

Believing in Murder. Working with Actors

ABSTRACT. Horn Magnus von, *Believing in murder. Working with actors.* „Images” vol. XIX, no. 28. Poznań 2016. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. Pp. 185–197. ISSN 1731-450X. DOI 10.14746/i.2016.28.15.

In this paper I want to focus on working with actors. How we tried to reach such extreme emotions and behaviour as described above. I will describe the process of rehearsals with the two main actors and the problems we met on the road. It's important to mention that the idea for this kind of film was also strongly inspired by my wish to work with actors on an extremely emotional level, where we would all more or less lose control.

KEYWORDS: Working with actors, process of rehearsals, filmmaker

I wrote a script about two 18 years old boys who murdered a teenage girl and who have to relive their crime during a crime reconstruction led by a psychologist and a meeting with the parents of the murdered girl. I wanted to make a short film that would explore the darkest sides of the human being that were not to be connected with psychopathic behavior. In other words, I wanted to make a film about the darkness that exists in us all. I strongly believe that everyone is able to commit horrible acts of pain, mentally or physically, towards themselves or other people. I believe that this is in our nature and that we very rarely are in control of this side of our behavior. It's a side we do not feel is part of us because we cannot control it.

Two years ago I read the crime report of a murder that took place in Louisiana, USA. Four boys, in-between the ages 16 and 20, randomly picked up a 30 years old female hitch hiker. They took her to a remote area where they started beating her, throwing bottles at her and jumping on her face. She finally died because of the violence. The boys then sexually molested the body with a bottle and finally threw her off a cliff. At this moment one of the boys started feeling sick so the others drove him home. The three remaining boys then returned to the body with a flashlight and a knife. They stabbed the body 180 times, cut off her fingers and toes and in the autopsy report it was written that one of them had even carved out her lunge and taken a bite of it. The boys were later arrested because one of them had shown off one of the victims fingers in school.

I based my script on this happening and wrote a story about a unplanned murder that became more brutal than the mind of the main characters could ever imagine since they entered a stage of killing themselves once they realized that they had actually killed a person. By killing themselves, I mean that the extensive violence committed to the

Introduction

body after death was a reaction to the complete frustration over the fact that they actually killed someone. This is a very abstract idea but I believe that when my characters realized that they had committed a “inhuman” act, there is a trigger that keeps pulling them into “inhumanity” rather than returning them to reason and confronting them with their “inhumanity”.

In this paper I want to focus on working with actors. How we tried to reach such extreme emotions and behavior as described above. I will describe the process of rehearsals with the two main actors and what problems we met on the road. It’s important to mention that the idea for this kind of film was also strongly inspired by me wanting to work with actors on an extreme emotional level where we all more or less would lose control.

Acting

Before I start describing the work me and my actors went through I would like to shortly describe what approach I had to acting in general during the production of this film. I do not feel that I have any idea of what acting should be, or is, at all times. I can just feel what acting is for me at the moment of a certain project. For this project I wanted it to be an experience stronger than the intellect. I wanted the actors to really experience something that was stronger than their own imagination. In this way they wouldn’t be allowed to imagine their characters but rather just find them when they would be in the right emotional state. If compared to any of the many methods and systems I guess Meisner’s acting technique would be the closest. I find that the actors work should be very primitive and physical and communicated through clear and few emotions.

In Stanislavski’s ‘system’ the actor analyzes deeply the motivations and emotions of the character in order to personify him or her with psychological realism and emotional authenticity. However, using the Method, an actor recalls emotions or reactions from his or her own life and uses them to identify with the character being portrayed.

Those trained by Lee Strasberg often used personal experience on stage to identify with the emotional life of the character and portray it. Sanford Meisner found that too cerebral, and advocated fully immersing oneself in the moment of a character and gaining spontaneity through an understanding of the scene’s circumstances, and through exercises he designed to help the actor gain emotional investment in the scene and then free him or her to react as the character. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Method_acting>)

Like Meisner I believe that it’s more important for the actor to be able to use imagination to stimulate emotions and involvement rather than, like Strasberg, making the actor use emotional recall (using personal emotions from past memories) or Stanislavski’s emotional memory (more or less the same thing). I think the strongest and most effective acting comes out of the actor’s real human responses to circumstances and other people. Our own human organism communicates much stronger if it is not restrained by circumstances that take away the

unique behavior of each and every person. I believe that the moment (the action in the scene) should exist when it is acted out and does not necessarily need to be built up by our own private emotional past. The less the actor has to think about (his acting) the better the result. An example of this is an exercise (by Meisner) where two actors sit facing each other and use one single line concerning one of their behaviors to communicate. They repeat this line to each other until the meaning changes. In this way the actor is only trying to communicate through body and tone and already decided changes in the scene are taken away. In this way the scene becomes organic and not destroyed by restraints. An actor should be cast for a part because his normal, natural features fit the character, and not remade into a character.

For me the theoretical part of the acting process, such as discussing back stories and characters is a necessary evil (and rather boring period) that finally allows you to try something physical. Hopefully then the actor will forget everything called back-story and character theory and try something where he puts himself into the scene and stops feeling safe. I believe acting is interesting when the actor is risking his own integrity and feelings. If I'm suppose to relate to a character shown on the screen I need to feel that the character is as unsafe as I feel unsafe in this world and that there is no such thing as the safety of pretending.

Already at an early point in writing the script I knew that I wanted to use acting students for the parts of the two main characters, Arek and Damian (both 18 years old). I wanted them to be inexperienced acting students that had energy, motivation and enthusiasm to act but still weren't aware of their own capabilities to their full extent. This was of capital importance to me since I wanted the main actors to really live through horrible emotions that they themselves were afraid off and hadn't experienced before. I wanted the murder, the film circulates around, and the emotions, the emotional consequences of the murder, to be true for them and therefore they would have to be truly repulsive for them since the characters weren't suppose to be psychopaths. Since they would be young acting students they would have a masochistic attraction to opening themselves emotionally.

The actors I finally picked after a month long casting period was Radek Rospondek and Marek Kossakowski.

Radek Rospondek was 19 years old and studied at Dorota Pomykala's private acting school in Katowice because he didn't get in to any of the state acting schools in Poland. When I met him for the first time he was just about to do some kind of mouth operation to get better articulation. Apparently this was one of the reasons why no schools accepted him. He had dark hair and a face that was very difficult to read. On the casting I didn't even know if he was bored, tired or just pretending to be cool or not caring at all.

Marek Kossakowski was 23 years old but looked like 17. When I met him he wasn't studying anymore and he hadn't really finished any acting school but rather started them and got thrown out or quit

after some time. He had studied at PWST Wroclaw for a year, then L'ART in Krakow for two years and PWST Warszawa for three years. He had strange blond hair and looked like he was able to see ghosts everywhere.

I will from here on mostly focus on my work with the actors that played Arek and Damian (Radek and Marek), since I feel that it was the most rewarding work when it comes to what I have tried to describe above. But I will also describe the work done when “grown up” (professional) actors entered our stage

Rehearsal 1

The first rehearsal was a talking and theoretical one. I had planned it to be with as little stress as possible. I wanted to try to create a feeling that we don't discuss outside matters and we don't feel time pressure. I wanted to discover the characters with them and not serve them to them. I didn't want them to think that they would get anything for free. The actors care if they have to fight for it. I think this first rehearsal was for me to make them understand that it was worth fighting for. So I started telling them about how I imagined the film and the feelings of how the story was going to be told. I like situations like this because it doesn't really matter what I say, the only thing that matters is that I say it with emotions. As long as the actors see that I want to tell something I feel deeply myself it doesn't really matter what is being said. In general I believe that energy is more important than sense and logics. As long as the energy is truthful.

Radek played the main part of the film, Arek. Marek played Arek's friend, Damian. In the relationship between them, Arek was suppose to be the dominating one. Both of them were suppose to be outsiders and their lack of friends had brought them together in a contemporary polish society where they had been going to school together for most of their lives. The unplanned murder was a resault of impossible love. Arek loved the girl they murdered and she never even knew about it. Arek brought Damian along to scare the girl and it ended





in murder. A murder that Arek forced Damian into. Not only did Arek murder the girl, but he also made a murderer out of his only friend.

The most difficult part for me in conversations like the one I had on rehearsal 1 is when it comes to making up back stories. I hate this but I understand the importance of it for the actor. They started asking me how the murdered had happened. What had happened one hour before and how they had proceeded. I had for a long time searched the internet to find some true story of how a crime was “prepared” but without luck. I hate coming up with it myself because I don’t believe in my own back stories. It doesn’t really bother me because I don’t feel I need this back





story. But I know that I need to tell it to other people. So I had prepared a back story I honestly didn't feel much for but thought that it might be satisfactory for the actors. I started telling how Arek had stolen his father's car and picked up Damian. How they had waited for her outside the bar where she was last seen before her death and so on and so on. When I told this story to the actors they might have thought that I was making a lot of pauses as to build some kind of suspense, but really I was just making pauses because I needed to check their faces and see if they are buying this stuff. I'm so happy when they buy it and actually feel that it helped them. And they bought it. After that we finished.

Rehearsal 2

I had decided that we should start working on the "easiest" scene. The scene was a conversation between Arek and Damian alone in a police car before being brought to the crime scene. This was to be their first conversation after they had been arrested. For me it was very important to see the boys in a private conversation that would establish their friendship and hierarchy. I as I mentioned before, Arek was to be the leader of the two. I thought this would be rather simple to work out with the actors but it proved to be very difficult. Marek (Damian) couldn't seem to become the weaker one of the two. He would constantly start dominating over Radek (Arek). After we had had a long talk about the fear they must feel being confronted with their crime once again we tried some improvisation and it ended with Marek hitting Radek. I really liked the fact that Marek hit Radek but this was not the right

direction. I tried to turn it around so that Radek would hit Marek but even though he hit him it was difficult to get away from the fact that Marek hit Radek the first time. And we focused on this problem a great deal during that day we never seemed to get completely away from it. We even stopped rehearsing the scene we were suppose to rehearse and did improvisations where Marek was the younger brother of Radek and they fantasized about opening a sea side restaurant together.

I think the problem of Marek wanting to dominate was based on very simple facts. He was four years older than Radek. He was much more experienced as an actor and he didn't really have the same nervous for acting in a film like Radek had, since this was Radek's first film ever. But these reasons are obvious, a bit childish and rarely admitted. During this rehearsal I asked him why he couldn't just be more dominated by Arek. He told me that he felt his character would be too stupid if he was that easily dominated by his friend. I understood his argument by I didn't really believe in him.

Marek also had another side that bothered me. He would constantly make these faces when acting. Not faces like funny faces, but more like ticks. His cheeks would jump and he would make sudden movements as if he was very nervous. Even though these ticks were pretty interesting I felt that they were ticks he had practiced and controlled very well. It was an actor feeling safe and doing his strange crazy face that has given him applause many times before. I didn't speak to Marek about this but I felt that it would be a problem.

In the last scene of my script the main character Arek meets the parents, of the girl he murdered, in a prison visiting room which results in Arek having a complete break down. The scene was written like this.

Rehearsal 3

Arek siedzi twarzą w twarz z rodzicami zamordowanej dziewczyny. Rodzice są bardzo dobrze ubrani i wyglądają na zamożnych. Sala jest pusta, poza nimi i jednym strażnikiem. Matka mówi spokojnie, wygląda jakby wzięła mocne środki uspokajające. Ojciec bez słowa patrzy na Arka. Arek wygląda jakby był bardzo mocno zamysłony. Długa cisza. Od czasu do czasu matka patrzy poza kadr, tak jakby chciała, żeby ktoś jej powiedział co ma robić. Otwiera mały notatnik, który przed nią leży. Przeskakuje parę stron i patrzy na coś, co ma napisane w notatniku.

Matka: Jesteśmy bardzo wdzięczni, że zgodziłeś się z nami spotkać. To wiele dla nas... znaczy. Dziękuję.

Matka patrzy na Arka jakby czekała na odpowiedź. Cisza.

Matka: Chcesz coś może nam powiedzieć?

Arek nic nie odpowiada. Matka patrzy do notatnika i czyta. Napięcie odmalowuje się na twarzy Arka. Wygląda, jakby miał zacząć płakać.

Matka: Dlaczego odebrałeś nam naszą córkę?

Matka patrzy na Arka, jakby powiedziała coś strasznego. Przez moment trwa cisza pełna napięcia. Matka patrzy znowu na notatnik.

Matka: Czy czujesz, że zrobiłeś coś strasznego?

Arek wydaje dziwny dźwięk, ale zachowuje się tak, jakby tego nie zauważył. Matka czeka na jego odpowiedź. Po chwili znowu patrzy na notatnik.

Matka: Czy Wiktoria cię kiedykolwiek skrzywdziła?

Arek wydaje z siebie kolejny dziwny dźwięk. Rodzice patrzą na niego znowu, jakby czekali na odpowiedź. Ojciec poprawia się na krześle, zbliżając się nieco do Arka. Rodzice patrzą na Arka, jakby próbowali coś zrozumieć. Twarz Arka staje się czerwona. Arek stara się ukryć jakiś rodzaj bólu i patrzy prosto na nich. Widać, że zaraz wybuchnie. Na jego twarzy widać nienawiść. Matka wygląda na dosyć zdziwioną i zagubioną. Arek zaczyna krzyczeć i wydawać z siebie straszne dźwięki jakby kompletnie stracił kontrolę. Matka zaczyna czytać z notatnika, jakby próbowała profesjonalnie dokończyć swój obowiązek.

Matka: Kochaliśmy ją bardzo. To wszystko.

Zachowanie Arka zmienia się z furii w łzy i z powrotem w furie. Krzyczy jak zwierzę.

Arek's break down was to show his own inability to understand what he has done. His own inability to logically deal with his emotions of guilt and fear. As if there was nothing left in him except animalistic fury, childish innocence and guilt. I also had an idea of connecting the mother to Arek in the end of the scene. As if she understood Arek in his breakdown. That she feels exactly the same way he does but is unable to express it. The theory I built was that when Arek breaks down the mother should want to feel what he feels.

This was the scene I was most scared of doing. I knew that this scene had to be a surprise to me and I couldn't control it. I knew that I couldn't rehearse this scene into the scene I wanted because then it would be controlled and uninteresting. The scene would take place one time and one time only, and that would be during the shooting of it. But one very important thing for me was to check if my 19 years old actor, Arek, was able at all do get to this emotional level that results in a complete break down. I decided to test him without any other actors present just to see how far I could push him. We sat down in a room and started talking about the scene first. I explained to him how I pictured it and what emotions I thought were going through his characters head. When he said that he more or less understood I told him to take a seat on a chair in the middle of room and show me those feelings. I very coldly asked him to try to reach these kinds of emotions. He looked surprised at first but then sat down and started concentrating. While he was doing this I turned on my computer and connected a pair of loud speakers to it. In a sound program I had already prepared a sound file with a woman who, very monotony, is reading the lines of the mother in the scene. I also had another sound file with the sound of a man who is choking on his own blood. I got this sound from a video I found on the internet of a man who gets beaten in the head several times and receives internal bleedings in his throat and starts choking on his own blood when he tries to breath through his mouth. It sounds more or less like a pig.

When I saw that Arek was more or less ready (that he was seriously pushing himself towards painful emotions) I told him to imagine himself watching his mother being raped. Then that he is raping a young girl and his parents are watching him. I kept telling him to imagine other similar scenarios and suddenly start playing the sound file from my computer of the female voice reading the mothers lines. I saw that this worked well on Arek and I started mixing her calm voice with the sounds of the man choking on his own blood. I mixed it and played it for him during 20 minutes and then I stopped. Arek was now suffering. I went over to him and started screaming at him to show me more. To show me more fear. I slapped him over the face and screamed at him repeatedly to show me more. I wanted him to show hate towards me. At the moment when I saw he was about to hit me back, I jumped at him and threw him to the floor. I held him violently and told him to cry like a child. And he did so. He broke down. He was able to go from a little child crying to very aggressive emotions if I just pushed him a bit in either way.

I let Arek rest for a few minutes and then I read some other scenes from the script with him and it was amazing. Because of his break down he single handedly managed to hit all the right emotions in scenes that were not physically connected to the scene we had just rehearsed. At that moment he discovered by himself what was the most important things for him in the film. Everything could be read out of what he was acting out with me (and I wasn't even acting) at that moment. His relationship to Damian (the friend he betrays). His feelings towards the murder itself. The feelings towards having to confess it over again.

After this I knew that Arek was able to do the last scene of the script. But I also knew that I was never to rehearse that scene again and not even talk about it. It would work by itself. The one rehearsal we had was to give Arek a trauma. To plant a trauma he could return to when we shot the scene. Now he would be very scared that he wouldn't be able to return to his break down, and this I discovered was the best energy for him, because then he would freak out for real. And he did. On the set he was laying on the floor outside the room where we shot, not wanting to go in because he was so scared he wouldn't be able to return to the emotions we once had. He was even crying. When I pulled him in to the room and sat him down by the table where the actors who played the mother and the father (Dorota Segda and Mariusz Siudziński) were sitting (they had not even been introduced to Radek before) he pulled it off very well. He was even able to repeat it five times. Dorota Segda even changed the ending of the scene during the take when she very naturally started crying with Radek and took his hand in hers. This was something I would never have been able to write because it would have sounded too sentimental and pretentious but when it was natural it suddenly worked. It worked because it was never planned and it was out of control.

Rehearsal 4

I met Radek and Marek in Warszawa and we had rehearsals in ZASP. A really interesting place. We had rehearsals in a beautiful room that more or less looked like sala Senatu in PWSFTviT. There was even a room next to ours with a reception and serious women.

My goal with these rehearsals was to make Marek insecure and make him realise that he had to fight more for his character. As I mentioned before, I felt that he used faces and methods he had already established as winning methods for his looks. So I let Radek watch us when I tried a rehearsal with Marek that somehow looked like the experiment I had done with Radek on the previous rehearsal, but without computer and special effects. Marek started crying and we rolled around on the floor for a while but I felt all the time that it wasn't costing Marek anything. Radek, who was watching, was more emotionally engaged than Marek. I stopped working with Marek and put him together with Radek. I told Radek to start pushing Marek to admit a murder he didn't commit. Radek was supposed to make Marek believe he was guilty. It ended with Radek chasing Marek through ZASP and into the reception room with the serious women and then back to our room. A security guard came and told us to keep it down. I still felt that Marek was not really experiencing the pain he was supposed to experience. Radek on the other hand was doing a really good job. When we had a break he came to me and said that after the previous rehearsals we had, something broke in him. He could sit at home and listen to some Ukrainian folk music and start crying. He said that he didn't know if he should hate me or like me for that rehearsal.

I started speaking to Marek in front of Radek about his previous acting experiences and it turned out that he had taken special acting classes in mentally breaking down so what we did was not at all new for him. I told Marek that I didn't believe in his acting that he performed on our rehearsals. He took this pretty hard and became quiet. I told him that he needs to find something original for this film and not something old he has used before. I told him he needs to feel that he's risking something and that it hurts. I felt really bad saying this because I never thought he would take it so hard. It was a very awkward silence in the room and finally we started talking about other things such as Poland and the Catholic church. I asked Marek many questions about his parents and why he didn't really keep contact with them.

When we finished the rehearsals Radek had to run to make the train back to Czestochowa. I still had some time and so did Marek. We went to eat. Marek almost seemed happy that Radek had left and he spoke to me all the time about ideas, asking for my opinion and was suddenly very happy. It was strange but good.

Conclusion

After this we started having rehearsals together with the rest of the actors. I will not describe this in the same way as I have described the rehearsals I had with Radek and Marek since the character of the rehearsals changed as soon as other actors were involved. When I say changed I mean that we basically started rehearsing scenes as they were

written in the script and tried to find out how they would be acted out in front of the camera. Although this as well was a very important part of the process I feel it's another story and doesn't really connect to the work me, Radek and Marek did in the beginning. That work was more searching for energy and this is what I would like to discuss here.

I now more than during the rehearsals understand that what we were looking for with Radek and Marek was the energy of fear. I wanted them to gain an emotional level that would color everything they did. And what was most interesting for me was that this emotional level of fear doesn't have to be directly connected to the back story or character portrayed by the actor himself. The characters in my film had committed a murder and I wanted them to be scared to death of what they had done. Rather than having them act out fear I thought it would be better to create real fear for them and make some kind of trauma that they would be able to use. Meaning that the material we worked on would always be connected with horrible feelings for them that they had really felt and not only imagined. I further think that this feeling of fear can be very abstract and doesn't have to be precisely connected to the material or script. The best way is to first find the fear and then do the scenes. A good example is the rehearsal I did with Radek alone when I used the sounds from the computer. First he broke down and then we did a random scene from the script that worked out great because he had such strong emotions inside and watching him trying to hide them and deal with them during the reading of other scenes really answered a bunch of questions in just a few seconds. An extreme example could be an actor who just before auditioning for a romantic comedy gets a phone call that his parents are dead. Still he takes part in the audition and brings strange drama to a scene that originally in the script was driven by completely different emotions. The actors sadness over his parents death is set in contrast to the romantic comedy scene he is acting. I guess this is what I wanted to try. And the wider and more generally I describe it, I see that this is the driving force behind all good drama. Saying one thing and meaning another. It's more interesting to watch an actor who is suppose to be drunk, trying to persuade that he's sober.

How did this work out then? What happened on set and what was registered? Did these big emotions I have been writing about survive to the screen? At the moment I'm in the editing room and I can see pretty clearly what went wrong and what turned out ok. I will start with the more positive side of this discussion. Something I was pretty amazed about and didn't really think would work. This is when big emotions from one actor makes the other actor who might lack these emotions (but is intelligent), act very good by just feeling that the other actor feels something very strongly.

When I started doing rehearsals with more actors than just Radek and Marek I suddenly saw that I had to get rid of the actress that was supposed to portray the girl who stands in as the victim during the reconstruction of the crime. I suddenly saw that she couldn't understand

my interpretation of her part and that she never would. So I changed her and picked another actress I had worked with before and knew was an intelligent actress. The problem was that I was never able to make rehearsals with her and the rest of the cast. We just had to do the whole thing hard core on set. And it would be hard core because the actress was suppose to suddenly mentally break down when one of the boys was going to touch her on the cheek the way he touched the girl he murdered. This was shot without any rehearsals and it turned out pretty interesting because the actress could see that Radek (the boy who touched her) really felt what he was doing, that he really expressed fear. The actress was under Radek's hypnosis and she understood everything from just seeing him. Of course this only works in short moments, and this was exactly one of them. It was only a short moment that was needed. The girl that acted the victim on the reconstruction was only suppose to have one real scene and that was when she breaks down by the boy touching her. After that she's out of the film. And further more I realized that this kind of acting only works if the actor is intelligent and open to every possibility. This would never have worked with the actress I had to change because she was not open to abstract ideas. To react violently she would require physical violence. The idea of the scene was that she reacts violently but not as an reaction to physical violence but to some strange sense of fear and violence in the air.

Another example of this was the last scene of the film (the scene with Arek and the parents of the victim) as I described in the chapter Rehearsal 3. Here Dorota Segda lived of the crazy emotions Radek had gathered. Neither had I with Segda done any rehearsals but she just fed off the crazy break down Radek was going through. The scene, as it was written, was lost and a new scene developed between them since it became very organic and truthful all of a sudden. This means that Dorota Segda started acting as she truly felt (reacting too Arek) and she threw the script away. This worked perfectly in this scene because it was short and really needed to be explosive. I think energy and presence is so much more important in acting than back story and complete understanding of the theory of the scene. But maybe energy and presence is impossible if there is no back story and theory in the beginning. Or maybe someone else, not the actor, needs to think about the theory and direct accordingly.

Marek fought really hard all the time on set to stay in character and suffer. I don't know if this resulted in better acting or if he just wanted to show that he took it very seriously by not eating the whole day. Sometimes he was good and sometimes bad. But I still had such a big problem during set to see if this is what I wanted from him or not. I don't think he ever really became the weaker boy who was dominated by the other one. He was a strange mix between a young scared blond kid and a satanic weirdo with ticks. Maybe that's good for the film. I don't really know yet but I'm mostly frustrated about that I never really got to understand Marek and the way he worked. Within there lies the problem of not being able to make him the character I wanted. I didn't understand

him, and that's why I say such things like he made sure it looked like he suffered during set and so on. For sure it was not like that. He took it very seriously. Radek even told me many times that he was very amazed by the way Marek was able to stay in character for such long time periods.

However, the biggest problem was something much more general. I think one very annoying mistake I made while working intensively with actors was forgetting about the other aspects of film making. I put too much trust into my actors and their faces and became very uncreative while working on storyboards, movement, locations, costumes and stenography. When I'm now editing my film I see that I completely forgot to shoot the location. A location that we searched for during two months and now it looks like it could have been shot in my back yard. I also see that I forgot to shoot a significant amount of reaction shots. During the process of making the film I remember being very lazy about costumes and knowing exactly what was going to happen during set. I didn't even have any storyboards during shooting. I think I thought that my actors and their big emotions would make everything natural and they themselves would feel how to move and ping pong editing would still be interesting because the actors' faces would keep the audience interested. Of course, now in the editing room I wish I would have fought harder and played more attention to details and other aspects than acting.

This way of working with actors is somewhat limited to amateurs and actors who are not yet working professionally. It's a method that can only be used with actors who are prepared to invest with their private emotions to the end. In theory I think this should be a basic thing for actors but in practice it looks a bit different. If an actor who has been acting for 30 years has been investing his private emotions into every piece of drama that has required it, he would probably be completely emotionally devastated by now. Professional actors know this and don't let themselves be pushed more than they feel required. When Radek acted out the last scene of the film with Dorota Segda she took him aside when we were finished and told that he has to learn how to control such emotional break downs. "You can't let them touch you, or you'll go insane". Dorota Segda was the perfect example of this. She cried and screamed as much as Radek but once the scene ended she was right back to normal. Radek was not.

Maybe I would put it another way. The method I used with Radek and Marek can only be used with actors who are ready to give everything for a single project. This is of course mostly common among amateur actors and acting students. But I'm confident that the same way of working can be used with any actor as long as they feel it is worth investing to that extent that their personal emotions are disturbed by the process. For me it's obvious that I will always fight for the actor to be personally involved with the character. The actor fights against being hurt (getting too involved), even subconsciously, and I think it's the directors' work to try to get the actor to hurt himself. Otherwise there will never be blood, sweat and tears.



Fot. Justyna Sulejewska