative Teaching, Learning, Research, VIII(2), pp. 124-126. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.8.2.12 |
| Type of publication | Article (non peer-reviewed) |
| Link to publisher's version | 10.33178/scenario.8.2.12 |
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| Download date | 2026-10-05 11:50:34 |
| Item downloaded from | https://hdl.handle.net/10468/12753 |

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

ISSN 1649-8526
Scenario
Language • Culture • Literature
Volume 2014 · Issue 2
http://scenario.ucc.ie

Short Film

# Don't Play the Visual, Play the Emotion!

## Fusing Drama and Film in the Teaching of Empathy

***Nataliia Dzhyma***

This contribution aims to introduce SCENARIO readers to my pedagogical practice at the Institute of International Relations, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev, which specializes in the training of future Ukrainian diplomats. In order to do so I have opted for the medium of film to give interested colleagues a vivid impression of how I propose to put empathy at the centre of diplomacy-related training programmes.

Since prehistoric times empathy has been understood to be a pillar of diplomacy. For Fliess (1942: 212), empathy is the ability "to step into another's shoes", for Etchefoyen (1996: 271) "to feel and understand what another feels", for Stover (2005: 209) "to take the role of the other and to view the world from different perspectives participating in the values, feelings and perceptions of another".

Drama Pedagogy, within the protective space of the imagination, offers many ways of "living through" the lives of others. It therefore seems ideally suited to play a key role in empathy-focused training programmes.

Sharing the well-known idea that being in public position is like being on stage but without a script, I developed a teaching concept which blends the diplomatic with the theatrical by using selected film clips in my classes, as a reference point for excercises that focus on feeling and on understanding what another feels. For guidance, I turned to those who are making cinema: script writers, directors, sound editors, camera-men, actors. These encounters gave me a deep insight into film as an art form and into how films are made. It became of special interest to me how actors work in the recording studio, how they empathize with a screen character and create this person's voice, facial expression, gestures etc. The major lesson learnt during my observations and research can perhaps be summed up in the words of the sound editor Al Nelson: "Don't play the visual, play the emotion!" (Isaza 2010)

The film shows my first steps into what could become a new, exciting area of research in the field of performative teaching and learning: the interrelationship between the medium of film and drama pedagogy.

Please note that the idea to forge closer links between drama pedagogy and film arose during a research visit to University College Cork. I wish to thank Dr. Manfred Schewe for his support and expert guidance and for encouraging me to use film as a medium through which to present my practice-based research. Please click here to download the film (large: 1.7Gb).

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https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.8.2.12

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