

UNIVERSITY OF THEATRE AND FILM ARTS
DOCTORAL SCHOOL

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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FILMIC EFFECTS

*or the cinematic techniques
of the communication with the audience
from the point of view of a practicing filmmaker*

THE THESES OF THE DISSERTATION

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THE THESES OF THE DISSERTATION

summarised according to the chapters of the dissertation

THE AIM OF THE DISSERTATION

My doctoral thesis is a summing up of - and is built on - many years of teaching experience I gathered at my film-language courses that I have held over a decade at various departments and in different classes at the University of Theatre and Film Arts.

In my classes we investigate the possibilities and the applications of the formal language of the film, but not in any abstract manner, or from a theoretical point of view, but in a very practical way, from the perspective of an actual filmmaker, first and foremost based on my own actual experiences as a film director. The courses are more or less thematic conversations with the students, where always they have to examine, to explore the creative problems that are raised, and look for the possible answers and solutions to the emerging questions. The analysis of each detail of any film examines the possible decisions during the making of a film (its dramatisation, preparation, production, shooting, editing and post production). More exactly we are looking for the answers to what the makers of a film did and how they did it and why — what kind of fundamental questions they had to find the proper answers to, what kind of decisions they had to make to get to any (either good or false) solution seen in the finished film.

The aim of my dissertation is to be a useful tool - as broadsheets - in the university curriculum, first of all for the students of directing, their teachers, but also to all students of the SZFE, all whom the text — that contains all the basic skills and knowledge concerning the language of the film, its uses, its means, and the communication with the audience — can help during their theoretical studies but also during their practical activity. It is according to this purpose that I have divided my paper into five greater chapters, where I discuss a few problem areas that a film director is confronted with during preproduction, shooting and postproduction. I have written my dissertation based on the conclusions I drew during my own directorial experience. Consequently there are quite a few self-made concepts in text, that can help the work of a beginner who is getting in touch for the first time with his or her profession, or is already starting to practice it. The paper is not a synthesis or summary of the already known theories of the language of the film, and theoretical essays, and doesn't want to compete with

these, but it is written specifically from the practical perspective, and, hopefully, it can become a useful series of essays for both the practice and the teaching of filmmaking.

THE THESES OF THE DIFFERENT CHAPTERS

1.

Literary script and technical script

First and foremost for practical reasons the paper contains a quasi introductory chapter to help the students' with the practical problems that arise during the writing of the literary and technical script (orientation among the different terms, concepts, layout, style, etc.). As the thesis of the chapter there is a detailed and illustrated elaboration of the eyeline and axis that causes maybe the greatest problems for a beginner during the planning of the plan-sequence (axis, crossing the line), and the correct method of using the axes.

1/a The basic elements of the technical script

1/b A practical problem: a crossing the line (how we define the eyeline of the protagonist, and what is the right positioning of the camera).

2.

The elements of the language of the film

A thematically grouped exploration of the most important linguistic means and elements of the film. The information. The dramaturgical motives and pillars of the filmic narration. The time-space structure of the filmic narration. The concept and usage of montage, film-time, film-space. The ways and possibilities of the creation of the mood and atmosphere of a film. The ways and means of the visual emphasis in a filmic narration. As the thesis of the chapter I try to prove my statement, that the main task of a film director (taking into consideration the extremely complex and far-reaching work phases of filmmaking, it may be more proper to use the term filmmaker), to build his film from the fragmentary mosaic-like pieces of space and time, as an information transmitting narrative structure in a unified, unbroken continuity on the level of the recipient.

3.

Sensing time, states of time

This chapter of the dissertation is closely connected to the one before, that covers the generally used elements of the filmic language, through the meticulous analysis of four well known film-scenes, it shows the possibilities and the means of filmic language to manipulate, distort, lengthen, compress, slow down or handle it in real time, using such situations in which the filmic time is inseparable from the subjective time sensing of the characters in the film.

The thesis of the chapter is, that the purpose of time distortion in a film is to synchronize the distorted sense of time of the spectator with the subjective sense of time of the character in the film, which is closely connected with the shorter or longer situations experienced and lived through by the character, that affect him or her emotionally.

4.

What is behind a film image

the poetic character of the film - montage, as the means of communication with the subconscious of the spectator.

Also linked to the second, filmic language-chapter of my dissertation, here is a more detailed articulation of the effect mechanisms of the montage, particularly as it regards the nonverbal, not instantly conscious sensitive, guttural, emotional informations. I tried to confirm with my statements and conclusions as the thesis of the chapter, that during the making and analysis of the films, we must not regard the film as an exclusively storytelling, action-filled, dramatic structure and medium, but it is just as important to deal with the nonverbal communication, and all the means of the film language that facilitate it. Consequently the central statement of this chapter is that the film is not only a dramatic genre, but it is a medium that can transmit, like music and poetry, nonverbal and sensual information.

5.

The operating principle of the hitchcockian suspense, the methodology of its practical construction and the elements of its structure.

This chapter acquaints the reader with the principles of the classic - hitchcockian (not only used by Hitchcock) - suspense and the dramaturgy of its construction. After the general introduction the microscopically detailed analysis of two well known suspense-scenes explore

the dramaturgical articulation of the hitchcockian suspense and the function of each phase. My analysis also covers the possible mistakes that can reduce or spoil the effects of suspense. My thesis is the central idea, that suspense and surprise are not two effects that exclude each other.

6.

Details of a perfect murder

Az a summary of the statements and conclusions of the previous chapters of the dissertation, the complex analysis of the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's film Psycho (Psycho, 1960), from image to image, from frame to frame: analysis of image, dramaturgy and structure, focusing on the nonverbal meta-messages and effects that impress and influence the spectators. All this is completed with the description of my discovery of the secret of the technical solution of the most famous shot — illustrated with diagrams — the famous shower head that ejects water free of droplets — through which this shot is easily reproducible. (This part of the dissertation was the material of my rigorosum.)