

ACTORS-WITH-DISABILITIES IN AFRICAN PLAY PERFORMANCE: AN EVALUATION OF THE STAGING OF MR. SABI AT ASIKO ARTS THEATRE VILLAGE

MONIJESU EBUBE

Department of Theatre and Film Arts, Faculty of Arts,
University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria.
Phone: +2348033670664

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ABSTRACT

In African society, the disabled are often seen as objects of pity and as result exempted from normal activities especially of recreation and entertainment in order not to bother them. Also, it is believed majorly that their disability requires they should be hidden from the public eye as much as possible, not to talk of attracting undue attention to themselves. Hence, they hardly ever participate in stage performances or other recreational activities that require an audience/crowd. Apart from the fear of stigmatization, the other obstacle that assails the disabled is the inconsideration of the disabled in the building of most of the infrastructures in African society. To address the involvement or non-involvement of these categories of members of the African society, the attitude of the Average African to the disabled must first be addressed. This article will concentrate on the disabled in Nigeria, where Asiko Arts Theatre Village is based. It looks into the psychological importance of engaging the physically challenged in theatrical performances and its benefits.

Keywords: Recreation, Stage Performance, Actors-with-Disabilities, Exempted.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The disabled are often seen as liabilities because of their neediness and dependence on others as a result of their impediments. The uneasy atmosphere often felt by the entrance of persons with disability into a gathering of able-bodied persons can be daunting for the disabled who primarily want to blend in and engage in enjoyable activities. The able-bodied society needs to learn to overlook the disability of the disabled, except when dangerous. To an extent, it is the social duty of the able-bodied to help create diversions from the incapacities of these particular members of society, and one method to do so is the primary objective of this article.

The tragic circumstances that robbed the disabled of the capacity of some parts of their bodies to function properly, did not necessarily rob them of their aspirations. In a sense, that is more of a setback, than even a physical disability. Initially, the dream to be a world-acclaimed singer or actor or even an athlete becomes shattered alongside their bodies. Yet, some years after getting over the first shock --if not congenital--the dream may return with hope again! However, it all depends on the encouragement and assistance they get from society. What this paper will stress is the fact that persons with disabilities want and need to have pleasure as well, by engaging in the activities they love. They are not condemned to boredom for the rest of their

lives, simply because they have been rendered immobile for whatever reason. Theatre as a major source of entertainment entails fun in all its ramifications both for the entertainer and the entertained, therefore, persons with disability can entertain and be entertained. This work will base its findings on persons with disabilities as entertainers, presenting the stage as the ideal place for a disabled actor to start.

The questions this paper will endeavor to answer are: can a person with disabilities realize his/her dream of becoming an Actor? How can the Playwright involve the physically challenged in his/her stories? How can a director ensure that that role is played by a genuine person with a disability and not improvised by an able-bodied? In addition, can the director enable the disabled to play a role originally meant for the able-bodied, thereby, not restricting them to very few roles or confining them to typecasting? If most of the roles meant for the disabled have been taken by the able-bodied, then persons with disabilities should take regular roles meant for the able-bodied. This paper will engage a qualitative method, using Mr. Sabi, a play written by this present researcher and staged at Asiko Arts Theatre Village, Jos, Nigeria, the challenges encountered and how it was overcome. Conclusions will be drawn on the prospects of engaging these often neglected members of our society in stage plays.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since this paper is based on arts and disabilities it shall be hinged on two basic theories: Berthold Brecht's breaking the Fourth Wall and Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Brecht's theory is found relevant to this work on disability in relation to art, as Barnes noted,

Disability art is potentially educative, transformative, expressive, emotionally exploratory, participative, and involving. It is a concept of cultural action that owes much to playwrights such as Berthold Brecht and educationalists like Paulo Freire because it is radical, challenging, and progressive at an individual and social level. Brecht was a well-known German Marxist dramatist whose plays and songs focus on oppression and injustice. (9)

Brecht's theory of "Breaking the Fourth Wall" states that

The story is the point of interest, not the characters. The story is the sequence of events that is the social experiment, allowing the interplay of social forces, from which the play's lesson emerges. If the audience does not maintain a distance between the characters and themselves then this cannot be achieved. Acting in Epic Theatre means that an actor is required to play characters believably without convincing either the audience or themselves that they are, indeed, the characters. There is an audible and visual distance between the actor and their character and the actors will often 'break the fourth wall' and address the audience, play multiple characters and use exaggerated or repetitive actions to make their distance and social commentary known.

Brecht's focus on oppression and injustice in his plays is directly in consonant with the theory of radical socio-political interpretation of disability. Britain's Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS), in their manifesto entitled The Fundamental Principle of Disability cited in Barnes) they assert that it is society that disables people with impairments.

In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society. (Barnes: 14)

Thus, if the disabled can be categorized as the oppressed in some instances, then this work will reason with Paulo Freire and his theories as well. Freire believed the oppressed suffer from duality established in their innermost being, he stressed that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. (Freire: 4) What freedom in this instance? The freedom to be able to take part in an audition and be cast for a role in a play they desire to be part of. But according to Freire:

The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescription or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account. (Freire: 48)

Again, Paulo Freire postulates that:

To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction. (Freire: 50)

Furthermore, he argues that:

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption. (Freire: 54)

If persons with disabilities cannot represent themselves in plays, not to mention representing able-bodied characters, this paper will be left with no option than to classify them as the “oppressed”.

I Want To Be What I Want To Be

These are the ones who are determined not to be deterred from their goals in spite of whatever has happened and say: “I want to be what I want to be”. If our dreams, through thick and thin stick to us and will not let go, it leaves us with no other option, except to pursue that dream to realization. But if life has brought some physical setbacks that make the realization of this dream impossible, such a one cannot achieve this without some assistance; Assistance from those who are able-bodied enough to care for the weak, those who have the mental and physical capacity to lend a hand to those downtrodden by unfortunate circumstances that took away their physical or mental abilities, assistance from governmental and non-governmental bodies

who choose to include these people in their decisions and projects to bring about the social development of the society.

Understanding Disability

Disability has different models, this work will focus on the medical, the social and moral models. In the medical model, disability is considered an entirely physical occurrence, and being disabled is a negative that can only be made better if the disability is cured and the person is made 'normal'. Many disability rights advocates reject this, and promote a social model in which disability is a difference – neither a good nor a bad trait.

According to the Northern-Officers Group (1) definition, a disabled person is a person with an impairment who experiences disability. Disability is the result of negative interactions that take place between a person with an impairment and her or his social environment.

Moral Model of Disability: the African Mentality

According to Drimmer (in Kaplan: 353), the moral model is historically the oldest and is less prevalent today. However, there are still many cultures that associate disability with sin and shame, and disability is often associated with feelings of guilt, even if not overtly based on religious doctrine. For the individual with a disability, this model is particularly burdensome. Families keep them out of school and exclude them from any chance at having a meaningful role in society. Even in less extreme circumstances, this model has resulted in general social ostracism and self-hatred.

Regrettably, this cruel model accurately reflects and characterizes the bulk of African outlook, attitude, perception and superstitious beliefs towards these people of the society, who are often blamed for their misfortune and seen as burdens. The psychological pain is more unbearable for these ones, than the physical, caused by the insensitivities of the society they live in. As a result of the ostracism often experienced, they are made to feel there is not much to live for.

Actors-with-Disabilities

The term "Actors-with-Disabilities", as it is used in this study is derived from the phrase "Persons-with-Disabilities". This is an adverb that refers to those who have one or more forms of disabilities and who play a role on stage or the screen.

History of Disability and Arts

In the past, people with impairment were actively involved in entertainment in various ways. From Barnes' (2003) record, they have been providing important source of entertainment for the non-disabled majority. Quoting Garland (1995), he observed that the ancient Egyptians, for example, used blind people as musicians, artists and masseuses. 'Deformed slaves' were highly prized among the Greeks and Romans. The custom of keeping such slaves as entertainers became popular during the Hellenistic era. People of short stature or 'dwarfs' were particularly popular in Athens and imperial Rome.

People were said to be fascinated by these ‘abnormalities’, as a result, throughout the medieval period dwarfs were often found in several royal courts in Europe playing the role of ‘court jesters’. From Barnes (2003) account we are told that during the middle ages and afterwards, people with physical and intellectual impairments were often displayed for money during festivals, holidays and during fairs and on market day.

From Caudle’s (2017) account, in 1886, the ‘Idiots Act’ made a clear distinction between ‘lunatics’ on the one side and ‘idiots’ and ‘imbeciles’ on the other for the first time. This was followed by the Mental Deficiency Act in 1913, requiring Local Authorities to maintain ‘mental deficiency’ institutions where the terms ‘idiot’, ‘feeble minded’ and ‘moral imbecile’ was used in describing people with mental health issues and people with learning disabilities. He relates that “people with learning disabilities, many of whom had lived for decades in institutions, represented a marginalized community of interest, and a number of projects sought to introduce new skills and enable people to express ideas and experiences through theatre.”

From Ruth Bailey’s (1) account Graeae, which was the first professional theatre company for disabled people was found to resist the exclusion of the disabled people from the theatre. According to her what motivated Graeae and Heart ‘n’ Soul was its link with the Disability arts Movement. A movement that was part of a broader struggle for equal rights for disabled people, thereby, reflecting the experience of disabled people in order to celebrate disability and counter the stereotypical view of disabled peoples’ lives as tragic and helpless.

The Stage, an Ideal Platform for the Disabled

The theatre serves as a training ground for upcoming actors and therefore quite accommodating. The director/actor relationship that obtains in the theatre, makes it an appropriate and conducive environment for the disabled actor to start from, before getting into the hasty atmosphere of the film industry. During rehearsals in the theatre, the director is equipped with various assistants like the Stage Managers and the Stage Hands, these, together with the director can create a welcoming and easy stage where the disabled can take charge, through their gentle and patient prodding.

The theatre is also a favorable place for the disabled actor because of the static stage. Here, there are no locations that may pose some challenges for the disabled actor to function in. The stage is flat and as a matter of ethics, have no natural or unexpected obstacles which can either aggravate or create a phobia. This makes it easier for the disabled actor to master the stage as a result of long periods of rehearsals on the same stage repeatedly.

Involving the Disabled in our Stories

The African society consists of communities, the Africans are involved in each other’s lives not out of compulsion, but as a result of a lifestyle that stems from long history of neighborliness, necessitated by the poverty experienced by the majority with virtually no aid from expected sources. Lack of infrastructures to make life easier for the ordinary man in African society leaves them with no option but to rely solely on help from family, neighbors and friends. It is in Africa that Cain’s complain in the bible “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4: 9) is countered. An African is most often his brother’s keeper.

Being handicapped in Africa is in certain respects much more difficult than it is in the Western world; it is a significant setback, there is practically no enabling environment for the disabled to thrive in, they must rely on family and friends in order to get by. It takes an extremely determined person with disability, who is able to overcome all the hurdles of growing up in a society that has no provision for the handicapped to achieve their goals or realise some of their potentials.

As this paper focuses mainly on how these attitudes to the disabled in African society affect the acting career and how it can be addressed; one wonders why in most of our stories the disabled are hardly ever reflected, yet; they are part of us, we live with them, eat with them, grow with them. They feel the pain we feel and share in the joy as well because they exist side by side with the able-bodied; therefore, they belong in our stories. Jenny Sealey (cited in Mills: 1) a deaf artistic director of Graeae, argues that ‘difference, of any kind informs art’ But from the look of things, the ‘different’ seem to go into oblivion in the stories where they originally played a part.

During an interview with Zainab (Mrs. Sabi) after the staging of Mr. Sabi she expressed pleasure in being given the privilege of acting in Mr. Sabi, her experience has been that of exclusion from activities with able-bodies, so she was surprised to be included in a cast of ninety-nine percent able-bodied. She then argued that most of the drama and film she watches exclude actors-with-disabilities, even when the character is disabled, they use able-bodied actor to improvise the disabled role. She opines that cannot be a true story, because the able-bodied do not know exactly how it feels to be disabled; hence they do not have the capacity to act as persons with disabilities. So, Zainab advocates that only the disabled should be cast for a disabled role.

Also, we feel obliged not to bother them or be bothered by them. So the playwright, who probably aims at his or her play becoming a top choice for directors who prefer plays that can be easily realized on stage with less trouble for cast and crew; will eagerly exempt them in the stories. Oftentimes, the only times you see a person with disability in these stories is in a crowd in the market squares, playing the “Idiot” or beggar on the street. This is saddening, because it makes some of these stories untrue, though fictitious. Undoubtedly, idiocy is a form of disability but disability is not synonymous to idiocy; neither are beggars always disabled and vice versa.

Theatre is an imitation of real life not unreal life, as a result, one ought to see persons with disability roles more often than we do in plays, since our real world is not perfect or spotless. Sealey remarks, “The thing that people forget is that theatre is about having different experiences, so it’s all about using this as part of the artistic process”. Prince Amponsah (2), an actor living with disability, observed that it is rare to see a cast comprising of disabled actors on stage telling their own stories. “We applaud and award actors for their ability to transform and take on the characteristics of persons with disabilities” he remarked, which is quite impressive, but he argues that it doesn’t minimize the reality of appropriation.

Candidly, it is not any more impressive to see an able-bodied acting a disabled role, than it is, seeing a disabled take up the role of non-disabled, instead, since playing these roles could be

more challenging for the physically challenged, their applause ought to be louder when they do. In Amponsah's touching words:

One may argue that being an actor means the opportunity to become a chameleon, capable of playing a wide array of characters with true authenticity. Fine. However there is a serious issue when the stories told about disabled people are, for the most part, written and played by non-disabled people. It leaves those of us with the lived experience feeling voiceless and unappreciated. I, for one, firmly believe there is room to tell all our stories-And, more importantly, there is an audience who wants to see them presented.

Indeed, the audience ought to be given more opportunities to experience ability in disability through play performances. According to Soorenian (15), "As a result of these exclusionary practices, the general public has little exposure to disabled people and the experience of disablement.

When Mr Sabi was first written by this researcher who also directed it, it originally did not include the disabled. The idea came when the rehearsals started. It seemed quite appropriate to include a disabled actor, especially for the role of Mrs.Sabi because that decision immediately puts Mr.Sabi on the spot! His vices and callousness becomes glaring, and the underlying message about Nigeria becomes louder and more apparent. Seeing her in such a vulnerable state; yet being taken advantage of and maltreated by the man who ought to protect, provide and love her, clearly replicates the nation's pathetic leadership situation.

Typecasting the Disabled

Typecasting is a term used in the theatre to describe a role given to someone whose real characteristics and personality is obviously similar to the character he or she portrays. Charney (2012) opines that typecast as a verb is to assign (an actor or actress) repeatedly to the same type of role, as a result of the appropriateness of their appearance or previous success in such roles. This is a regular practice when a disabled actor is involved in a play, we often go looking for them to participate in a play only when there is a dire need for them. Parrota (2017) argues that making the disabled to play themselves is irrelevant since each have different experiences and acting tend to reflect such experiences in order to deal with them, he believes that the only way to "normalize" disability on stage is to have the disabled play a non-disabled character.

More often than not, directors overlook these roles and replace them with able-bodied actors instead, while a few cast actual persons with disabilities. What they don't know is, according to Christopher Shinn (2017), "able-bodied actors can listen to the disabled, can do research, and can use imagination and empathy to create believable characters. But they can't draw on their direct experience".

Unavailability of Actors with Disabilities in Africa

Disabled actors are rather few in Africa, as a result, directors might find disabled people, but not disabled actors to work with. This may be because; in Africa, acting is seen as strictly for the super-extroverts who are outgoing, it is seen as a profession where you advertise or publicise yourself, and such publicity is frowned at; depending on the condition of the actor,

especially female. For instance, it was believed that a woman should be seen but not heard in public places, so, majority of parents did not want to hear of their daughters engaging in such public display as acting, as this might send a wrong signal about the chastity of the girl and prevent her from getting an ideal suitor. In the same vain, the disabled are often seen as undignified citizens - due to no fault of theirs - who should be kept from public view as much as possible, so, unlike what obtained in the medieval period and in ancient Egypt where parading abnormalities on stage was a major source of fun for the audience, it might seem ridiculous displaying disability to the public, to most Africans, it is foolery, a taboo! Hence, the disabled shy away from such 'undue limelight'.

As a matter of fact, being in front of the public view is difficult for even a non-disabled, the audience keep changing, the reaction you got yesterday may be different from the reaction you get today for the same play, same cast, because it is a different audience with different views, therefore, they are full of surprises; both pleasant and unpleasant. A stage actor must be prepared to handle this, but this does not apply to a screen actor whose audience is invisible. The theatre does not require stars like the film industry does, the director is therefore expected to work from the scratch with novice who have or have never acted before.

If this be the case, a handicapped actor is not necessarily confined to a disabled role in the theatre, and the director is not restricted to typecast roles to his actors either; disabled or not, it is often regarded as unprofessional. Amponsah (1), a disabled actor, affirms that in theatre, there seems to be more of a willingness to cast against type, though more needs to be done for diversity, of course. But compared to TV and film, the stage seems to be ahead in leaps and bounds. Also from a record given by Soloski (2016), in The New York Times, Katy Sullivan, a professional actress who is a Paralympic medallist does not believe that able-bodied performers should be prevented from playing the disabled. She sees acting as "putting on someone else's life experiences and trying to be truthful about them, whether you are disabled or not". Still, she noted, "Using performers with disabilities brings a layer of authenticity that you don't have to go searching for".

Likewise, disabled actors should not be prevented from playing able-bodied character, except it will hurt them, if they are prevented, then the inclusion should be regarded as partial. Moreover, restricting them to playing only disabled characters lessen their chances of getting roles to play, for disabled roles are quite few.

Nevertheless, working with disabled actors could be more challenging for a director, more so, if he or she has not experienced the awkwardness of any impairment. But with a good communication and cooperation between him/her and the physically challenged actor, they can work together to achieve satisfactory blockings. Yet the demanding nature of working with these categories of actors, is obviously why most directors opt for actors that have no abnormalities especially in the African society where there are few infrastructures. From Barnes (5) statement "There has also been a general expansion in the number of 'positive' images of disabled people". He observed Paul Longmore's (1987) comment on these developments in American advertising with disabled characters appearing in advertisements for Levi Jeans, McDonalds Hamburgers, and Kodak films - a trend which has yet to cross the Atlantic.

To cast actors with certain disabilities is to be ready to go through their impediments; side by side, it is to put yourself in their shoes and know where and when it pinches. Here, the glamour of directing is put aside, no barking orders, you are learning as much as they are. This is why the often chaotic situation of film location may not always be as favourable for the disabled as the stage.

Notwithstanding, including people with disabilities in the theatre arts can go a long way in contributing to their mental and psychological “recovery” and according to Darling (2003) in Sulewski et al “The arts can play an important role in the progression of the disability identity or the identity “career”. For instance, in 2002, VSA Arts and Volkswagen of America, Inc. decided to partner in organising a yearly competition for visual artists with disabilities.

Other times, Kenneth Stem (n.p) points out; arts are used as a therapeutic measure in a professional setting as a means to connect young people with disabilities to their bodies, emotions and self-esteem. He stresses further that:

Art can provide an outlet for a range of emotions from anger and aggression to joy and beauty. Another benefit is that the arts encourage socialization, which can be difficult to achieve for young people with a disability...But the biggest case that can be made in favor of arts programs for people with disabilities is the increase in self-esteem and self-worth that comes when a person creates something new, or something beautiful, that connects with others. Arts give people with disabilities a chance to share their voice, their vision, and their skill through expression on the stage or on the canvas.

From the above, it becomes glaring that stage art plays significant roles in ensuring acceptance of people with disabilities socially, as well as giving them a platform for expressing their inward abilities, thereby relegating the outward disabilities. This translates to a distraction from their outward appearance both for the audience and the actor. Moreover, it creates employment for the disabled, empowering them financially thereby, enabling their independence.

MR. SABI

The Synopsis

The play satirizes on Nigeria as a nation, and its leaders. Mr Sabi who represents both Nigeria and its style of leadership, gives an impression of being ‘magnanimous’ outside, but at home he neglects his family, which consists of a disabled wife in a wheelchair and five (poorly spaced) children. His carpentry business yields much profit, but he hardly provides money for housekeeping, rather he spends it on concubines and friends in drinking parlours. Often, when walking down the streets, he is hailed and praised. Yet, on the home front, he even batters his wife in her helpless state when she requests for money to feed the household. At the end, Mr. Sabi falls from electrocution as he tries to bypass the power supply meter when his neighbours disconnected him as a result of his constant refusal to pay his share of the bills. He survived, but was left with some disabilities.

The Staging of Mr. Sabi with Zainab

The play was originally created and staged at Asiko Arts Theatre Village, Jos, Nigeria to a small audience before taking it out to a larger audience in celebration of Nigerian National Independence Day at the University of Jos American Space, Jos, Nigeria. The director of the theatre who is the present researcher, worked with a disabled actor for the first time.

Zainab Naomi Charles, a thirty-five year old Public Administration graduate of Plateau State Polytechnic, Nigeria, who played the role of Mrs Sabi is quadriplegic and in a wheelchair, nevertheless, her spirit is not confined to a wheelchair. The resilience with which she faced up to her irresponsible husband coupled with her determination to make sure her children are not left to starve to death was noteworthy. This is portrayed in the first scene, where she was getting breakfast ready for their children and also preparing to go and sell Kunu (millet drink) in order to get some money for food. She exhibited a lot of energy from her wheelchair, so much so, that the wheelchair becomes invisible! Her typical African woman sharp tongue, leaves no room for self-pity of any sort. She did not allow herself to be used as a doormat in her matrimonial home. Zainab, kept the tempo of the play well sustained throughout the length of the production.

During call time for rehearsals Zainab was often the most punctual member of the cast. She comes ahead of the rest of the actors and wait. During an interview she admitted that she looks forward to coming for rehearsals, when asked “why?” she says acting on stage is a dream come true for her. She had loved to do it but never knew it would be possible, she confessed though that staying alone at home brings not only boredom, but makes her feel more ‘confined’ and sorry for herself. Actually, Zainab is involved in several other activities like sports; and represents the state in Badminton, Short-put, Wheelchair Race and Table Tennis.

The rest of the cast enjoyed working with her, they found her interesting and motivating. The stage was not built with the disabled in mind, but with practise, co-actors were able to assist in her movement without getting out of character and attracting undue attention to her disability. Hence, she mastered her blockings in good time.

Mrs Sabi’s character portrays an average Nigerian, who is talented and hardworking, yet finds himself or herself in a system that tends to pull them backwards; as a result, they keep struggling without making a head way like those under a curse. Her disability portrays the disability of the nation as a result of poor management of the rich resources of the land by certain leaders who only come to their leadership positions just to loot the nation’s treasury. Mrs Sabi’s agitation shows the agitations of an average Nigerian citizen who long and clamour for change but without any end in sight of the dark tunnel of oppression.

3.0 CONCLUSION

There are challenges in working with disabled actors as a director, as well as working with able-bodied ones. Some of the challenges faced was that it is more expensive and quite tasking to keep a disabled actor than a non-disabled. For instance, to get Naomi to the theatre for rehearsals and back home, an empty taxi that can accommodate both her and her wheelchair will have to be hired, this is costly. Also, it was time consuming because the rest of the cast and crew had to move at Zainab’s pace. Therefore, everyone becomes disabled for a moment in order to carry her along. It was an unusual experience for the able-bodied members of the

cast and crew, because it gave most of them the only opportunity they have had (and may ever have), to associate closely enough with a person with disability and have a feel of it.

Regardless of that, including the disabled in our plays can be quite rewarding for both the director and the actor. Casting the disabled gives a play depth and meaning because the audience can identify with it. Life is inclusive, and theatre is an imitation of life.

Including the disabled in our stories or plays is not only beneficial for the actor with disability, but it also compliments the playwright's and or director's work, because through inclusion, the truth is told without guilt or embarrassment by the teller.

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