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# MASTERCLASS

## JOHN MALKOVICH



*Introduction by Despina Mouzaki, TIFF's director, Georges Corraface, TIFF's president, and George Krassakopoulos, film critic and discussion's moderator.*

**George Krassakopoulos**

I would like to start by talking about misconceptions. I'm sure that there are many people who think of you as a British actor; Hollywood thinks of you as the perfect villain for its movies. What other misconceptions are there about you?

**John Malkovich**

I don't know, because I never read things about myself. I don't know what conceptions there are about me so I wouldn't know what misconceptions there are.

**George Krassakopoulos**

But you must be aware of the public's opinion of you; what your fans think of you.

**John Malkovich**

Honestly, not so much.

**George Krassakopoulos**

You are one of the few actors that had the compliment to be made a movie, to have someone explore your mind, and to make a movie about what it is to be John Malkovich. Would you give us an inside opinion what is it to be John Malkovich?

**John Malkovich**

Well, I'm not sure the movie was really intended as a compliment, I wouldn't quite go that far. Of course, that was the brainchild of Charlie Kaufman, a person I had not met when he wrote it, quite a few years before it was made. Russ and I had a production deal at "Castle Rock" in America and I had read it and Russ had read it before me and we actually tried to produce it with our production deal at "Castle Rock" and me directing it, if he would make it about someone else; he didn't seem terrifically interested in doing that.

**Russell Smith**

One of the things that was very interesting about "Being John Malkovich" -and of course, for me, being a partner of John Malkovich- is that when it came time to talk to the director and the producer about the project, we kept saying "It doesn't really have to be "John Malkovich"; it could be "Being Kevin Spacey", it could be "Being Alec Baldwin". But every time you started thinking about another actor, you would say, "No, really it couldn't, because we know too much about them; they all have press agents and we read about them every week and there's something that is not really so dichotic or slightly mysterious about them and ultimately, you're absolutely right; it couldn't be about anybody else".

**George Krassakopoulos**

Speaking about producing movies -and this brings us to "Juno", of course- how do you think you fit into the Hollywood business, into the movie business as a producer? What interests you in the films that you choose to produce?

**John Malkovich**

What interests Russ, my partner, and my other partner, Lianne Halfon, who isn't here today unfortunately, are stories we like; films we'd like to see made. I think we probably don't fit in very well, but we keep going and we keep trying to do things that interest us. Russ can speak a lot more about this but I think it's quite a difficult time for a certain kind of movie. In fact you could even say that for all movies. This is because of the advent of the new media and the fact that if you did a film 30 years ago, people who were interested had to go and see it in the cinema and in a certain period

of time, which is no longer the case. When you make a film now and it turns out 10 years later that people actually really like it, that's way too late to have done you any good. For instance, "Ripley's Game" which Russ produced and which I had a role in, wasn't even released in America and I gather it's thought of to be quite a good film by at least some people. The future of the business really is quite an unknown and we just try to keep slogging on, doing the things that interest us.

### **Russell Smith**

I don't know what to tell you about the future of the business. I can tell you that at least right now we're looking to be lighter and funnier in terms of films that we want to make.

### **George Krassakopoulos**

Did producing films start as a way for you to find and develop material that you think would suit you as an actor or for another reason?

### **John Malkovich**

The first film that I produced was a film called "The Accidental Tourist" and I still remember the people of Warner Brothers, and their faces; they were beginning to misunderstand me; they thought I wanted to be in it and I wanted Bill Hurt to be in it. I don't think they understood really. Generally, I wouldn't be terrifically interested in doing that, in other words, developing themes for me to act in. It doesn't strike me as very graceful. "Here now, I'm playing Mother Theresa".

### **George Krassakopoulos**

At this point, I would like us to see a clip from one of your movies, "Dangerous Liaisons", and then you could talk about that for a while.

(screening)

Okay, so this is one of your movies that played a big part in your career and I think it's a movie that made a lot of people think of you as a kind of a sex symbol.

### **John Malkovich**

No accounting for taste. That's a film we shot in 1988, written by Christopher Hampton from his play, from a novel of Choderlos de Laclos. Stephen Frears directed it, with Glenn Close, Michelle Pfeiffer, Uma Thurman and Keanu, immortal Keanu. We shot for a very brief time, actually, about nine weeks, I think. It's a really lovely screenplay and I think Stephen did a really good job with it, also quite well lit by Phillippe Rousselot, the French cinematographer and exceedingly well shot by an Englishman, the operator who I had the great pleasure to work with twice, called Mike Fox; I did a film with him later called "Shadow of The Vampire". He was actually the focus puller on "Lawrence of Arabia"; he was a fantastic shot maker and personally I would say that a good part of the credit for "Les Liaisons Dangereuses" go to him because a good percentage of the shots are his shots.

### **George Krassakopoulos**

How would you say that you approach a role? There are many great acting schools in America. What is your method? Is it your own method, the John Malkovich method?

### **John Malkovich**

I wouldn't say "John Malkovich method". In my last year of school I met and went to school with a lot of other kids who started Steppenwolf theatre in Chicago. I think collectively our method was -I wouldn't say rejection or refutation but- something nearly like a rejection of methods that existed. It wasn't Actor's Studio, it wasn't a kind of highly technical sort of English style that you might see at the Artists Theatre, but it probably had elements of both.

Our method really was to do; and when we first started out, because Russell was also the producer of Steppenwolf theatre, it was obligatory that you went to each performance of a play. So, you went every night and the director gave notes every night and that had a tendency to continually make people be on a search and continually keep working and trying to refine their performance and keep trying to discover it. I think our method was more an intention to create something living

every night and for me, that's carried over into the cinema in an attempt to create something living in every take. I'm doing a film with Clint Eastwood at the moment and Clint is a famously economical man; so, we might do one take; but if we did 300 I would keep working.

**George Krassakopoulos**

Speaking of Clint Eastwood, I think we could see a clip from "In the Line of Fire" and you can tell us more about that later.

(screening)

So, this is you in villain mode. Do you enjoy playing the bad guy?

**John Malkovich**

I don't really think of people that way, meaning people and what they are; it's not really for me as an actor to judge whether I would condone what they do. Personally, the role is to play them; I don't really even think about that. Part of your job is to just try to comprehend and then try to portray in a compelling fashion the way that person views the world. It's not my view; it can never be my view so I don't think too much about that.

**Russell Smith**

One of the things that Hollywood likes about John playing a villain is hearing that voice. And unlike a lot of classically trained actors, who have to live their character for a period of time to then create that role, John can just do it in about a second and a half. So, you have that that soft voice which can then become violent very quickly as opposed to a build-up. So, there's a surprise there and that's why they think of him as being the bad guy; because he can just spook you all the time.

**George Krassakopoulos**

But you're not like that in real life.

**John Malkovich**

I don't think so.

**George Krassakopoulos**

I'm sure there are many questions from the audience. Θα μπορούσαμε αν θέλει κάποιος από εσάς να ρωτήσει κάτι.

**From the audience**

We recently had a conference on acting at the Aristotle University and one of the papers presented was based on research with actors and they found that the actor does not really feel what the character feels. I would like to hear more from your experience on that. Do you experience the character's feelings? Or is your experience when you are playing a part entirely different?

**John Malkovich**

That's a good question but it's quite difficult to answer, because it would predispose a certain psychosis on the part of actors to feel what a generally imaginary person feels in a generally imaginary situation. I think you could only feel an approximation of what you could imagine that character would feel in that situation and that's I think is about as far as you could go.

**From the audience**

If you had to choose to continue your career either as an actor or as a producer or as a director, which one would you choose between acting, producing and directing?

**John Malkovich**

I honestly don't know, but I suppose I would choose directing. I suppose.

**From the audience**

Have you thought about it?

**John Malkovich**

I haven't really thought about it, but I suppose it's because when you direct, it really is your vision

of something; when you act, you play a part in someone else's dream or nightmare and although I'm not someone with what we call in California "control issues", I feel okay being responsible for something in its entirety and when you are an actor, that's really not the case.

**George Krassakopoulos**

But since "The Dancer Upstairs" you haven't done another film. Are you saving this for later?

**John Malkovich**

No, it's not so much that; it's some of the things I've been interested in since then haven't happened or they weren't particularly something I felt like I wanted to devote that much time and energy too and plus I still direct a lot in the theatre. So, I just finished directing a play in Paris, which I'll go back and see in a few days when I leave here. So, I've always kept directing but the film "The Dancer Upstairs" took 8 years to get to make it and that's an awfully long time for very little return.

**From the audience**

Mr. Malkovich, I'm a great fan and I think the first movie I saw with you was the "Death of a Salesman". This Friday, by chance, I rented "Art School Confidential". I saw that movie and I thought it was so cool that after seeing it I went to the Internet and checked out the management and I found this guy called Kyle. I talked to him on the phone for probably a minute and I had no idea, although I live in Thessaloniki -I'm German by the way- that you would come to the Festival. So, I was talking to Kyle and he told me "Yes, John is in Thessaloniki". So, I said "Wow! I have to go there". The reason I called Kyle was to ask him -because I loved "Art School Confidential" and your part in it- if there was a possibility to meet you. So now I'm here, I've met you and it's great.

**John Malkovich**

Nice to meet you.

**From the audience**

There's one thing I wanted to ask you about this movie, "Art School Confidential". Comparing big budget movies, like "Beowulf" to more or less lower budget movies like "Art School Confidential", do you do smaller movies more or less for fun or -because I saw on this DVD the special report where they said "we are sort of a family, we enjoyed it" and it seemed to me it was a very nice set for people. Would you say big movies to make some money, to make a living or smaller movies to have some fun?

**John Malkovich**

I actually wouldn't go that far. Certainly, I've done movies for money because I make a living to a certain extent as a professional actor. "Art School Confidential" happens to be a film that Russ produced from our company, which is called Mr. Mudd.

**Russell Smith**

Nice to meet you.

**John Malkovich**

And now you can meet Russ as well.

**Russell Smith**

Kyle works for us in our office.

**John Malkovich**

But yes, to try to have a production company and do things that interest you is expensive and one of the ways I have found in my life that I can make money is by being a professional actor. So, yes, that does help out because it's not easy to do things like "Art School Confidential". You have to have a script written, you have to have that script paid for, and you have to then find the money to produce it and that's not always very easy for that kind of film. Because, I'm sure you're aware, unlike in Germany, France, and, I imagine, in Greece also, -Spain I think less so- there is no entity to finance small independent films in America; there is no sort of cultural history of that; there is no

framework or foundation for doing that; so, it's really a scramble and I'm glad I can do things like "Beowulf". However, whether it's more fun or not I can never say, because I enjoyed Beowulf. It was a fantastic experience with a wonderful cast of people and Robert Zemeckis is extremely bright and enthusiastic and innovative and it's a film done completely on computer. But all the actors worked together in every scene so it's a very new technology but also very fun.

**Russell Smith**

In terms of big movies versus small movies and whether they are fun or not, it probably can be as un-fun as some big movies and I think that depends on two things. One is that as a producer in a movie, you have to cast it. When you cast the film, you don't just cast the actors; you have to cast who the director of photography is and who the editor is and who that group of people are that are going to make the film because that's the people you are going to spend a lot of time with. You cast personalities as well as talent and that creates the atmosphere on the set. The second thing is there are some directors and some producers who believe that art can only be achieved through pain.

**John Malkovich**

Obviously not their own pain.

**Russell Smith**

Yes, pain inflicted on others, a birthing process that involves pain. These are normally male producers and directors that say this -oddly enough. And there are others that believe that you create a comfortable atmosphere in which you entrust the professional actors and crew that you hired to deliver their best for you under that atmosphere. I think that's what we try to do when we produce things. I know that John's had a couple of movies in a row with some real professionals: the Cohen brothers and now Clint Eastwood and his sets are run in very much the same way. Put the right people together, trust that they are going to deliver for you and no yelling and screaming; no need to create chaos in order to see clearly through the chaos.

**From the audience**

(Inaudible) Let's go back to acting. There is an aura in the audience you can feel, I think: all those journalists and younger people than me who are afraid to ask a question. That is the atmosphere. Have you done many Masterclasses?

**John Malkovich**

No.

**From the audience**

Is this your first?

**John Malkovich**

No.

**From the audience**

Yes.

**John Malkovich**

I don't really know what I am a master of; I certainly would feel rather ashamed if people were afraid to ask a question.

**From the audience**

They told me that even Maria Callas felt a little anxious when she delivered Masterclasses at the Juilliard School, so I can understand that. But as a journalist, I feel a personal awe, which is not typical of my character. Let's go back to acting. If you were to direct one of your movies in which your producer would want you to have a major part, how safe would you feel?

**John Malkovich**

Do you mean if I were acting in it?

**From the audience**

In a film that you had to direct at the same time. Difficult.

**Russell Smith**

Let me just say something. When John and I were in college, he was a forestry major and not a theatre major. There's this myth that John's been an actor all his life and he really wasn't. He followed a very nice looking girl into the theatre department and stayed there and found that this is something that really spoke to him.

For all of you that are actors here -and you know we have an Actor Theatre in Chicago which was founded by actors and run by actors- you know that it is so difficult to impart to actors how to do it. It really is the hardest thing and I've watched it; I'm someone who's never acted in my life, I've always liked actors, I've always looked and watched them and I can tell the difference between a good one and someone who's less than good. But it's an amazingly difficult thing to impart how you do it to how they do it, which is why they create things like "the method" where they say, "Do this and then this and then this" and through that process they end up being a particular kind of actor.

The thing about John is that he really doesn't know how he does it and I'm telling you, I've watched this forever. When we were doing this movie called "Of Mice and Men", John was playing Lennie, the poor, slightly retarded guy that had a problem with small animals and there was this actress named Sherilyn Fenn who was so nervous to just be around John, she could hardly deal with it. And there was a scene in the barn where he is petting a puppy, a small little puppy and he pets it too high and kills it and then she gets upset and then he kills her.

She couldn't sleep for three days building up to the nervousness of that scene. She would be running around the barn, she would be having breathing exercises "Let's see this; let's see that". John would be kneeling in the straw, kind of like "hm hm hm hm", and then the director would say "Okay, Sherilyn, are you ready?" and then she'd run around and they'd have to pat her sweat off and get her back to where she needed to be. He would just be there and the cameras would roll and his voice would change immediately, his face would grow into this slack of the character, he'd kill the puppy, kill her, he'd get up, he'd smoke a cigarette and he'd talk to you about sports. That kind of thing, he can't say, "That's how I do it" because I don't really think he knows.

**Nick Gage**

John, we worked in a film together 22 years ago, "Eleni".

**George Krassakopoulos**

Ο κύριος είναι ο Nick Gage, ο συγγραφέας του βιβλίου «Ελένη».

**Nick Gage**

I remember that we went out every night; your really sly sense of humor is reflected even in your dramatic roles, but has never really been captured in its full force in any film. Have you ever really thought of doing a Cary Grant kind of comedy? Cary Grant of the 30s.

**John Malkovich**

Nice to see you, by the way. I was doing a film, when was "Mary Reilly"? Ten years ago?

**From the audience**

In 1996.

**John Malkovich**

Thank you. Can you come to Los Angeles and replace Kyle? I was doing the film called "Mary Reilly" with Stephen Frears who also directed "Les Liaisons Dangereuses" and he kept asking me to watch "Notorious"; a film with Cary Grant, which isn't a comedy in particular. I watched it 3-4 times and he would come every morning and say "Have you been watching "Notorious"?" and I said, "Yes, Stephen, I was just watching it", but finally I had to tell him "Stephen, you know, that's Cary Grant! He

can't act that! That's why he's Cary Grant!"

I could do and have done many comedies, especially in the theatre, and I just finished one which I think will be at Sundance this year from the Tom Hanks and Garry Goetzman company, Playtone, called "The Great Buck Howard" about the so-called mentalist. But I think what happened there is that somehow, in America especially, but elsewhere also but in a different guise, in France I'm often asked to play a French aristocrat or here I'm asked to do this or there I'm asked to do this. Many of the things I'm asked to do often are very far from me, almost all of them, but I'm just rarely asked to do something like that. In the theatre, yes, but not so much in movies.

**From the audience (inaudible)**

**John Malkovich**

As I remember, Clint was just sort of hanging from a wall and it seemed to take a long time and I thought "Wait, I can bring this to a quick end and we'll all go to lunch". So I think the idea originated there.

**George Krassakopoulos**

Κάποια άλλη ερώτηση;

**From the audience**

I wanted to ask you something. Is there something that you haven't done so far because you were afraid of or because you felt that you couldn't handle it, a role or a screenplay or a project that you had postponed because of this?

**John Malkovich**

I can say consciously that there are things I should have done or things I've always felt I would like to but haven't just yet, but I couldn't say that I have a terrifically pronounced fear of failure. I failed many times. I plan to keep on failing that. I understand your question. But what I'm saying is that this would only come into play if you were afraid of failing. If you are not afraid of failing, you don't worry about whether you have the preparation for it.

In one of the first films I did in French, I arrived on the set in Czechoslovakia. The night before, I directed a play in Chicago. When I got there, they said "We'd like you to be French and we want you to do it in French" and I think it was 16 pages. That night, I think, was the only night I've ever worried about work in my life but I didn't really worry because I knew I really wasn't capable of doing it. Had I had sufficient time to prepare, okay, but I didn't. But instead of worrying about it and at the same time being fully aware I wasn't going to be capable of it, I studied it 15 or 16 hours a day every day and that's all I did for weeks and I failed. And I learned a lot. And I'm quite happy with that. So, I can't say there's anything I didn't do because I didn't quite feel I was ready for it.

On the contrary, I would say nearly everything I've done, I didn't quite feel I was really quite ready for it, but suddenly the rehearsal started or the film started shooting or something happened and you just do the very best you can do. There's an American play I always liked very much called "In the summer house", written by Jane Bowles, the mad wife of Paul Bowles, an exquisitely talented writer who spent the last 16 years in an institution in Spain. I haven't done it, but I don't know if it's because I like it but I think there are flaws in it or because I like it but I haven't quite figured out how to do it, or I just haven't done it.

But I have mostly tried to do things that are a challenge to me and I've kept trying to do that. The first play that I directed in Paris when it was first proposed to me, I said "That's very sweet, but you're utterly mad; I can't direct a play in French; it would be absurd to try and I won't even consider it". I called the woman a couple of hours later and I said "Never mind, I'll do it". Why? Because I think I probably didn't think I'd be able to and I think probably at the same time realized that if I didn't try it then, which was several years ago, I may never would.

**From the audience**

Hello, my name is Helen. From your experience as an actor, producer and director, is there something that you would like to share -which might be very simple but at the same time very important- to new filmmakers?

**John Malkovich**

Yes. I think the first thing I can say is that I am optimistic that, with the advent of the new technologies and the changing of technologies, it's possible that creative people will be able to make creative things without need of an almost obscene level of financing, of resources. I'm happy about that and the thing I've always tried to keep in mind is that when William Faulkner won the Nobel Prize in 1949, he gave, I think, quite an astonishing speech though a brief one.

Essentially at that time what William was writing about was the advent of atomic weapons and how rather than worrying about the human condition, people were worrying about "when would I be blown up?" -I mean, always an interesting worry. But Faulkner said that -and I think this would hold true much more so today- "the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself, which alone can make good writing because that alone is worth the agony and the sweat". And he said, "He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid: and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed -love, honor, pride, pity, compassion, sacrifice". And he said, "Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and worst of all, without pity or compassion. His grieves grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands".

And at the same time I'm optimistic and I think that things like YouTube -where some goofball in Massachusetts decides to put on a blond wig and do a video about buying shoes which is then seen by millions or somebody decides to translate a Bollywood song and call it "Nipple, Nipple"- are actually wonderful advances and I think it gives a kind of democracy. Yes, and there are some nonsense of course, but it's the way for people who don't have resources, they just have some imagination, they have something they think is funny -normally it's funny but it doesn't necessarily have to be.

(from the audience inaudible)

Of course, and that's the pessimistic side, the fact that if you're a "creative person" -I never pretended that I was and I certainly never said I was- so much more attention is paid to every other element, exclusive of what you create. And I find that sad and worrisome and that's also something which if I were forced to give advice to young people and young people were so desperate that they had to listen to my advice -and I hope that never comes to pass -that appalling situation- what I would say is now I think it's exceedingly difficult.

When I started out and when Russ was a producer at Steppenwolf, we just wanted to put on plays. We didn't think about being famous or rich and we didn't think about being in movies or for that matter, doing movies. We had our Thanksgiving, and we just did our plays and I think that it's so much more difficult now than when we were starting out. And I think that's unfortunate and it's a prodigiously weighty cross to bear for the young people because if they go into this business, a lot of times the focus is on everything but what you actually do.

**Από το κοινό**

Στα ελληνικά θα κάνω την ερώτηση, αν θέλετε τη μεταφράζετε. Η ερώτησή μου θα ήταν για τα πρώτα του όνειρα. Η ερώτηση που είχα αποφασίσει να κάνω στον κ. Malkovich ήταν ακριβώς γι' αυτό, για τα πρώτα του όνειρα όταν ξεκινούσε στις μέρες του Σικάγο, σ' εκείνη τη θεατρική σκηνή.

Αυτό που θέλω να ξέρω είναι αν νιώθει μέσα στην εκπληκτική πορεία του ότι έχει χάσει αυτό που ήθελε να πετύχει κι αν υπάρχουν πράγματα που θα ήθελε να πραγματοποιήσει στο μέλλον. Σημαντικές προσδοκίες, κάτι που δεν έχει πετύχει.

**George Krassakopoulos**

Taking the cue from what you were saying about your early work and Steppenwolf Theatre, she is asking whether you feel focused on what you started to create when you began working as an actor and if there are some things that you still crave for and you want to achieve in the future.

**John Malkovich**

Yes, I think that my focus is essentially the same and that may be a sad admission since I'm well into my fifties now, but when I go back to Paris in a few days and see the play I've directed, I'll still be wondering the exact same things that I was wondering when I was 22. Why isn't it funnier? Why isn't it sadder? Why isn't it more moving? Why isn't it unbearable and what did I do wrong? These were pretty much the same thoughts I would have had when I was 21 or 22.

**From the audience**

I would like to ask you. Did you ever experience lack of concentration when you were on the set and what did you do to fight this? Or if you were not focused on the scene at that time, what did you do to fight this?

**John Malkovich**

I can answer that in an odd way. I don't know if I've ever experienced lack of concentration, if I've had a sort of break in concentration because I don't know if I have any concentration; because when I go to do something I just try to empty out and if you're sufficiently empty, you'll be -at least that's my thinking- free enough to let what's in you come out. But if you try to focus too hard, I think you'll be quite stilted and quite blocked really.

**Russell Smith**

I was visiting John on the set of the movie he's doing with Clint Eastwood yesterday before we left town and we were talking to Clint in between some setups and we were talking about the fact that he doesn't rehearse. And one of the things he said was that if you rehearse a scene on a movie, you'll notice that even the extras who become very comfortable standing there doing nothing, they immediately begin to find a character for themselves. He said that if you don't rehearse and you just shoot, you find people in a much more natural place and I think that the same thing sometimes applies to actors -they over think it.

**From the audience**

I suppose your job demands a lot of energy devotion, both mental and physical. Haven't you ever gotten so tired that you've felt giving the whole thing up and wake up one day and say "Okay, I'm not going to do this anymore".

**John Malkovich**

No, I can't say I have. I felt at times I had to encounter situations so unpleasant that at least for a time it made me question if I wanted to continue doing it, but blessedly in my case that's happened very rarely and I always have a decent amount of energy and I'm not contemplating stopping any time soon which is not to say that this time may not come. No, I still have a lot of energy.

**From the audience**

Hello. You mentioned before that a day before you started shooting, you were supposed to act in French. Have you ever acted in a different language that was not your native language?

**John Malkovich**

Yes, I've done several films in French and parts of films in Portuguese, Chinese.

**From the audience**

Have you ever done theatre?

**John Malkovich**

No, I directed theatre in French and Spanish, but I wouldn't act in French in a theatre.

**From the audience**

Why?

**John Malkovich**

It would just be too difficult.

**From the audience**

Because of the accent? My question is actually if you think it would be a different approach in the way of working.

**John Malkovich**

Sure, because the French language, for instance, is so different to English. English is a language of stress, so in other words, every word in a sentence can in theory change the meaning of that sentence depending on what you stress. In French that doesn't exist. In English you can say... take the phrase "I had a dog". You can say, "I had a dog", you can say "I HAD a dog", you can say, "I had A dog", you can say "I had a DOG". In French you can say "J' ai un chien". So, that -of course that's a slight exaggeration, it's not a wild exaggeration- so, obviously there're things that I can do in my mother tongue that I'll never be able to do in any other language.

**From the audience**

And why do you think you can do that in film and not in theatre? Because of takes?

**Russell Smith**

Because any time you speak in a foreign language, in film, the longest a scene can go, the longest you are going to have to concentrate and it's probably 3 minutes and if the thing rolls out you can change it, you can take a breath and rehearse but you can be on stage 30 minutes speaking in a foreign language and by that time you've got a headache, I would've imagined.

**John Malkovich**

Yes, I just wouldn't be comfortable doing that in the theatre. I can't imagine even trying it. And also because I think I couldn't add anything that about 500 French actors couldn't do much better. I mean, in all honesty, but I don't necessarily feel that's the case if I'm directing in a foreign language. That's not necessarily the case.

**Russell Smith**

And we've done a lot of films where the actor is either speaking in dialect or someone is speaking in English, like Javier Bardem, who is acting in English but English is not his first language. But what happens is that there is a dialect coach there on the set, there's a script supervisor there on the set, they get you all ready to say those lines, you do it for one take, then you go and you can go off and look at the monitor and they can talk to you and you can do it again and run the lines again and you can spend 15 minutes between every one minute take and in theatre this is just impossible to do anything other than have it down completely.

**From the audience**

Have you ever regretted making a movie while actually shooting it and if that happened, how did you feel about that? And have you ever regretted making a movie afterwards?

**John Malkovich**

Not only have I regretted making a movie while shooting it, I've even regretted making a movie while reading it and knowing that I would make it; I've regretted making a movie while only having heard about it and knowing I may have to do it. Yeah, well, I think a lot of things you do, you regret. But I only regret it infinitesimally. For example, Nick and I did a film 22 years ago, which I very much liked doing, mostly because Nick and I went for dinner nearly every night. The film was based on his book "Eleni" which is a book I had read and had admired enormously but it was not a

very good film -and this is not a criticism of anybody any more than this is a criticism of myself. So, yes, I regretted it because it didn't pretty much reach anywhere near the density, the profundity, and the emotional depth of the material. So, of course, you regret that; it's sad but you also can't do anything about it, movies and plays, both. They are a kind of alchemy and sometimes even when it's the least expected, the thing that needs to happen happens in an awkward way and you create something golden or at least silver and many times it doesn't. But yes, there are things I've regretted, things I wished they had been much better and I wished I had been much better.

**From the audience**

(inaudible) Have you thought of playing an ancient tragedy? In Epidaurus?

**John Malkovich**

No. I played only Teiresias in college but I've never had anyone propose to me that and I think that it's a very difficult thing to do. I'm open to all kinds of propositions.

**From the audience**

What's your opinion about journalists and especially movie critics since they also play a small role in the job? Thank you.

**John Malkovich**

I don't really have an opinion about journalists as a whole in the same way that I wouldn't have an opinion about anybody as a whole. I obviously have a few friends who are journalists and whether you believe it or not, I even have friends who are movie critics. They have a function to play in the same way that actors do and directors do and the audience does. They have a role to play. The fact that they often fail at that role shouldn't shock anyone. I often fail at mine and they fail at theirs and life goes on.

Movie critics? I don't read criticism of that kind, but it's not because I have anything against it or them; it's because that's not my job. I'd be utterly incapable of writing a critique of the simplest thing because if it's something I liked, I would say I like it but if it's something I really loved I'm not sure I would be able to talk about it and if it's something I didn't like at all, there wouldn't be anything to say.

So, I don't really have an opinion, per se, it's another field though, especially journalism and maybe slightly less of movie critiques but certainly in journalism; it's something that's very much affected by the changes coming in the world of information, of "now it's no longer them telling us what we are supposed to feel based on what they feel or tell us what we're supposed to know based on what they know or what they decide to tell us". These days are over and they will never come back.

**George Krassakopoulos**

This is all the time we had for today. I would like to thank you both for being here.

**John Malkovich**

Thank you very much and I'd like to thank you all. I'm very stunned that all of you speak such unbelievable English. I'm very ashamed that I can't say anything in Greek except «Ευχαριστώ».



