

外教社 翻译硕士专业 (MTI) 系列教材  
笔译实践指南丛书 ②

Phyllis Zatlin

# Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation

A Practitioner's View

## 剧场翻译及电影改编

一位实际工作者的观点

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## 导 读

翻译是一项实践性非常强的工作。不同的翻译领域往往各有不同的翻译技巧。就口译而言，同声传译、交替传译的技巧就不尽相同；就笔译而言，文学翻译与非文学类的各行业的翻译也大相径庭。在文学翻译中，着眼于舞台演出的戏剧翻译具有鲜明的特色，电影翻译和改编则更是翻译实践中一个较为特殊的分支。本书要探讨的正是剧场翻译和电影翻译、改编这一翻译实践的特殊类型。作者菲莉斯·查特林(Phyllis Zatlin)是美国罗格斯新泽西州立大学的西班牙语教授，但她更是一位翻译实践工作者：她将数量众多的西班牙语和法语剧作翻译成英语，担任一套戏剧翻译丛书的主编，担任美国唯一介绍当代西班牙戏剧的杂志 *Estreno* 的编辑，还负责所在学校的翻译培训项目。她完全从一位实践工作者的角度来考虑问题，力求避免任何理论探讨，而希望翻译工作者能得益于她丰富的实践经验。她还以问卷的形式收集世界各国其他翻译实践工作者的第一手经验，以使自己的论述更具有普遍意义。

就结构而言，本书第一至五章探讨剧场翻译的一般问题，第六章探讨剧场与电影的字幕和配音，第七至八章则探讨将戏剧改编为电影的问题。在探讨剧场翻译的一般问题时，作者讲述了资深翻译家的“实战经验”，特别是跨文化交流的诸多问题，这尤其能使翻译新手受到很大启发。例如，作者提到不同地区的观众群具有不同的观剧习惯，对于剧中出现的粗俗的语言和描述，有的观众群喜闻乐见，有的则大惊失色；在翻译实践中，要针对不同的观众群，或者变含蓄为直白，或者变直白为含蓄。这实际上已经不是翻译是否忠实于原文的问题，而是怎样才能更好地进行跨文化交流的问题——剧场翻译已经成为跨文化交流的重要领域，剧场翻译工作者同时也是跨文化交流工作者。

这个实例也凸现出剧场翻译的显著特点，即必须适应剧场接受的直接性。这主要体现在以下几点：1) 剧场翻译需要观众不经思考直接接受，观众的反应是即时的，没有任何回味的时间和余地；2) 剧场翻译需要上口，这与一般的“戏剧翻译”大相径庭。如果不能上口，剧场翻译即使文采飞扬、忠实准确，也会在演出时惨遭失败；3) 剧场翻译无法作注，这与可以阅读的文

学类翻译迥然不同。既然不能作注,语言和文化差异造成的歧义、误解都必须消化在译文中;或者删除目标文化难以理解的内容,或者将此类内容转化为目标文化中的等值物。

作者认为,剧场翻译应该重视整体效果,即译文应该在剧场中产生与原文一样的效果。这就要求译文不仅重视具体句子、段落、场景的忠实准确,而且要再现出原文的节奏、风格、声调,对于原文中的方言、口语也要作出相应的处理。译者还应该与导演和演员进行交流,产生互动,以便让导演和演员在演出中通过译文来再现出原文的整体效果。

作为一名剧场翻译的实践者,菲莉斯·查特林在书中涉及剧场翻译的方方面面,其中也包括剧场翻译的报酬问题。据她了解,在大部分情况下,剧场翻译报酬微薄,而且缺乏稳定性,所以很难将其作为主业。剧场翻译充其量也只能作为学者的副业,或者一般翻译工作者偶尔为之的工作。

菲莉斯·查特林的论述对于中国剧场翻译的发展也具有借鉴意义。总的来说,中国剧场演出的规模较小,演出剧目(特别是外国当代剧目)的总量也较少。这是中国戏剧教育的体制造成的。中国的综合性大学很早就有外国戏剧演出的课程,具有演出外国戏剧的传统。例如,早在1925年,北京大学就在英国文学系开设“演剧”和“编剧”两门戏剧实践课程,学生的戏剧实践也十分活跃。但遗憾的是这一传统并没有得到发扬光大。1952年全国高等学校院系调整之后,戏剧教育更是成为专业戏剧学院的专有领域,综合性大学很少涉足。这一体制造成了以下后果:1)为数量较少的专业剧院培养戏剧人才的主要是数量更少的专业戏剧学院,数量众多的综合性大学与专业剧院缺乏较为密切的联系;2)由于专业戏剧学院难以拥有综合性大学的人文教育资源,培养出的戏剧人才往往技术能力长于人文素养;3)综合性大学的学生往往数以万计,而专业戏剧学院的在校学生一般只有寥寥千人;戏剧学院的戏剧演出无法获得较大的观众群,而潜在观众人数众多的综合性大学又较少有高质量的戏剧演出。戏剧教育体制上的问题不仅影响到专业戏剧人才的培养,也影响到观众群的培育。

由此可见,在中国,剧场翻译的市场更小,工作机会更少。不过,也许正是因为剧场翻译市场尚未真正成熟,恰恰需要进行更多的开拓。剧场翻译多涉及当代戏剧的翻译,而中国观众接触外国当代戏剧的机会更少,潜在的需求也就更大。剧场翻译由此担负着多重任务:与国外剧场或外国戏剧研究者保持密切联系,了解外国当代戏剧的动态,以便选择合适的剧作进行译介;向国内戏剧实践工作者推介外国当代剧作;在排演外国戏剧时与演职人员紧密合作,解决剧本的语言及其他问题;以各种方式向一般观众介绍自己的译作。剧场翻译应该是多面手,应该具有极大的工作热情,否则很难胜任这一工作。

在中国优秀的剧场翻译中，英若诚先生是一个很好的例子。他主要是演员，但同时也是导演。他从事剧场翻译则是因为他演出或者导演时有“难言之隐”——“现成的译本不适合演出”；“有经验的演员都会告诉你，演翻译过来的戏，要找到真正‘口语化’的本子多么困难”。因此，他在演出和导演实践中也自己翻译剧本。莎士比亚的大部分剧作都已经有多多个译本，但他在演出《请君入瓮》（即《一报还一报》）时还是自己动手重译；而他与美国剧作家阿瑟·密勒在中国首演《推销员之死》时的合作更是传为佳话。1983年《推销员之死》在北京人民艺术剧院上演，成为中国“文革”后上演的第一个外国剧目。这一剧作能在中国上演，英若诚起了重要作用：他到美国与密勒共同商定剧目，亲自翻译剧本，担任男主角，并协助密勒导演这部中文版的《推销员之死》。在“文革”刚刚结束时，大部分中国人还不知道“推销员”为何物，能使中国观众对该剧产生共鸣实属不易。英若诚集剧场翻译、演员、“助理导演”于一身，保证了剧作的成功上演。

今天，剧场翻译当然没有必要集演员与导演于一身，而应该专心致志地多译剧本、译好剧本。不过，剧场翻译仍须密切联系剧场，把剧场演出当作自己的最终作品，以演出效果来衡量自己的作品，让更多的观众欣赏到自己的作品。

其实，今天的剧场翻译还有一片更大的天地，那就是电影翻译。查特林专章论述了电影字幕和配音的问题。这两者各有所长：字幕制作成本低廉，而且使影片更有原汁原味的感觉；配音虽然成本高昂，但能使观看更为省力，同时也为出于政治或者文化原因进行删节提供了方便。作者还探讨了一些技术细节，例如字幕没有足够的空间体现完整的对话，因此要有简化对话的技巧；字幕在屏幕上出现时要尽量便于观看，可采取隔行斜体等。字幕和配音不仅可用于电影，也可用于电视、DVD（字幕还可用于剧场演出的外语原文戏剧），因此具有更好的应用和职业前景。

作者在最后两章探讨了将小说和戏剧改编为电影的问题，认为这也是一种特殊形式的“翻译”。可见作者把剧场翻译视为一种原创性的工作，与剧作家和导演的工作平起平坐。作者在论述剧场翻译时，不仅注重译者的语言和文化素养，也要求译者成为一名戏剧实践工作者，同时也关注电影、电视、DVD等新的媒体。本书超越了传统意义上的翻译研究，在更大的背景上探讨了当代文化传播的重要问题，开阔了视野，打开了思路，能使翻译实践工作者受到很大启发。

程朝翔

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# Preface

When Robert Wechsler wrote his highly acclaimed study on literary translation, *Performing Without a Stage* (Wechsler, 1998), he was not specifically thinking of theatre. He speaks of actors interpreting the work of the playwright and of singers interpreting the work of the songwriter, thus establishing through performance that their own work is an art. 'The translator's problem is that he is a performer without a stage, an artist whose performance looks just like the original, just like a play or a song or a composition, nothing but ink on a page' (Wechsler, 1998: 7). It is my belief, however, that theatrical translation should be intended precisely for performance. If a play translation is nothing but ink on a page, it is not theatre (performance text). If it is published and read, it may be considered drama (literary text), and Wechsler's excellent observations on literary translation will apply. Even if the translator's contribution to the production remains invisible to some observers, theatrical translators, like playwrights, need to perform *with* a stage. Marion Peter Holt, the foremost translator of contemporary Spanish theatre in the United States, affirms that performability has been the prime aim of every play he has translated, with publication perhaps coming after performance (Holt, 2002, personal communication).

In *Performing Without a Stage*, Wechsler makes one reference to Molière and several to Shakespeare, but he generally concentrates on the translation of novel and poetry. In this respect, his book is similar to the vast majority of studies in the field. Theory of literary translation has centered on these genres. In *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context* (Lefevere, 1992), André Lefevere includes 374 books and articles in his 'Suggestions for Further Reading'; in only six of these titles is drama specifically mentioned. Prefacing her discussion of the subject in the first edition of her *Translation Studies* (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 120), Susan Bassnett identifies theatre as 'one of the most neglected areas'; given her own strong interest in the subject, she gives to theatre some 12 pages of her 53-page chapter on literary translation. In the



third edition of her groundbreaking book, she appends a select bibliography of works published in English from 1980 onward (Bassnett, 2002: 149–64). Her list includes 210 books and 47 articles; only six of these books and three of the articles refer to theatre. It is therefore understandable that in *Literary Translation. A Practical Guide*, Clifford E. Landers (2001) dedicates only two and a half pages to translating for the theatre. Brigitte Schultze theorizes that much less has been written on the translation of drama because with narrative fiction and poetry one has to deal only with written text. 'Drama translation, in contrast, implies simultaneous transfer into two forms of communication: monomedial literature (reading) and polymedial theatre (performance)' (Schultze, 1998: 177).

The tendency to bypass theatre in translation studies is one of the reasons for the defensive tone that I have adopted in Chapter 1: 'In Theatrical Translation, There is No Lack of Conflict'. Of course the relative lack of such studies is also the primary impetus for this book.

Despite the traditional emphasis in translation studies on narrative and poetry, there is a growing bibliography on theatre. From the period 1980–1989, we find three interesting anthologies in English containing the perspectives of theatrical translators from various countries: two volumes edited by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, *The Languages of Theatre. Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama* (Zuber, 1980) and *Page to Stage. Theatre as Translation* (Zuber-Skerritt, 1984); and *The Play Out of Context. Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, edited by Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (1989). More recent publications include *Stages of Translation* (1996), an anthology of essays and interviews that discuss theatrical translation in practice, edited by David Johnston; *Moving Target. Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation* (2000), edited by Carole-Anne Upton; and *Time-Sharing on Stage. Drama Translation in Theatre and Society* (2000), a theoretical work by Sirkku Aaltonen. The present book, like Aaltonen's, is a unified study by a single author, but in spirit it is closer to the diversified array of the several anthologies and to the approach taken in Landers' practical guide.

As a professor of Spanish literature for 40 years, my principal area of specialization has always been contemporary theatre. Initially I examined texts as literature only, but over time, in both my teaching and writing, I began to focus on plays in performance. In 1987, I was unexpectedly cast as coordinator of my department's certificate and masters programmes in translation. I therefore also assumed the role of a translator, and it was natural for me to turn to plays as source texts. Among translations from Spanish and French that I have created, ten works have been performed by professional or university groups. My practical experience also extends to close association with the work of others. Among the

masters theses in translation that I have directed, there are more than 20 in the field of theatre; several of these translated plays have been staged or published. I have been actively involved since its founding in 1992 with ESTRENO Plays, an ongoing collection of translations of contemporary Spanish theatre, and have been general editor of the series since 1998. Most of the translations published by ESTRENO Plays have been performed at some level.

In preparing this book I have consulted published studies but have drawn as well upon personal interviews and correspondence with translators and other theatre professionals in the United States and Europe. I have been fortunate in receiving thoughtful responses to a written questionnaire from an international selection of theatrical translators. The results of the survey and the names of the participants are found in Chapter 2: 'Out of the Shadows: The Translators Speak for Themselves'. An outgrowth of the questionnaire, along with interviews during a sabbatical trip to Europe in 2003, is Chapter 3: 'Networking: Collaborative Ventures'. Additional references to the questionnaires are incorporated in various places within the text, and the survey form appears as an appendix. Quotes given throughout the book without specific source references have been taken from the questionnaire responses.

Although my expertise is concentrated in contemporary Spanish theatre and I work from Spanish and French into English, I have deliberately reached out to include translation into English from other languages, and, to a lesser degree, other language combinations: from English or Spanish to French, for example. Readers will discover a disproportionate concentration on Hispanic texts but the goal throughout has been to elaborate concepts that are not language specific.

This book is intended as a point of departure, not an all-inclusive study of a complex subject. Absent here, for example, are separate chapters on such topics as translation of opera libretti, adaptation of stage plays as musical comedies, intralingual translation (that is, the modernization of classic texts), or translation of drama written in verse, although these are all subjects that crop up frequently the more one explores the general issue of theatrical translation and adaptation. In his thoughtful introduction to the 1985 modernization of José Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio*, Andrés Amorós clarifies his position on adapting that 19th-century verse drama for contemporary audiences. Rejecting both total fidelity and radical change, he affirms:

I believe one must 'dust it off': suppress repetitions, eliminate what today sounds ridiculous to us or distances us too much. Of course it is necessary to keep the classic rhyme and stanzas. That requires

delicate adaptation work, because changing one word almost always means revising the line or the whole stanza. (Amorós, 1985: 19)

Amorós succinctly identifies here not only the basic problem for all theatrical translation of how to reach the target audience but also the special difficulties posed by poetry.

It is no doubt true that to translate poetry one must be a poet. Not being a poet myself, I would never tackle verse drama; nevertheless, theatrical translators often find they must confront occasional passages of poetry or song lyrics. The subject is thus among those dealt with in Chapter 4: 'Practical Approaches to Translating Theatre'.

This book includes a separate chapter on the translation of bilingual play texts because I have had to confront that problem several times myself as translator, editor, or teacher. To my knowledge, Chapter 5: 'Variations on the Bilingual Play Text', is the first published effort at providing a general analysis of the subject.

As the hybrid title indicates, my study is not limited to play translation *per se*. Chapter 6: 'Titling and Dubbing for Stage and Screen' was originally suggested by Tommi Grover of Multilingual Matters. I anticipated that my exploration of the topic would lead to just a few pages but soon learned that this, too, is a complex issue. Very little has been written about the use of these forms of translation to make theatre performance accessible to spectators who do not understand the language of the play. With respect to film, I found a number of published studies but from my travels discovered that previous articles, labeling certain countries as strongly preferring dubbing to subtitling, are either out of date or were based on prime-time television rather than movies.

The chapter on subtitling and dubbing presents a transition between my examination of theatre and my commentary on film adaptation of plays. In 1992, when I first taught a graduate seminar, 'Literature into Film', I was struck by the similarities between translation and adaptation/transformation theory. The strategies and conventions of film are often described as a language. At the fidelity end of the scale, the goal in translating a play to a second natural language or transforming it for the screen is to carry the source text over into that other language with dynamic equivalence. Thus I have routinely mentioned the parallels with translation when teaching film adaptation and with film adaptation when teaching literary translation. I am, of course, not alone in observing this connection.

As is true of translation theory, adaptation theory concentrates on the novel and tends to bypass theatre. The annotated bibliography in James

Naremore's *Film Adaptation* (2000) cites 38 books and articles; in their titles, only three of them refer directly to theatre, and two of those are to Shakespeare, the 'literary' playwright par excellence. What is more, studies in the field often disparage theatre and its influence on movies. Chapter 7, 'On and Off the Screen: The Many Faces of Adaptation', traces that debate while establishing that adaptation of stage plays has been and continues to be an important part of film history.

Chapter 8, 'From Stage to Screen: Strategies for Film Adaptation', in parallel with Chapter 4 on theatrical translation, presents specific suggestions for transforming a play into a movie. These suggestions are developed from a number of concrete examples that are primarily, but not exclusively, based on American and Spanish films.

In the process of preparing this book, I have received encouragement, guidance, recommendations, and information from a large number of people. Without their collective assistance, this book could not have been written. I have recognized their contributions within the text and in notes; I would like to express my continuing gratitude to them all. I am also deeply appreciative for the insights I have gained from the playwrights whose works I have translated, from colleagues who have collaborated in one way or another in the work of ESTRENO Plays, from those who have organized and participated in various panels on theatrical translation or film transformation at conferences in Jaén and Madrid, Spain, and at annual meetings of the American Literary Translators Association, and from my students of translation studies and film adaptation over the years. My special thanks to Patricia W. O'Connor, founding editor of *Estreno*; Martha T. Halsey, founding editor of *ESTRENO Plays*; Iride Lamartina-Lens of Pace University, and Geneviève and Pierre Ulmann for urging me to undertake my first play translations from Spanish and French; to Marion Peter Holt, for his boundless generosity in sharing his knowledge and expertise with me and my students; and to Maria Delgado, for facilitating my research in the United Kingdom in numerous ways. I would also like to acknowledge the benefit I derived from directing the research of several students who helped clarify my understanding of their subjects: Patricia Santoro and Asun Gómez, on film adaptation; Ellen Bay, on subtitling; and Kerri Allen, on theatrical translation.

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# Contents

Preface .....	iii
1 In Theatrical Translation, There is No Lack of Conflict .....	1
2 Out of the Shadows: The Translators Speak for Themselves .....	21
3 Networking: Collaborative Ventures .....	53
4 Practical Approaches to Translating Theatre .....	67
5 Variations on the Bilingual Play Text .....	103
6 Titling and Dubbing for Stage and Screen .....	123
7 On and Off the Screen: The Many Faces of Adaptation .....	150
8 From Stage to Screen: Strategies for Film Adaptation .....	169
Appendix: Questionnaire for Theatrical Translators .....	203
Bibliography .....	206
Index .....	208

## Chapter 1

# *In Theatrical Translation, There is No Lack of Conflict*

*Nothing is more difficult and less appreciated than a good translation*

Paul Claudel<sup>1</sup>

Drama, by definition, is the story of conflict. No conflict, no drama. In that respect, the practice of literary translation presupposes dramatic action, for translators may anticipate from the outset the conflict stemming from the widely held belief that they are traitors who invariably betray the source text. With the old adage, *traduttore, traditore*, the translator is cast as Iago.

We can, of course, object to such a negative view by citing innumerable examples of fine translations that capture well the meaning and style of their source texts. In theatrical translation, however, some betrayal is a necessity. As Ortrun Zuber succinctly observes, 'a play is dependent on the immediacy of the impact on the audience' (Zuber, 1980: 92). Readers who are committed to learning more about another culture may have no problem with translated novels that offer explanations in footnotes or that inspire them to research unfamiliar references. Spectators in the theatre must grasp immediately the sense of the dialogue. Readers may delight in the recreation of antiquated language within a narrative text, but, as Hamlet maintains, actors on stage must be able to speak the speech 'trippingly on the tongue'. Clifford Landers correctly states: 'Even style, which is by no means unimportant in dramatic translation, sometimes must yield to the reality that actors have to be able to deliver the lines in a convincing and natural manner' (Landers, 2001: 104). To achieve speakable dialogue, theatrical translators can and do adapt.

I am not making new discoveries here. Previous essays on translating for the stage repeatedly establish these points. Robert W. Corrigan affirmed that theatrical translators, like playwrights, must know how writing for the theatre differs from literature and must be trained in the

practice of theatre: 'Without such training the tendency will be to translate words and their meanings. This practice will never produce performable translations, and that is, after all, the purpose of doing the job in the first place' (Corrigan, 1961: 100). Two decades later, George Wellwarth (1981) insisted on the importance of style with this warning: 'No audience will give its full attention to a play whose dialogue is stilted' (Wellwarth, 1981: 142). Rick Hite (1999: 304) advised theatrical translators to become actors and listen to their work so that they may perceive 'the problems of translating from spoken text to spoken text' and 'become more sensitive to the vocal idiosyncrasies of both languages, of their inherent rhythms, patterns, and stress'.

Corrigan, Wellwarth and Hite refer specifically to the modern American stage. Their comments could be applied equally well to the British, French and Spanish stages but are not necessarily universal today nor applicable to earlier periods. Geneviève Ullmann, who has for many years headed an international literary agency in Paris, states that in Belgium, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries, spectators accept translations that sound like translations.<sup>2</sup> In France translations are not considered stageworthy unless they flow like original texts.

It is this latter goal, of producing texts that flow, that we shall have in mind throughout this book. That goal is consistent with a final declaration on minimal requirements for theatrical translators that was issued in January 1998 by the Ariane Literary Network, a project of the European Union. Those requirements encompass linguistic competency, theatrical experience, and writing talent (European Union, 1998).

In the early decades of the 20th century, American audiences apparently were as amenable to stilted dialogue as Ullmann believes contemporary Belgian, German and Scandinavian spectators are still. A number of plays by Nobel prize winner Jacinto Benavente and other Spanish authors reached the Broadway stage with ease in translations by John Garrett Underhill that today we might kindly call 'wooden'. Underhill's absolute fidelity to his source, coupled with his failure to recognize idiomatic expressions, resulted in the kinds of passages that give translators a bad name. Consider, for example, this one sentence spoken by the Captain in an early scene of Benavente's internationally acclaimed metatheatrical farce, *The Bonds of Interest*:

Because we were defeated in the late wars – more through these base traffickers who govern us and send us to defend their interests without enthusiasm and without arms, than through any power of the enemy, as if a man could fight with his whole heart for what he



did not love – defeated by these traffickers who did not contribute so much as a single soldier to our ranks or lend one single penny to the cause but upon good interest and yet better security; who, as soon as they scented danger and saw their pockets in jeopardy, threatened to make common cause with the enemy – now they blame us, they abuse us and despise us, and seek to economize out of our martial misery, which is the little pay that they give us, and would dismiss us if they dared, if they were not afraid that some day all those whom they have oppressed by their tyranny and their greed would rise up and turn against them. (Benavente, 1929: 50)

The original Spanish – believe it or not – has comic flair. A good translation would allow us to ‘hear’ the voice of a talented comic actor delivering this monologue. But with Underhill’s language, any bonds of interest that a potential director today might feel up to this point in the script would rapidly unravel. No wonder Lorenzo Mans decided to do a new translation of Benavente’s *Los intereses creados* (*The Art of Swindling*) for the 1996 staging in Atlanta.

Poor translation is a serious matter if one is trying to get a play staged. Theatrical directors are not likely to go beyond the title and the opening pages if those lack ‘sparkle’. In my experience, directors tend either to love a play on first sight or to reject it with the same speed. This is so in large part because even the smallest professional theatre is likely to be inundated with hundreds of unsolicited manuscripts a year. Wellestablished, large theatres are likely to reject all unsolicited manuscripts automatically and let literary agents do their initial screening for them.

Why are Underhill’s translations no longer acceptable? In general the approach to translation has changed radically in the post Chomsky era.<sup>3</sup> Comparative linguistics has provided a framework for translation theory, and the new theory has inspired more dynamic recreations of source texts. We are now aware that each language has its own stylistics and that theatre conventions vary from country to country. A wise translator takes those differences into account.

In making the adjustments to a dramatic text that today we find essential, translators are by no means alone in adapting and interpreting their source. From the perspective of theatre practitioners, staging a play always involves translation of many kinds. Reba Gostand notes:

Drama, as an art-form, is a constant process of translation: from original concept to script (when there is one), to producer/director’s interpretation, to contribution by designer and actor/actress, to visual and/or