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STAGE MANNERS

An actor, performer or musician should have a good command of what is called "Stage Manners".

While it is not possible here to give a full text on the subject, these basics should suffice.

1. The performer purpose is basically Communication.

(a) To Communicate one must have R (Reality) - which is to say one must be visible.

(b) To Communicate one must have R that there is an audience there to be Communicated to.

(c) A degree of Affinity with or for the audience must be physically expressed. (One cannot treat an audience with contempt, for instance.) (A perpetual smile is not a must, a respectful look, a friendly look does as well.)

If you look over the above ABCs you will see that the general basic of Stage Manners is the ARC Triangle. From this almost anything else can be derived.

However, there are some traditional rules.

I. You accept applause. This is the contribution of the audience. You do not cut it off. You acknowledge it with bows or other physical actions. But you accept it. You don't dodge it.

II. You never turn your back on the audience. (An exception is an actor in play stage situations.) You turn in such a way as to turn facing the audience. You do not turn the other way around and so give them your back.

III. Never express embarrassment or stage fright even when you feel it. Force yourself into a physical appearance and expression of poise.

IV. If you goof, ride right over it. Do not break off, call attention to it or look helpless or foolish. Just ride right over it and go on.

V. If you do not know what to do with your hands or feet, don't do anything with them. Avoid twisting your feet or legs or hands or arms around. Don't fiddle with things. Be positive in motion.

VI. During breaks or silent periods remember you are still on stage and Stage Manners still apply.

VII. Always appear to be in control of the place and the audience.

VIII. Never let your poise be shattered by a sudden surprise. Ride over it and handle.

IX. A performer DOMINATES an audience:

- (a) By his comm,
- (b) By his art,
- (c) By his technical perfection,
- (d) By his Stage Manners.

None of this means that one cannot clown, joke, act superior or even seem austere. These are the arts of presence. But even in doing these, Stage Manners are observed.

If as a small child one was always cautioned about his manners and resented it one should get a clear idea of what manners are:

In a culture manners are the lubrication that ease the frictions of social contacts.

On the stage, Stage Manners are the means of smoothing the problems of interchange between audience and performer.

The hallmark of the professional performer, next to his art and expertise, are flawless Stage Manners.

Stand before a full length mirror. (Or use Video Tape.) Assume the postures of your act. Accept applause gracefully. Bow gracefully. Smile pleasantly. Laugh. Be dignified. Demonstrate poise. Assume the posture needed for a non-applauding audience. Ride out boos. Demand more applause. Do the postures to end your performance after applause. Accept a standing ovation. Deplore not being able to give an encore. Appear at the start for a first part of a performance. Assume the postures and poise needed on stage during a one minute break between numbers. Accept a plaque. Accept flowers. Ride over a bad goof. Be respectful to the audience. Kid the audience out of it. Do each one of the IX rules. AND ALL WITHOUT SAYING A WORD. Do it with physical motions or lack of them.

When you can do all these things and look right to yourself and feel easy about them you will have and be confident of your Stage Manners.

L. RON HUBBARD
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