

The Singing Actor: The Birth of The Singing Actor in Sinhalese Theatre of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

According to Leslie Bennett (2013), the singing actor must perform the structure laid out in the text, yet freely improvise within that structure making discoveries and impromptu decisions in order to tell the truth onstage. There have been many actors with the ability to sing in the history of Sinhala theatre of Sri Lanka, from the time of folk drama to contemporary theatre. It is a rare talent and only a handful of actors have been able to successfully bring this talent to their performances. The success of the performance varies depending on the ability to effectively combine acting, singing, and dancing. Although Singing Actors are sought after and are of great worth, there is hardly any academic research about them. With 15 years of practical experience in theatre, I was inspired to research on the singing actor, by focusing mainly on '*Tharawo Igilethi*' and '*Rathuhattakari*', two plays that I have performed in as a singing actor myself. Interviews with Dr. Jayalath Manorathne and Mr. Rodney Warnakula, former actors of these plays have added value to this research. The challenges faced, the techniques used in order to overcome them; and the pros and cons of a Singing Actor were identified through this research. In addition, it will contribute to the wider community of research by attempting to fill a research gap, as this subject area has not been researched in this manner before and I have been able to reach new grounds based on the facts and findings of this research. This dissertation is intended to produce a greater academic interest in the study of the 'singing actor'.

Keywords: Singing, Acting, Experience, Challenges, Techniques