

ADVICE on DIRECTING CHILDREN

Here's some advice I sent to another student about working with kids:

"I have a lot of experience, and have had a great deal of success directing kids...even the youngest. There are no "tricks" that I subscribe to. I say (with some exaggeration) that I direct them the same as I would any actor. But fundamentally that is true. I try to communicate with them respectfully and specifically. I try to engage their imaginations (not so much their emotions.) After all, if there is one thing that kids naturally understand better than adults it is make believe. And that is what acting is. Remember that and you'll be fine.

Some cautions and caveats: Kids as young as 5 can be directed. Their main limitations are length of time that they can focus and concentration, and lack of stamina. If they are even kindergarten age they have a familiarity with the concept of "workspace" which is helpful. If they are younger they won't really know the difference between work and play.

I have directed two year olds....and three year olds. That is more like wrangling animals. With them you are basing everything on your interpersonal relationship. It is most important that they have rapport with the adults with whom they act. It is hugely important that the adult is comfortable, at ease and inventive with kids. (The same is true if you have an adult who has to interact with an animal) If you have an actor who is wary around dogs trying to get him to play with one will never work. So, if you are going to go super young, who your adult actors are is crucial to your success. They will be the ones doing a lot of the actual "directing" of the kid while in the scene together."

I hope this helps,

BARNET KELLMAN