
Article

Exploring the work of Dorothy Arzner as a film-making teacher in southern California

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Abstract

Dorothy Arzner is best remembered as one of the exceptionally few women to direct feature films during Hollywood's 'golden age'. One of the lesser known dimensions of her career is her work as a film-making teacher in southern California during a time of great change in the ways that US-based film-makers learnt their craft. During the 1950s and 1960s, students were no longer limited to on-the-job studio training, as Arzner had been in her prime; instead, they were learning how to make films via college and university coursework, and Arzner was unquestionably a key player in this educational transition. After examining her preliminary instructional work with Realart Pictures and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, this article explores Arzner's teaching experiences at the Pasadena Playhouse College of Theatre Arts and the University of California Los Angeles. It combines her assessments of her pedagogical practices with commentary from former students and colleagues to provide a composite portrait of this pivotal film-maker turned educator.

Keywords Dorothy Arzner; Francis Ford Coppola; film-making education; Pasadena Playhouse; student film-making; UCLA; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

Dorothy Arzner (Figure 1) is best remembered as one of the exceptionally few women to direct feature films in Hollywood during the American studio system's 'golden age'. Beginning her film career in 1919 as a script typist for Famous Players-Lasky, later known as Paramount Pictures, Arzner rose through the ranks to become a script continuity supervisor (a 'script clerk' in the parlance of the day), film editor and screenwriter during the 1920s, before directing her first film, *Fashions for Women*, in 1927. She prospered as a Hollywood director through the 1930s, before winding down that phase of her career in the early 1940s.

One of the lesser known aspects of Arzner's professional life is her work as a film-making teacher. After several preliminary instructional experiences with Realart Pictures Corporation and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in southern California, Arzner taught film production at the collegiate level from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s. The principal discussions of her life and career barely mention her pedagogical work at the Pasadena Playhouse College of Theatre Arts and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) (Mayne, 1994; Peary and Kay, 1974). This aspect of Arzner's work is nevertheless a pivotal subject within the broader topic of film-making education.

A major change in the process by which US-based film-makers 'learnt the ropes' of the business was under way in the 1950s. Prior to these years, film practitioners acquired their training while apprenticing at the studios, as Arzner had done following the First World War. By the 1950s, however, would-be film-makers were learning their craft by taking hands-on production courses at colleges and universities. Arzner was at the centre of this paradigm shift, serving as a critical bridge between the older generations of film practitioners who received on-the-job training and the first wave of college-educated film-makers. Among her students were: Francis Ford Coppola, who became a multi-award-winning screenwriter and director, renowned for the *Godfather* trilogy and many other films; Daisy Gerber, the only woman enrolled in UCLA's directing programme at the time, and who later served as an assistant director on more than three dozen films and television episodes; and Donald Shebib, who made documentaries for the National Film Board of Canada in the 1960s, and who went on to become one of Canada's most significant independent film-makers.

Figure 1. Dorothy Arzner (1897–1979) was a top Hollywood director during the 1930s (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



In the interest of shedding much-needed light on the pedagogic practices, philosophy and reception of this pioneer in American film-making education, the current study combines Arzner's assessments of her teacherly work with commentary from former students and colleagues to provide a composite portrait of this film director turned educator. It benefits enormously from an unpublished interview that film historian Kevin Brownlow conducted with Arzner in 1970 and graciously shared with the author.

Early one-on-one training

Like most film-makers of her generation, Arzner had learnt her craft while serving as an apprentice. Her mentor was Nan Heron, a Famous Players-Lasky editor who took the young typist under her wing in late 1919 and introduced her to the film-cutting process. Heron, then shaping the Donald Crisp film *Too Much Johnson* (1920), allowed Arzner to edit several of the film's five reels. As Arzner remembered it:

I watched her work on one reel and she let me do the second, while she watched and guided every cut. On Sunday I went into the studio and assembled the next reel. On Monday I told her about it and she looked at it and approved. I finished the picture under her guidance. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1968: 327)

As this quotation suggests, film education at this time took the form of on-the-job training, similar in many respects to a traditional craft apprenticeship.

Arzner's work on *Too Much Johnson* led to several follow-up film-editing assignments at Famous Players-Lasky. She impressed her superiors, who selected her to head the editing department at the company's Realart Pictures subsidiary. It was here that Arzner, then in her mid-20s, got her first taste of teaching. An important part of her job was to train others in the art and craft of film editing, and she welcomed the opportunity to do so. Taking her inspiration from her role model, Nan Heron, she 'paid it forward' by providing close, personalised instruction to her staff of young editors, all of them women (Brownlow, 1968: 327).

We may glean a sense of Arzner's early instructional methods from comments offered by Bebe Daniels, one of Realart's star performers. Daniels wanted to learn about the relationship between editing and other aspects of the film production process, and Arzner, despite a full agenda that included staff oversight and her own hands-on work as an editor, became her informal teacher. In a 1963 chat with film historian Kevin Brownlow, Daniels recalled Arzner's tutelage:

Dorothy used to hold the film up to the light and cut it in the hand [i.e., without the benefit of an editing apparatus]. I remember my first lesson; she held the film up and said, 'Well, now, look – this is dead from here to here – we're going to put this close-up in here – so we'll go to here. We don't need this – wait a minute, we can come in here'. Gradually I began to understand, and learnt to cut film myself. We used to mark the frame with a wax pencil, scrape the emulsion off with a razor blade, apply the glue, then put the other piece of film on top and press it down hard. Then we'd check our sprocket holes, and examine the cut under the magnifying glass. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1968: 323)

Daniels found Arzner's one-on-one guidance essential to her own growth as a film professional, and she would often spend her off-hours working in the editing room, just as Arzner had done under Nan Heron's supervision. As Daniels recalled to Brownlow:

Every night I'd trudge up [to the Realart editing room] and work with Dorothy until seven or eight [19.00 or 20.00], then I'd go home with my nails full of glue. I remember saying to Dorothy that I didn't want to bore her by coming up all the time. 'Bebe', she said. 'I love this'. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1968: 326)

Arzner went on to become a prominent director, but she never forgot the satisfaction she took from her instructional experiences at Realart in the early 1920s. Twenty years later, with the world again at war, she

saw an opportunity to return to film-making education. Shortly before the July 1943 release of her final Hollywood film, the war-themed *First Comes Courage*, Arzner had begun exploring the possibility of serving as a film-making teacher with the US Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Long interested in the intertwined topics of women and war (she had trained as an ambulance driver in an all-female unit during the First World War), she hoped she could teach WAAC members how to write, shoot and edit brief training films that would contribute to the well-being of enlisted women.

In spring that year, Arzner met with Army officers stationed in Los Angeles to discuss her idea. In a letter dated 29 May 1943, Colonel Jerome Sears informed Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, the Washington-based WAAC director, that Arzner was eager to serve as a teacher. Well aware of the challenges of recruiting women for the WAAC, Sears gave Arzner a solid endorsement:

Because of the fascination of motion picture production, it seems to me that the idea of having Miss Arzner in the WAAC as an instructor in the science of motion picture production would have a splendid effect so far as recruiting women for WAAC is concerned. The fact that the WAAC has a training unit under such competent direction would probably stimulate recruiting and bring into the WAAC many who would like to: (1) learn the industry, (2) use their knowledge later on after the duration to find places, as trained people, in the industry for a livelihood. If you permit me to make the suggestion, it seems to me that this [is the] very thing Miss Arzner could best produce for the WAAC. (Sears, 1943)

In a reply to Sears on behalf of Hobby dated 11 June 1943, Major Harold Edlund, director of WAAC recruiting, shared Sears's enthusiasm for Arzner: 'We know, of course, of her excellent reputation, and there is no question that women of her ability and experience could fill an extremely useful place in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps' (Edlund, 1943).

Although Arzner did not formally join the US Army as an officer – she turned down an offer to become a major, in fact – she did collaborate with four WAAC enlistees on several short training films (sample title: *How to Groom Oneself*). Cast members included stock players from the Samuel Goldwyn film company, some of whom had worked with Arzner on the 1934 Hollywood feature film *Nana* (Peary and Kay, 1974). Arzner expertly guided the WAAC women through the production process, paying special attention to their emerging skills as editors. Although the WAAC films were never shown to the public and are presumed lost, the experience energised Arzner and prepared her for a new phase in her post-Hollywood career years later.

Teaching film-making at the collegiate level

In August 1952, Arzner was appointed head of the television and motion picture department at the Pasadena Playhouse College of Theatre Arts (Figure 2) and taught the college's first film-making course (*Broadcasting Telecasting*, 1952; Hadleigh, 2016). Established in 1917, and designated as California's official state theatre in 1937, the Pasadena Playhouse was famed as an incubator of stage and screen talent in southern California. A 1953 overview article claimed that the Playhouse college was 'Hollywood's biggest single supplier of talent', and trumpeted Arzner's prominent place among its cadre of instructors: 'Dorothy Arzner, discoverer of Rosalind Russell and others, directed many well known motion pictures before joining the staff of the school' (Tregaskis, 1953: 43–4).

Arzner taught film production at the college for several years while also producing Playhouse stage plays, such as *Mother Was a Bachelor* in 1954. The film gauge that she and her students used was 16 mm, which had gained widespread acceptance as a professional film grade during the years after the Second World War. Arzner and fellow Playhouse teacher Dan Bailey supervised a series of films that showcased their students' work as cinematographers, set designers, sound technicians, script supervisors, editors and actors. Several Playhouse films survive and, at the time of writing, are available online for viewing, including: *Student Cinema Project: O'Henry [sic] III* (Pasadena, c.1954) and *Third Year Cinema Project*

Figure 2. The Pasadena Playhouse College of Theatre Arts, the venue for Arzner's first collegiate-level film-making courses (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



(Pasadena, c.1955). The former is an omnibus film featuring adaptations of three O. Henry short stories – ‘Jeff Peters as a personal magnet’, ‘One thousand dollars’ and ‘Psyche and the skyscraper’ – while the latter is a dialogue-heavy crime drama photographed in a shadowy film noir style.

Although hampered by limited budgets and resources, Arzner and Bailey guided their students through these productions under highly controlled conditions. Here, again, we may see a certain sense of liminality between film education and training. The students shot both films entirely indoors with studio lighting and relatively smooth and steady (if occasionally rather ponderous) camerawork. In addition, they followed classic continuity guidelines while editing the films: they matched close-ups to master shots, cut on action, established eyeline matches, and generally avoided violating the ‘180-degree rule’. Although lacking in Hollywood polish, the resulting films amply illustrate Arzner’s belief – honed during her years as a mainstream movie director – that artistic control over such things as lighting, camera movement and shot selection was of particular importance.

Arzner took a break from the field of higher education in the mid-1950s, but she returned in autumn 1959 to begin a six-year term as a film lecturer in UCLA’s Theater Arts Department. She did so at the invitation of Arthur Ripley, a longtime Hollywood writer-producer who had been named director of the department’s film division in 1954. Ripley, who said his prime objectives for running the division would be ‘to stimulate the students’ creative impulses’ and ‘to turn out students who have something to say, who understand the substance and meaning of what they’re doing’ (quoted in Shuman, 1954: 5), saw Arzner as the perfect person to encourage student creativity.

Arzner, however, was not so sure. During her lengthy Hollywood career, she had developed a reputation for self-effacement. For instance, she once told a perplexed interviewer to ‘just say, “there

is nothing to say about Dorothy Arzner"" (quoted in Martin, 1938: 3). This tendency was on full display during her negotiations with Ripley. Although she had teaching experience with Realart, the WAAC and the Pasadena Playhouse College of Theatre Arts, she characteristically downplayed her achievements. As she told Kevin Brownlow:

First of all, I came just to lecture. I was asked to come because one of the professors was taking a sabbatical. I said, 'I don't know anything about teaching.' Arthur Ripley was the head of the department. He was a very fine man, really. He said, 'Oh, just tell them what you know. That's all I wanted you to do; tell them what you know,' and I said, 'I can't stand up and lecture.' He said, 'Well, they'll ask questions', which is true, so I started and I did that for one semester. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

Her first course at UCLA was titled Motion Picture Direction, and its focus was described in the university's 1959/60 catalogue as an 'analysis of the relationship of the motion picture director to the problems of story and dramatic structure' (*Bulletin*, 1959: 396). Arzner found this pedagogical experience mostly unsatisfactory – she had simply talked to the students about film directing – and by the second semester she tried something different: she attempted to engage her students in a series of pre-production exercises. As she explained:

In the second semester I tried to have them write something and then work it with just a viewfinder and tell me how they were going to break it up and cut it and make scenes and have the students play the different parts so they could move it and know what composition is. I found that was impossible because they'd take the finder and [move it in ways differently] from the camera. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

Frustrated with this approach, Arzner took the next step and arranged to have equipment brought in for the students to use. She and they were initially limited to rather primitive video cameras, but the situation soon changed for the better:

We tried bringing a television camera in and seeing whether that would work, but we got so cluttered up with electronics and that sort of thing. Finally, I said, 'I just don't want to go on unless we really make pictures. You have a camera right here and a few lights – now do it like matinee theater. Just no sets – furniture and drapes.' So, they draped the whole thing and we started that way, and then bit by bit the students began building little sets, and finally we were ending up with real pictures with sets and furniture and everything in them, and a cast. They began casting professional actors from Hollywood, and the actors were delighted to be helpful to the students. So, they brought in professional actors from outside, cast any way they wanted, wherever they could get them, and we ended up winning awards. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

Arzner's students were now working with the 16 mm film format, the same film-making gauge her Pasadena Playhouse students had used. UCLA's 16 mm equipment represented a major step up from the cumbersome video technology with which Arzner and her students had been saddled.

The availability of sync-sound film-making equipment for Arzner's students led to a significant change in her responsibilities. During her time at UCLA, Arzner progressed from teaching general courses in directing and dramaturgy to supervising more than fifty film productions at the graduate level. 'It has been an interesting experience,' she told Bob Thomas of the Associated Press on the occasion of her UCLA retirement:

Each semester the students have produced eight or nine short films of their own, and usually one of them is very good. Some of the students have gone into the industry and have been successful; some you never hear from again, but the good students are the ones who will be the coming picture makers, and they've got a lot of fire. (Quoted in Thomas, 1965: 11)

She ran her graduate film-making workshops as professionally as possible, despite minuscule budgets and less-than-optimal working conditions. As she noted of her students:

I was quite tough on them from the standpoint of really running [the directing workshop] like a studio and no nonsense. They went there on time, and they were out immediately. I never saw students work so hard. They'd start at noon, because we couldn't really shoot until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The men would stop building the sets and then we would shoot until about 2:00 a.m. – from about 4:00 until 2:00 a.m. – and we'd have quiet. I didn't have anything but some old barracks that were there from the army to shoot in, but we built sets and had rafters for the lights and all the rest of it. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

Wishing to educate her students on the importance of artistic control, Arzner emphasised such critical topics as studio lighting and pictorial composition. 'The training, I felt, was very important within a studio with light controlled, with everything controlled,' she said:

not just shooting outdoors and take what you can get, and have it like TV with whatever photography you get. I wanted them to learn how to light, and composition, and getting the whole thing under control. Then they can go off as far as they want. I used to say you could go way out, but at least learn what the controls are, because they always looked down on Hollywood pictures. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

The last phrase in Arzner's commentary hints at a difficulty that she encountered; unlike her more conservative Pasadena Playhouse students, some of her UCLA students balked at the idea of Hollywood-style 'control' and all that it represented: shooting indoors on constructed sets with studio lighting and largely immobile camerawork. Instead, they wanted to film outdoors, even if it meant working under relatively low lighting conditions. Such film-making was then possible due to improvements in handheld cameras and highly light-sensitive ('fast') lenses and film stock during the 1950s and 1960s, and Arzner's students were eager to take advantage of these changes to the film apparatus and its raw material. In response to Brownlow's question about whether her students were still creating films, she said:

Yes, they're still making them, although they've now gotten so far out with them. I went to one of the previews last year, and they're not really doing it with controlled lighting. They're outside shooting [their films] like documentaries much more, and if it isn't documentary, still so much of it is shot outside – and, way out as far as what they're telling. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

Arzner, who brought a traditionalist film-making sensibility to her teaching, often used terms such as 'far out' and 'way out' to label the kinds of films that some of her UCLA students were making. As a director who had thrived in the highly controlled environments of Hollywood studio sets during the 1930s, Arzner stressed a conventionality in both the form and content of film. There is thus a certain irony to her vital role as an early film-making educator; she loved working with students, but she was not particularly receptive to some of their burgeoning film-makerly interests. Many of her UCLA students were intrigued by the international films they had been seeing as part of their on- and off-campus experiences and sought to emulate them. Far from encouraging them to do so, Arzner tried to steer them towards more conventional Hollywood ways of making films. In other words, she tried to dissuade them from mimicking European open-ended film-making styles that were coming to the fore in the 1950s and 1960s, such as those of the French *nouvelle vague*. Speaking of her students, she told Bob Thomas that:

[M]y function was to guide them on scripts and camera angles and see that they didn't get too far out. They are influenced by the Europeans and want to do abstract things. I told them their job was to communicate, not to leave it up to the audience to decide what the film was about. (Quoted in Thomas, 1965: 11)

Francine Parker, who interviewed Arzner on behalf of the Directors Guild of America in 1973, readily picked up on this dimension of Arzner's teaching agenda. Parker (1973: 13) noted that Arzner told her:

how much she enjoyed teaching at the Pasadena Playhouse and UCLA. Her philosophy was clear: maintain conscious control of your medium, nothing random. To 'entertain' to her means 'to take over', to enter someone else's mind with your own statement. No meandering camera, no purposelessness masquerading as style, no diffusion disguised as profundity, or poetry.

In retrospect, Arzner's perspective was utterly transparent; she believed that the students needed to learn the established Hollywood rules before they could break them, if they must indeed break them.

Reactions from students and colleagues

Despite the occasional disconnect between Arzner's guidance and her UCLA students' actual filmic output, there is no question that the students held their teacher in exceptionally high regard. They were quite impressed by her significant body of work as a Hollywood director, work that gave her the necessary credentials to serve as a film-making instructor despite having no college degrees. (She had enrolled as a pre-medical student at the University of Southern California in 1915 but dropped out after completing only one year.) Indeed, Arzner's students honoured her by exhibiting her films on a regular basis. As she noted, the students:

gathered as many of my pictures that they could and ran one every week on Friday afternoon for a festival. The place was jammed with the kids to see what I had, and it was fun for me to see them and hear their comments in the evening. I found they were very interested in these pictures that were made so far back. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

Figure 3. Arzner (left) shares a light moment with Clara Bow on the set of *The Wild Party* in 1929. With its college setting, *The Wild Party* was a favourite among Arzner's UCLA students (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



A student favourite, not so coincidentally, happened to have a collegiate setting: *The Wild Party* (1929), which featured Clara Bow as a college student and Fredric March as one of her professors (Figure 3).

In addition to respecting her work as a Hollywood director, Arzner's students and colleagues appreciated her teacherly acumen. 'She was a natural teacher who treated student work seriously and was always interested' in it, said John Young, chair of UCLA's Theater Arts Department, adding that 'she also recognized talent and innovation' (Quoted in Gross, 1980: 2). Her former students likewise lauded Arzner, often quoting her while discussing her influence. For example, Jack Hill, who wrote, produced and directed the Arzner-supervised film *The Host* in 1960, and who made a name for himself as a director of cult and blaxploitation films in the 1970s, recalled a bit of her advice about film acting: 'Don't be afraid to let actors play broad,' Arzner told him, 'Audiences like that' (quoted in Stephens, 1996: 56). Hill also remembered an Arznerian cardinal rule about spectatorial engagement. As he told Paul Rowlands, 'Dorothy Arzner at the UCLA taught me a very important lesson: the only crime is to bore the audience. I think I've been successful with that' (quoted in Rowlands, 2018: n.p.).

Stephen Burum, who photographed Hill's *The Host* and many other UCLA student productions before embarking on a long and distinguished career as a professional cinematographer, found much to admire in Arzner's teacherly guidance in her graduate film production workshops. As he noted:

She probably taught me more than anybody else. I shot more than seventy student films, and she was the faculty adviser on most of them. In those days, when you shot a student project, the adviser was always on set in case you had questions. Miss Arzner was very clever about helping students. If you were in trouble, she'd say, 'You know, what I've always liked about your film is ...', and she'd tell you what your picture was about. Or, if the director was about to make a misstep, she'd say, 'Steve, you know that's wrong; don't let him do that'. So I'd tell the director what he should do, and she'd come over and say, 'You can't say that, he's the director'. She taught you from the beginning where your place was and how far you could go. She was really classy, which was typical of that generation. She always said, 'Ladies and gentlemen make motion pictures'. She'd never let anyone swear or be nasty, and she treated students like colleagues. (Quoted in Bosley, 2008: 83)

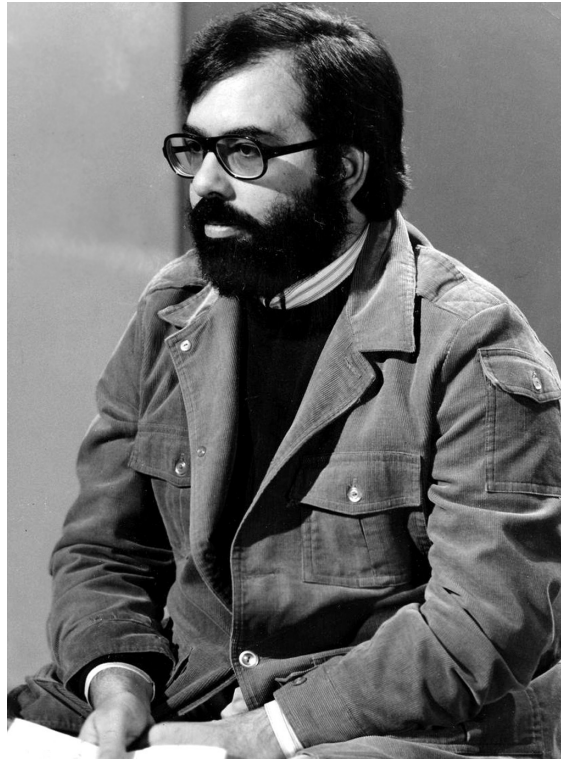
Her most famous former student is Francis Ford Coppola (Figure 4), whom Andrew Sarris identified in 1968 as 'probably the first reasonably talented and sensibly adaptable directorial talent to emerge from a university curriculum in film-making' (Sarris, 1968: 210). Arzner likewise recognised Coppola's abilities and potential well before *The Godfather* (1972) made him a household name. When Kevin Brownlow asked her in 1970 who she had as students at UCLA, she immediately replied:

Coppola, who shot the last picture [for the directing workshop]. He was one of my students. He made a very interesting picture, too, for us. He built a whole concrete section of an overpass on the freeways and brought it into the studio in sections. Everyone thought he was crazy, and I supported him. When I read his treatment [i.e., narrative summary] of his first picture, I said, 'This boy can't miss'. He had a really creative mind. Good writer – he was excellent. (Quoted in Brownlow, 1970)

She confirmed her support for Coppola while chatting with journalist John Hussar about her former status as an itinerant director in Hollywood. Arzner said she never thought of herself as 'an organizational director' in the American studio system and, as an outsider, felt a certain kinship with Coppola. 'And neither was Francis an organizational director', she said, 'I told him he was going to be an ambitious talented director one day, and he certainly is an outlaw' (quoted in Hussar, 1975: B1).

Coppola, who often said that Arzner believed in him when no one else would, paid tribute to her on multiple occasions. Speaking with *Sight and Sound's* Stephen Farber, for instance, he noted that one of the few positive forces he had encountered while attending UCLA film school was Arzner: 'She was always very sweet to me and encouraging. She was one of the better influences' (quoted in Farber, 1972: 219).

Figure 4. Francis Ford Coppola, seen here in 1976, is the best known and most successful of Arzner's former students (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



At a 1975 Directors Guild of America gala in her honour, he told the attendees about her early support: 'I worked on my first project under her supervision,' he said, 'and after – I think it was the second day – she sat there looking at me, nodding her head, and said, "You're going to be a very successful director"' (quoted in Basinger, 2011: n.p.).

In 2018, Coppola was instrumental in arranging for a Paramount building to be named after her, and he used the dedication ceremony as an opportunity to offer further insights into his film-making mentor. Underscoring his 'immense respect for her', he noted that Arzner shared certain directorial strategies, such as staying within view of the actors while in the midst of shooting and not retreating to the video assist. 'They're doing it for you,' she told him, 'They're not doing it for anyone else and if they see you smile or if they see you nod, they have a way to gauge what they're doing' (quoted in Chuba, 2018: n.p.).

Coppola also remembered a humane and compassionate side of Arzner beneath her no-nonsense exterior. He characterised her as:

salty and sort of tough, but she had a heart that was as big as the world, and one way I knew it was because every time she came to class, she would always bring boxes of cookies and crackers because she knew we were starving to death and had no money, and she would always have stuff so we could eat. (Quoted in Chuba, 2018: n.p.)

One encounter with Arzner was especially memorable:

She stopped and she handed me a box of crackers that she always had with her for her hungry students and she said to me, 'You'll make it, I know. I've been around and I know.' Then she disappeared into the shadows like the ending of one of her movies. (Quoted in Chuba, 2018: n.p.)

Coppola concluded his remarks by turning to a large photographic portrait of her at the Paramount building dedication ceremony and said:

I can never thank you enough, Ms. Arzner, for the many things you taught me, all of which helped me through the next fifty years of my career and for your prediction that gave me the confidence to go on and become a film director. Thank you. (Quoted in Chuba, 2018: n.p.)

Conclusion

As I hope this essay has illustrated, Dorothy Arzner was a formidable force in the field of US film-making education at a time of great change in that field. Despite limited budgets, equipment and facilities, Arzner devised a rigorous studio-based regimen for her students. At the same time, however, she leavened the process with a sensitivity to their youthful psychological needs. As she remarked in an undated oral history interview, 'you must preserve the young ego that thinks it knows so much' (quoted in Mayne, 1994: 85). Indeed, Francis Ford Coppola complimented her on this very point while praising her expertise, guidance and support (Basinger, 2011). Arzner's blend of professionalism and sincere compassion served her and the new generation of film-makers quite well, and it represents an early and compelling model for what film production training could be.

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Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

Filmography

Fashions for Women (US 1927, Dorothy Arzner)

First Comes Courage (US 1943, Dorothy Arzner)

The Godfather (US 1972, Francis Ford Coppola)

The Host (US 1960, Jack Hill)

How to Groom Oneself (US c.1943, Dorothy Arzner)

Nana (US 1934, Dorothy Arzner)

Student Cinema Project: O'Henry III (US c.1954, Dorothy Arzner and Dan Bailey)

Third Year Cinema Project (US c.1955, Dorothy Arzner and Dan Bailey)

Too Much Johnson (US 1920, Donald Crisp)

The Wild Party (US 1929, Dorothy Arzner)

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