COMEDY-DIRECTION

GENRES

- High
  - romantic
    - meet cute
      - marriage
        - dance
        - masque
  - satiric
    - anger
      - ridicule
        - Springtime for Hitler- Mel Brooks' 60 Minute interview w mike wallace
  - cerebral
    - language based
  - tragicomedy
    - anti hero
- Low
  - Roman
    - Broad
      - slapstick
        - mistaken identity
        - coincidence
        - doors
      - sketch
    - french farce
    - knickers
    - travesty
    - gross-out
      - extreme cruelty
        - "something about mary" dog on fire
    - physical

Archetypes

- hypocrite
- bigot
- miser
- tyrant
- hypochondriac
- lecher
- old-enfeebled (senex)
- Commedia
- clown/fool
  - kingfish
  - madcap
- schemer
- blowhard
  - ralph oramden
- toff
  - margaret dumont
- low-life/deflater
  - groucho
- mechanical
- simpleton
- ethnic
  - dialect humor
- zealot
- lord of misrule
  - falstaff
- lush
- wiley servant

Foibles

- Lust
- Greed
- Wrath
- Gluttony
- Envy
- Pride
- Bigotry
- self-righteousness

Imperfections

- Body Parts
  - mishape/montrosity
    - cyrano
    - eeygore
    - mr magoo
  - handicaps
    - sport of nature
      - twins
      - little people
      - giant
- Body functions
  - excretions
    - semen in something about mary
  - eruptions
    - scatology
- Humors
  - one step forward, two steps back
    - recidivism
  - "whos on first?"
    - misunderstanding
      - insight (unmasking)
        - the gov't inspector
          - expose corruption
        - unmask hypocrisy
        - exploiting stereotypes
        - transgressing taboos
          - borat
            - show that which is hidden

Pain/Infirmity

- non-lethal
  - absurd/extreme injury
    - Knights who say "nee"
  - back pain
  - stiff neck
  - childbirth
    - "tragedy is a closeup, comedy is a long shot"
  - cramps
  - genital
    - a shot to the balls
  - nausea
  - ticks
  - incontinance
- viewed from a distance
- self-inflicted
  - that which doesn't kill us is funny

Sacrificial

COMMUNAL

- Futility of Endeavor
  - pop a souffle
- Humanity
  - comedy happens around subjects that upset, or disturb us...things that make us uncomfortable
- Mortality/Impermanence
  - break priceless objects
  - sneeze on ashes
- False Logic

LANGUAGE

- Wit
  - insight (unmasking)
- Dialogue
  - dialogue is action
  - Sound
    - Ps and Ks
  - repartee
  - rejoinder
  - put down

Exploration

- detective work
- share/donate discovery

Character

- Society
  - Relationships
    - familial
    - romantic
    - religion+
      - neighborly
  - Hierarchies
    - families
  - Commentary
    - workplace
    - military
    - "high society"
    - religious
  - zeitgeist
    - topical
    - political

Humors

- choleric
  - yellow bile
    - summer
      - fire
    - "bilious"
      - ambition
      - energy
      - passion
    - a doer
    - a leader
    - military
    - political
    - can dominate other humors
    - money-spirit
    - suspicious
    - dry-spirit
- melancholic
  - black bile
    - fall
      - earth
      - dry and cold
  - thoughtful ponderer
    - depressive
    - kind
    - considerate
    - hamlet
  - poetic
    - obsessed with tragedy and cruelty
    - creative
- phlegmatic
  - phlegm
    - winter
      - water
    - calm
      - unemotional
        - wet and cold
    - kind
      - reliable
        - consistent
    - self-content
      - relaxed
  - compassionate
    - friend
      - horatio
    - resistent to change
    - diplomat
    - administrator
- sanguine
  - blood
    - spring
      - air
      - wet and hot
  - whimsical
    - light-hearted
    - fun-loving
    - spontaneous
    - cocky
  - arrogant
  - indulgent
- valium for panic attack - burt reynolds

TARGETS

- Authority
  - law
  - gov't
  - church/religion
  - parent
  - medicine
- The Extreme
- Propriety
- Incompetence
- Pretension

ATTITUDES

- Rebel
- Deadpan
  - "flight of the conchords"
  - steven wright
- Naif
  - steve martin
  - mr bean
- Underdog
  - woody allen
- Sangfroid
- Relentless

RESOLUTION

- Natural Order Restored
  - Harmony
  - Balance

SUBJECTS

DIRECTING

- Tasks
  - Be Audience
    - see all
    - pay attention to actors
    - hear all
    - respond authentically
    - be mirror
  - Make Events Happen
    - create paths
      - heighten investment
    - set stakes
  - Make Fiction Plausible
    - consult reality
    - set in motion
      - "well begun is well done"
      - pursue objectives
        - wants
        - needs
        - appetites
      - keep off balance
  - Create Freedom
    - permission to fail
    - trusted mirror
      - security to expose
  - Create Obstacles
    - make problems
      - enhance conflict
        - social
        - environmental
        - internal
  - Focus Attention
    - misdirection
    - work with (against) audience assumptions
      - • the audience ASSUMES that the guy behind the counter of such a humble eatery as a lunch counter will be more humble than the Soup Nazi turns out to be. His incongruous behavior IS funny -- but it's funny because we intuitively understand how he got to be the monster he is.
  - Make Decisions
    - Pitch
      - comic tone clearness
    - Rhythm
      - Timing
  - Casting
    - Mise en Scene
      - visualize
      - create paths
        - find actions
      - conceptualize
        - activities
          - action vs activity: reading mag in dr.'s office
      - resolve space
        - 'ask for the teacup, not the laugh'
    - Conduct Dialogue
      - emphasis
      - operative word
    - prove proposition
  - Rehearsing
    - challenge
      - invite exposure
    - encourage
    - Create Business
      - turn psychology into behavior
        - props
        - find activities
          - Activity v Action: reading magazine in dentist's office
    - Set Tone
      - find comedic prism
      - comedic investment
  - Bounce vs. Absorption
    - Beware of Black Holes
  - Qualities
    - light v heavy
    - dry v wet
  - Find the Funny
    - hunt for truffles
    - make jokes "land"
      - prepare for the accidental
      - cultivate spontaneity
    - till the soil
    - dis-proportion
- Reality First
  - funny will follow
  - comic lift
    - It's okay if behavior is an extreme (though hopefully a well-observed) example of real behavior. Seinfeld's Soup Nazi is a harried short order guy at lunchtime rush. Add to that the fact that his soup has become so popular that he has become as arrogant about his product as any Rolls Royce salesman...and you have "funny based on real" The lowly cook is puffed up into preposterous self importance...and the audience knows how he got that way.
    - Sid Caesar's doorman
  - Highlight Premise
    - know what joke you are telling
    - nature out of balance
    - fierce committment to unworthy objective
  - Pace
    - machine-like
    - "faster is funnier"
    - timing
      - clockwork
  - Movement
    - progress
    - regress
  - Anticipation
  - Shooting
    - Karel Reisz' banana peel
      - "tell 'em you're going to do it to 'em, do it to 'em, tell 'em you did it"
    - two shots
    - objectivity
- Concealment/eavesdrop
  - holes
  - closets
  - toilets
- Clothing and its Opposite
  - appurtenances
    - neckties
    - hats
    - feathers
    - uniforms
      - "uniforms travel"
      - PRINCIPLES
        - Occam's Razor
  - endowments
    - indignity
      - foolish disguise
      - rainbarrell
    - breasts
    - bottoms
    - phallol
    - hair
- Reversals
  - the guy as the bimbo in Broadcast News
- Transmutation
  - bottom
    - stutter
- Automatic/involuntary behavior
  - dr strangelove
- Repetition
  - running gag
  - litany
    - lesson pattern set up and fulfilled e.g. Andy teaches Bobby how to behave wearing "The Boyfriend Hat"
- Transformation
  - treating one thing as something else
    - banana becomes a gun
- Dehumanization
  - treating a person as an object
    - Entourage: smokejumper vince hanging by parachute harness...moved on a drycleaner rack-like conduit

Funny comes from honest observation of your characters' behavior in sticky situations. Situations in which they find themselves in conflict...usually with their own impulses.

Don't expect the viewer to believe what you wouldn't believe. Don't make the cardinal mistake of thinking that to be funny something must be improbable.

ROOTS

- Reflection
  - of intense feeling
- Subversion
- Agression
- Defense

OBJECTIVITY

- dispassion
  - mel brook's hangnail
- distance
  - "tragedy plus time"