

Michał Telega

The Actresses, Or Sorry for Touching You

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The Actresses, Or Sorry for Touching You

Characters:

- FIRST-YEAR FEMALE ACTING STUDENT
- SECOND-YEAR FEMALE ACTING STUDENT
- THIRD-YEAR FEMALE ACTING STUDENT
- FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE ACTING STUDENT
- FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE ACTING STUDENT

This text is a mixed record of comments by female acting students. It was created courtesy of women representing each year who replied to nine open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted separately and none of the students communicated with one another at that time.

Artistic supervision: Dr Iga Gańczarczyk

Questions asked of female students:

- 1. What female type/role would you like to play? If possible, specify a particular play, a text intended to be performed on stage, prose, or a creation of your own imagination.
- 2. Have your ever been typecast by your teachers, or are you regularly typecast and asked to play only particular roles?
- 3. Do you think female and male directors work differently? If so, what is the difference?
- 4. Have you ever experienced someone's gestures that violated your body boundaries and were not necessary for the work?
- 5. Would you object to an authority figure if he/she abused your trust? How would you do that?
- 6. As an actress, how do you treat your body? Do you have reservations about performing nude scenes? Have you ever been asked to undress when it was not justified?
- 7. Do you feel uneasy about talking to me now? Do you find my questions oppressive or feel that the questions are too intimate?
- 8. Do you think men and women are treated differently during classes, rehearsals, and workshops?
- 9. How do theatre managers and external directors behave toward young women at the point of entering the world of theatre, e.g. during graduation productions, workshops, or castings?

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READING AND STAGING NOTES:

The text written in upper-case letters is to be performed by a chorus.

These statements take the form of single sentences and should be read as such, with a short pause between each line. There are no punctuation marks in the text, except for quotation marks. When reading, however, full stops following each line are recommended. Please read in a monotone, flat manner, without applying any interpretive tone. Each line should be treated as one breath, so rhythmic values in choral parts are performed in unison. During intervals between sentences, a single, normative breath should be taken. If this could help the persons reading out the text, breathe in through the nose in a voiced manner.

Choral parts are broken down into the geometry of an A4 page. However, none of the sentences run parallel to one another. They are to be read out in the sequence provided. The text does not contain any sentences to be read simultaneously.

The remaining lines are assigned to individual female students. Please adopt a flat manner of reading these, but the readers may come up with their own punctuation marks.

Letters X or Y should be read as 'eks' and 'wai' respectively.

Stage directions, notes and subtitles numbered from 0 to 7 will be read by the author of the text (if he is present) or a person acting as stage manager/assistant.

Should the text be staged, the artists shall have full freedom to create a musical, dramatic, or formal score accompanying the text.

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0. give us a guarantee

FIRST-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

am I to tell all of it

FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

but then you will mix it and I will be safe

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I don't know if I can speak about it

FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

anonymous or flat-out

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I guess I'd rather write it down for you

WE DON'T WANT TO BE IN TROUBLE AFTERWARDS

PEOPLE WILL TALK

REPORT TO ONE ANOTHER

THAT THEY ARE MAKING A FUSS ABOUT IT

A BIG DEAL

YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO TRUST AGAIN LATER

BUT HOW LONG CANYOU REMAIN PASSIVE AND BEAR HUMILIATION

LET'S GIVE IT A GO

MAYBE JUST ONE SHOT

AT MOST WE WILL LOSE

BUT IF WE WIN

MYYYY GOD...

AFTER ALL THIS IS NOT BIASED

RESEARCH ON THE MILIEU—CRYSTAL-CLEAR

THIS IS ALWAYS SO EITHER/OR

1. compensate for your acting shortcomings with your looks

A STRONG WOMAN

MARION COTILLARD

ALWAYS STRONG AND PRAGMATIC

OR JUDYTA FROM FATHER MAREK

MAYBE LEVIVA FROM THE LABOUR OF LIFE

OPHELIA HAS BEEN HAUNTING ME FOR MANY YEARS NOW

TRAUMAS OR THE MOTIF OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN GENERAL

FOR INSTANCE A MOTHER WHO LOST HER CHILD

OR A WOMAN WHO WILL BE RAPED AND LOSE HER DIGNITY

IN FACT SHE WILL LOSE EVERYTHING SHE HAS

UNDERGO A TRANSFORMATION SUCH AS PUTTING ON OR LOSING WEIGHT

A CHARACTER STRUGGLING WITH A DELUSION

OR WHO HAS SOME SORT OF BIPOLAR DISORDER OR MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES

I WOULD LOVE TO RUN WITH WEAPONS AND SHOOT

A POLICEWOMAN WHO BELONGS TO A MOB

A WOMAN THAT HAS SOMETHING TO SAY

A WOMAN WHO IS CONFLICTED ABOUT HER LIFE

NOT A GIRL

NOT A TOMBOY

NOT A REBELLIOUS TEENAGER

BUT A MATURE AND STRONG WOMAN

AFTER ALL SO MANY ROLES CAN BE PERFORMED THAT WAY

SUPERWOMAN

A HUMILIATED WOMAN FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

this is what I've been missing recently

I am working

but still I end up typecast as a young girl

or a rebellious character with some tomboy traits

FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

never because of my looks and personality

did I have an opportunity

to play a very feminine part

once I could

I could be a diva

but it was a joke anyway

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

but it turned out there

that in each character I put a bigger

or smaller part of myself

I build on my emotions

feelings and experiences

-

now I realize my type

and very frequently

it is key in selecting parts for me to play

IT IS EASIER TO TYPECAST

THE WORK WILL BE DONE MORE QUICKLY AND YOU WON'T NEED TO IMMERSE YOURSELF

THERE ARE SEVERAL OF US IN THE GROUP—THREE OR FOUR ALWAYS TYPECAST IN THE SAME WAY

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

partly it's because of what you can see in my eyes

or my way of being

I pass for very tough

very masculine

I am young and I have

- objectively, not narcissistically, speaking -

a pretty body and I am a very sexual woman

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FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I was always this rebellious teenager

X was a diva with that permanent smile

Y was a mixed-up woman entering adulthood

IT MAKES IT EASIER FOR HIM

WE ARE TYPECAST

AS WE KNOW: COMPENSATE FOR YOUR ACTING SHORTCOMINGS WITH YOUR LOOKS

FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

in the past I was always given parts in a martyr style demonic pieces—it really drove me mad and I always had to be the submissive one bear the pain for everyone

FIRST-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I wanted to get this text

but it went to X

he said I was too pretty for the text

ALWAYS STARRING AS COLD BITCHES

IF CAST AS ANIELKA IN MAIDEN VOWS THEN FORMALLY

I'M NOT SURE IF THIS CHARACTER COULD BE CALLED A WOMAN AT ALL

I NEVER GET TYPICAL WOMEN'S PARTS

I AM TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OLD

I AM TWENTY-SIX YEARS OLD

I AM TWENTY-THREE YEARS OLD

I AM TWENTY-THREE YEARS OLD

I HAVE NO OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY WOMEN

AND IF I DO IT'S IN FAIRY TALES BECAUSE 'YOU HAVE THESE GIRLISH LOOKS'

COMPENSATE FOR YOUR ACTING SHORTCOMINGS WITH YOUR LOOKS

OR DRESSED AS A BOY WITH A SHARP TONGUE

AND THEN HE DOES NOT EXPLORE SEARCH HE DOESN'T FEEL LIKE

IT MAKES IT EASIER FOR HIM

THEN THERE IS NO NEED TO DWELL ON IT

THEN THERE IS NO NEED TO PUSH YOURSELF

THEN YOU CAN DO JUST LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO

2. trusted bodies

MY BODY IS

ATOOL

AN INSTRUMENT

MY BODY IS MY TEMPLE

MY CHARACTER IS NOT ME TO GET UNDRESSED

I DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD AGREE THE BREASTS IN HERE... OKEEEEY

BUT THE LOWER BODY

I WOULD NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT

I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH IT... I GUESS.

NOW I AM MY CHARACTER

THIS IS NOT ME AFTER ALL

FROM THE BEGINNING WE ARE TAUGHT

BUT THIS IS NOT ALWAYS THE RIGHT APPROACH TO TEACHING SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

FIRST-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I did ballroom dancing

and I had a world-class coach

who would send unambiguous texts to me in the evenings

an older guy

his hair grey all over

but he is an authority figure

so I would reply because I was glad

that he talked to me at all

(as he didn't with any other people)

but on the other hand

he was writing to me....

and I didn't know how to reply, how to find a way out...

then I had private lessons with him and he would say

'hey, woman'

and in the photos you could see him grabbing me and so on

but in the end the topic died and I quit dancing

I kept screenshots of these conversations

that he was pleased to work with me

creepy

he was about fifty back then and I only seventeen

I would reply to his texts

But I wouldn't drag the conversation on

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

he is using his position

and that he should be correcting me

okay

but these things could be said

no need for instant touching

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

the warm-up comes first

individual body parts

muscles and tendons

chest and abdomen

sticking in and out

he comes up to me and touches my breasts

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

not the sternum which the movement comes out of

he never asks for permission

he comes up to me and touches my breasts

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

sternum

where the impulse for movement comes from

in and out

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I have an issue

when nudity is not justified

I will have a conversation first

he would grab my breasts my butt

he could have said it

he would touch me where I felt he wanted to do some touching

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU BUT

and I was in it and others as well

in short they humiliated me

PLAY IT OUT OF YOUR CUNT
I BET YOU'VE NEVER FUCKED
IMAGINE YOU'RE GIVING A BLOW JOB
THAT'S NOT HOW YOU GIVE A BLOW JOB IS IT
WHERE ARE THE CUNTS, CUNTS COME TO THE STAGE
ALL OF YOU ARE WHORES

Not only men towards women

WOMEN TOWARDS GIRLS
YOU ARE YOUNG, PRETTIER BUT I AM BEAUTIFUL
AND GENERALLY I AM MORE BEAUTIFUL
SO I'LL GO AFTER YOU

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

we would cross body boundaries
but with art in our minds
a gradual process
I'm talking about a lot of trust
the sphere of conversations
questions on where to draw the line
on how far you can go

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

we worked with him

Y a friend of mine was also present

he would treat him better

he was open to his suggestions

he would listen to what this friend had to say

when I suggested anything he would stall and shrug me off

as if he was fighting with me

fighting to have the last say

as if he felt weaker and so needed to feel more like a masculine man

so you had to recreate his vision

and I got sexualized and screwed

and other people from the outside told me

that I was treated chauvinistically and I didn't feel well in there...

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU BUT

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

he said that no woman ever wrote a good drama

it's bad that people turn a blind eye

I thought that he is an old-timer so I will just let it go...

but I guess that's not what you should do

and it is that generation—it is instilled in them

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

_

MAYBE WE WENT TOO FAR TALKING ABOUT FEMINISM AND CHAUVINISM

MAYBE IT'S JUST PEOPLE TALKING

LIKE YOU'RE SITTING ON A BENCH WITH YOUR MATES AND THEY GO

HEY

THAT ONE HAS A GREAT ASS

AND WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

we worked with him

Y was his lynchpin

he was wasted all the time by which I mean he was drunk

for half a year

you could smell vodka from boozing all night

every day

you couldn't communicate with him

you would ask a question

and he couldn't reply or would say

'I don't feel well today so Y will reply to you'

girls—we will work by ourselves

that's what we decided

when we completed a process

he would only say at the end 'thank you, I'm not sure'

no comments no cooperation on whether we should change anything in this or that direction

Y was constantly high

okay I didn't see his blood results but you could tell from his eyes

they were red he laughed at strange things and was reticent

I wanted my work to mean something

for something to happen

to make it a challenge

show myself

the last chance to show myself

energy and time

-

crying

I would come to him and say

'tell me please, I beg you, just one thing—should it go this way or that way' and he would laugh and reply 'we'll see, I don't know, I don't know, we'll see'

he was drunk

Y was high

I told him to say anything

that this was the last time

six months of work has passed

and he started laughing

asked Y to say something

Y said:

'well for me it would make sense if the first one masturbated on the bed, jumped at a speaker, the speaker fell down on the head of the other one, smashing it, and the third one licked blood off the second one and then all of them would engage in lesbian sex'

he said that Y was right

you would never dare to say such things to boys

they had fucking loads of work

but they would never cross this line

OR MAYBE WHAT WE'RE SAYING MAKES NO SENSE

NOTHING WILL CHANGE ANYWAY

WE WON'T ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING

WOMEN WILL ALWAYS BE SEXUALIZED

LET'S NOT MAKE OURSELVES WARRIORS

GREAT FEMINISTS FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS
AFTER ALL IN SOME RESPECTS WE WILL ALWAYS BE

BE II VOONE REGIE TO WE WILLIEWIII O D.

SUBORDINATE

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

recently I've been constantly hearing 'the women were hopeless, the guys smashed it'

I understand

that most of them are elderly guys—with more experience in this work and we are young women
but we also work with young guys
and for them the problem did not exist
and they have this rule 'women suck'
and it is as if he was delusional
we didn't give him any reason
for him to keep sending us signals
that he considered us no-talent and worthless
plus brats so don't 'talk to me'

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

3. history of humiliation

FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

there was this supplementary casting for a piece in a musical

I sing and I am confident in doing it

I went to this casting

In the first stage, you had to sing any song with a microphone. Next, they selected eight girls. The auditions took two days. I was invited to the final. At that point, without any prior notice, it turned out that we were not to sing but to get undressed and put on outfits that either did not cover the lower body or exposed the breasts—they were some sort of ribbons. And the outfit was sheer, white and see-through. Justification: these were outfits to be worn at work and he had to see them. We were not prepared to do this. It is a great discomfort for instance when you have your period and you have not shaved your legs. It was wintertime, when you don't feel like exposing your legs. And there was a girl with her period, wearing so-called period underwear—her panties were simply not sexy. I saw tears in her eyes when they told her to put the outfit on. She had everything on top. The panties, the period. Worse still, the girl didn't use tampons, she had an issue with it. And so she had to use pads. And when you have a pad on, you put it into your panties, it is visible, convex, and it is not pleasant when you are not prepared. We were terrified. I really wanted to get this job. All eight of them were to enter the room, sing, and leave. First the outfits were worn. Then some sort of assistant came to us and said, 'You are to go to him, he will be sitting there, smile and be gorgeous.' Naturally, they told us to wear high heels. And he was sitting there, we all came in, eight of us, I felt embarrassed so I didn't even try to be like two other girls who entered after me and looked as if they had stepped out of a musical. He and his assistant were just sitting there. Two guys watching undressed chicks. They would make remarks such as:

'Hey why don't you show us something!

go on, show your leg
aren't you going to show it?
go on, show it
go on and fight for the job, fight for it,

the job will not come to you just like that!he is

Then the vocal audition turned out to be totally irrelevant as all of them sang well.

So the point was to get undressed in front of him and do as he pleased.

4. to have money for food

PHOTO SHOOTS

CASTINGS

WORKSHOPS

WORKING FOR A THEATRE

FOR A FILM

FOR A SERIES

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

more often than not! amateur short films

I got myriad proposals for a nude photo shoot a shoot with another woman—an erotic one. from those who wanted a sex session with me some proposals to star in an amateur porn film

YOU CONSTANTLY DASH
ON THE HOP
RUSHING ENTANGLED
TO EARN MONEY
TO PAY THE RENT
YOU HAVE TO EAT
HAVE SOME FUN OCCASIONALLY

we were doing a short film

he was from there

the young ones would also make little remarks one old geezer was very nice and acted as a sort of 'uncle'

... and then during a scene where it was freezing cold and I could not concentrate he said to me

'Hey did your mama have tits like you?'

that was so pathetic... I couldn't even come up with any response...

you are this frozen person and you must concentrate on a role and someone throws in a comment like this

... I laughed...

and then this response came to my mind:

'Did your daddy have a prick like you?'

I regretted not saying that...

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

Men in this profession are more cost-effective

yes

I'm talking about finances

they simply get paid more

GOD

DON'T LET ME EVER BE THOUGHT OF AS THE ONE WHO WILL UNDRESS

FIRST-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I had to fake an orgasm

cool a barrier that can be overcome

but when I act

I want more

not only in the erotic sense

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I can't imagine myself

running onstage with my breasts exposed

the eyes of dozens of spectators

on my bouncing tits

some of them would surely find an explanation

for this artistic move

but what about the throng of guys

lying in wait for such young bodies...

and my imagination can really go very far...

FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

when I arrive

at least I don't want it to turn out that

in the process I will be deprived of my text

and given a sissy poem instead

because guys need to play in serious scenes

whereas I will be hidden behind a flat SO I WANT TO SPEAK FROM BEHIND THE FLAT SCREAM FROM BEHIND THE WINGS

WHERE THE CAMERA CAN'T SEE

5. scream: no

ONE PERSON WILL REPORT TO ANOTHER WILL TELL THEM SOMETHING

AFTER ALL WE ALL KNOW ONE ANOTHER

PEOPLE WILL BE PEOPLE

YOU'RE AFRAID

YOU MAY EASILY

FLUNK OUT

YOU WON'T OBJECT DIRECTLY

FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I have the courage

and I have the gift of the gab after all

NO

TO SAY NO

BUT HOW

THERE ARE HUMAN TYPES
IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO THE INDIVIDUAL
WE'RE NOT SAYING EVERYONE IS MEAN
AND THAT THEY ALL MISTREAT US
NO

BUT WE ARE SAYING NO TO PRACTICES

THAT HUMILIATE US

THAT DESPISE US

THAT PLAY US

WE ARE SAYING NO TO BEHAVIOURS

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I would be scared on my own

I would be scared for myself

FIRST-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I'm saying this now but I don't know what would happen in a situation like this

trust

you're giving yourself over into his hands

AFTER ALL I MAY BE TREATED EVEN MORE BADLY LATER SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU BUT...

BULLIED

PERSECUTED

THIS COMES TO YOUR MIND

SO YOU PREFER TO GIVE PERMISSION

THE COMFORT OF BEING THERE COULD DETERIORATE

STAY SILENT

NO

SPEAK UP

NO

NO

SPEAK UP

NO

6. sex of work/work of sex

FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

a germ of relief and better treatment when you encounter a man sometimes women can also kick your ass for your hair your figure your smile height and weight

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

when a woman asks me to be sexual

sexy

more feminine

then she says it in a different way

demands it from me in a different way

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

Men ... frequently cross the line

they sometimes try to tease out sexuality more

more than necessary

this isn't always justified

so that it looks proper and so they can ... see something

FIRST SECOND THIRD

COMMENT STATEMENT JOKE

FOURTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

I remember that

he would fight for men much more than he would for women

they get more remarks

they work more

ATTENTION

FLATTERY

TOUCH

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

let's put the blame for it on the fact that

in Elizabethan times women were not allowed to speak on the stage

and they were played by men which is terribly fucked as well

in general there are more women in this profession

we have a bigger problem

because more women would like to land this job

there are not enough parts for us

working time

maybe the parts should be divided

so that everyone has a chance to present themselves

but so far

it's men who have a better chance to present themselves

there are more of us

and fewer parts

NO WOMAN HAS EVER WRITTEN A GOOD DRAMA

SO MAYBE THAT'S WHY...

SORRY FOR TOUCHING YOU

if we had the same number of men and women

things are divided equally

the same number of men as women

the same number of women as men

IF NOTHING CHANGES NOW

IF WE FAIL TO DO SOMETHING NOW

FIFTH-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

he treated men like

they are smarter

SECOND-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

he would turn to men

with more sensitivity and more attentively it was instilled in his mind that they are stronger and more resilient less sensitive?

JOINTLY

BEGINNING WITH THE FOUNDATIONS

PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS THIS IS WHERE ALL THIS IS HAPPENING IN THE NUANCES

THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENT

and when I played for the author of this text he permitted the actors to treat me like an object I was wearing a chemise a particular chemise and I was fed up with the constant comments the author of the text wouldn't react he isn't such a saint but we love each other

Translated by Dorota Pilas-Wiśniewska

ABSTRACT

Michał Telega

The Actresses, Or Sorry for Touching You

While collecting sources, Michał Telega interviewed five female students of the Faculty of Acting at the AST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Krakow (each student from different year) on crossing boundaries and abuse (sexual harassment) in artistic work. Transcripts of interviews and incidents revealed became evidence of bad practices in artistic education, which are also repeated in work relations at theatres, which connives at objectifying actresses.

Keywords: acting, theatre school, mobbing, sexual harassment.