

DIRECTING ACTORS

My aspiration is to get the best performance that an actor is capable of giving

WHAT IS AN ACTOR?

Someone who
does what a character does
says what the character says

ONE WHO DOES WHAT A CHARACTER DOES – SAYS WHAT THE CHARACTER SAYS

Notice i didn't say "Feels what a character feels"

THE FEELING FALLACY



Feelings aren't facts

feelings follow actions

WHO IS AN ACTOR?

WHAT DOES AN ACTOR WANT/NEED?



Who becomes an actor? -answer: anybody who wants to -- easy profession to access - not to succeed -- To understand actors and the people who want to be actors we have to consider what the Actor Wants and even Needs

- TO BE SEEN
- TO BE HEARD
- TO BE NAKED...BUT...
- TO BE SAFE

WHAT IS THE
ACTOR'S
PROBLEM?

- IT'S NOT THEIR WORDS
- THEY CAN'T SEE THEMSELVES

WHICH LEADS TO SELF CONSCIOUSNESS

The self -consciousness of hearing oneself say words that are not one's own

SELF- CONSCIOUSNESS

(Meisner thought that one technique an actor could use to counteract self-consciousness was to put one's attention on the other person.... onto someone else)

TO HELP ALLEVIATE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS - CLICK

THEY NEED TO
BELIEVE...

IN WHAT THEY'RE DOING AND SAYING...

HOW DO YOU BELIEVE?

CAN YOU GET THERE INTELLECTUALLY? -- THERE ARE A LOT OF COMPLICATED "METHODY" TECHNIQUES I'M GOING TO STEER YOU AWAY FROM
BECAUSE

BELIEF
IS
SIMPLE!

IT STEMS FROM ACCEPTING THE CIRCUMSTANCES

HOW DO KIDS PLAY HOUSE?

YOU BE THE
MOMMY
I'LL BE THE
DADDY

THE KIDS ACCEPT THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND PROCEED FROM THERE

“Good Acting is
true behavior
in imaginary circumstances.”

quote on Sanford Meisner's wall

CIRCUMSTANCES

WHAT ARE CIRCUMSTANCES? – they are Facts or conditions that pertain to the characters
2 Kinds — Given and Imaginary –

Two Kinds of Circumstances

- SCRIPT (GIVEN) CIRCUMSTANCES
- IMAGINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

SCRIPT Circumstances can't be changed
Imaginary Circumstances can

How a character behaves depends on Circumstances

THE ACTORS JOB

An Actor

MAKES CHOICES

under Given CIRCUMSTANCES

with Given OBJECTIVES

OUR APPROACH TO DIRECTING ACTORS WILL BE THROUGH
INVESTIGATING, EXAMINING AND CLARIFYING THE CIRCUMSTANCES
AND THE OBJECTIVES THAT APPLY TO THE SCENE

THE DIRECTOR'S JOB

#1

INVESTIGATING, EXAMINING AND
CLARIFYING THE CIRCUMSTANCES
AND OBJECTIVES
THAT APPLY TO A SCENE

What's an "Objective?"

A Goal one is trying to achieve. But There are lots of synonyms for Objectives: [CLICK](#)

- OBJECTIVE
- INTENTION
- WANT
- ACTION

Here we must acknowledge the Polyglot Problem

Objective = Goal

A Goal one is trying to achieve. not a desire — a goal — something you set out to accomplish.

ACTOR MUST KEEP IT REAL

FORGET THE LINES — KNOW THE OBJECTIVES

What real people know vs what actors know:

When you go to a meeting with the dean it's unlikely that you know what will be said. But you know the rules what you want and the obstacles that you must overcome to get it.

With actors it's the opposite !!!!

People speak in THOUGHTS not in WORDS –
the Actors job might be described as to make writing not sound like writing

AN ACTOR WANTS

TO CREATE A GREAT
CHARACTER

There are a lot of misconceptions about character – even among actors. Watch this scene from Flight of the Conchords -- Jemaine and Bret – want to buck up the spirits of their manager Murray by hiring an actor to pretend to be a record label representative and call murray giving encouraging feedback about the band. They approach an out of work actor at his bread job working at a dry cleaners



CHARACTER
IS
SIMPLE

WHAT IS CHARACTER?

WHAT IS CHARACTER?
Well, ARISTOTLE SAID:

“We are
what we repeatedly
do.”

ARISTOTLE

a great character is one who
pursues objectives
relentlessly and in interesting
ways



“Acting is simpler than we make it...”

put another way...My friend the great actress, writer and teacher Anna Deavere Smith says:

...If you really
do the things the character does,
and say the things the character says...

..you become the character.”



Anna Deavere Smith

Hemingway said that all attempts at character were caricature

Acting is Simple

IT'S HARD TO BE SIMPLE

Listen to Robert DeNiro

Acting Advice
from
Robert DeNiro

He's talking about working with David O Russell. What Russell did in Silver Linings Playbook was to create a world filled with activity. The pursuit of real objectives and the doing of real tasks freed the actors from self consciousness and anchored their performances in reality – the feelings followed the actions.

We ARE what we DO

Meisner said "The foundation of acting is the reality of doing"

Acting is not saying — it is doing. it is the doing of it. it is the doing of the thing

THAT'S WHY AS DIRECTORS WE MUST

DIRECT
ACTIONS
NOT EMOTIONS



TO ACHIEVE GOOD ACTING

THE DIRECTOR'S JOB

#2

TO CREATE CONDITIONS
THAT ALLOW THE ACTOR
TO

- BE UNSELF-CONSCIOUS
- BE PRESENT IN THE MOMENT
- BE NAKED AND EXPOSED
- BE VULNERABLE
- BE FEARLESS

WE MUST HELP THE ACTOR OVER-COME HIS FEARS OF

- BEING EXPOSED
- LOSING PRIVACY
- SHARING SECRET BEHAVIOR
- SHARING SECRET DESIRE (WANT)
- LOSING DIGNITY

“Sometimes acting is a really private thing
you do for the world.”

Phillip Seymour Hoffman

THE ACTOR EXPOSES HIS PRIVATE BEHAVIOR –

The qualities that make us human are the most special effects of all
Kenneth Turan NPR

“SELF BETRAYAL...
IS THE WHOLE ART OF ACTING”

George Bernard Shaw

Comic Acting – in particular – is sacrificial

COMIC ACTING IS SACRIFICIAL

AND THE COMIC ACTOR – in addition to betraying his privacy – SACRIFICES HIS DIGNITY
SO THAT WE CAN LAUGH AT HIM AND – SAFELY, --- THROUGH RECOGNITION – AT OURSELVES

THEREFORE:

ACTORS NEED

- TO DO “BAD” THINGS SAFELY
- A SAFE PLACE TO BE “BAD”

GOOD AND GREAT ACTORS KNOW THIS
BEGINNERS NEED TO LEARN THIS

BUT THE ANXIETY ATTENDANT TO BEING BAD MAKES ALL ACTORS WISH THEY COULD SEE THEMSELVES

THEY CAN'T SEE
THEMSELVES....

AND THEY KNOW IT



THE URGE TO SNEAK A PEEK AT ONESELF WHILE ACTING IS HARD TO RESIST - BUT IT TAKES THEM OUT OF IT --AND THE AUDIENCE CAN SEE THEM PEEKING --
THAT'S WHY THEY NEED THE DIRECTOR TO

BE THEIR MIRROR

THEY NEED TO FEEL THAT THE MIRROR IS HONEST...GIVES A TRUE REFLECTION..BUT IS ACCEPTING AND NON-JUDGMENTAL

ACTORS NEED TO FEEL SAFE WITH THEIR DIRECTOR

SO THEY CAN GO TO DANGEROUS PLACES –
THEY NEED TO TRUST THEIR DIRECTOR –
AS A DIRECTOR YOU NEED TO

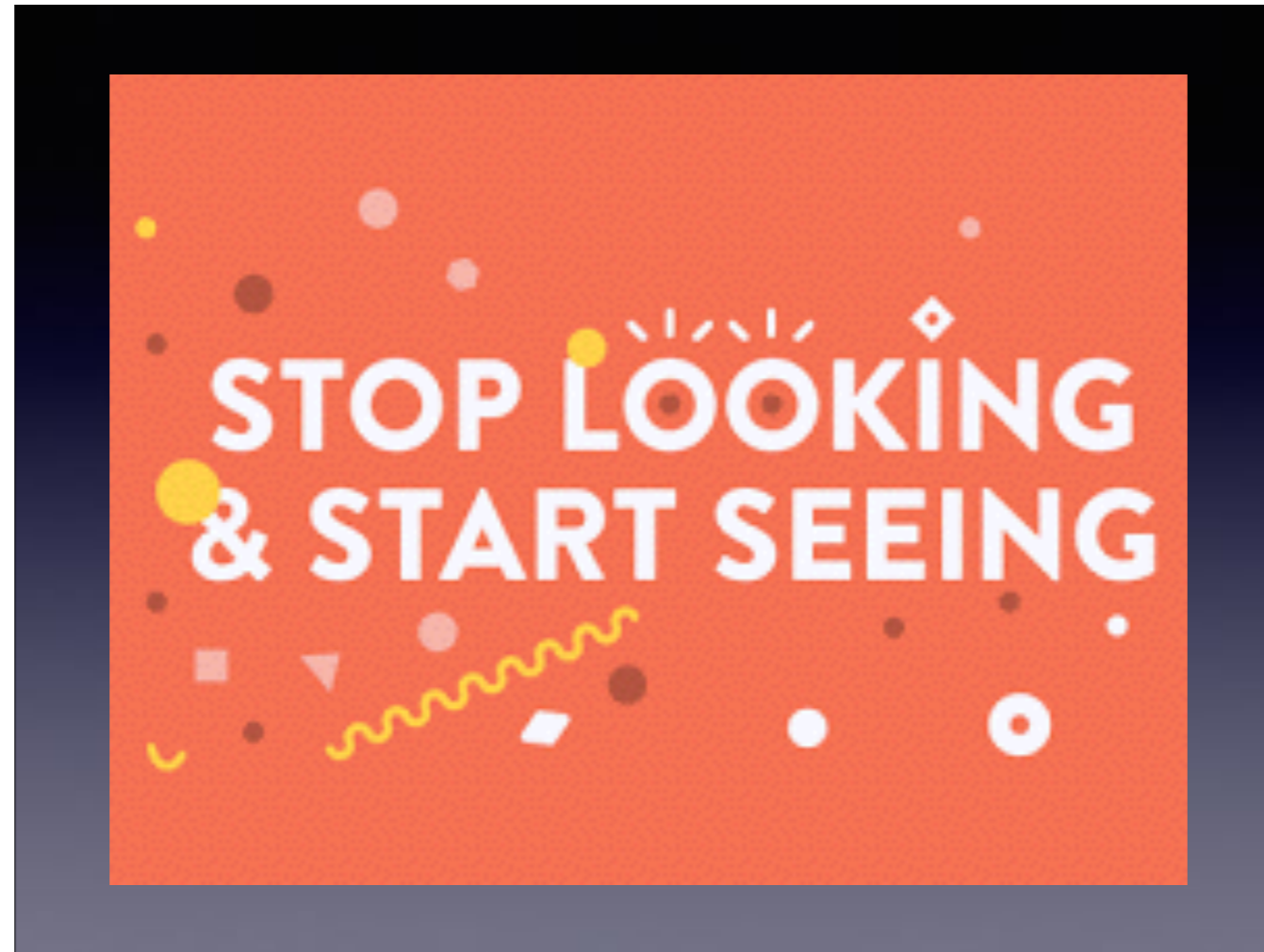
EARN
THEIR
TRUST

TO GAIN ACTORS' TRUST:

- LET THEM KNOW YOU'RE WATCHING
- LET THEM KNOW YOU "SEE" THEM

SEEING
isn't easy

You must direct with your eyes open... You must watch your actors the way an athlete trains to look at the ball. When the actor is acting you must see them "all the way into the racquet – onto the strings"



It also helps to have a sense of what your asking them to do - Put yourself in their shoes DIY acting...
AND ABOVE ALL.... BE HONEST

BE HONEST

DON'T LIE
OR TRY TO BULLSHIT THEM

ENGAGE THE POWER OF "I DON'T KNOW" – don't just take it from me...

When interviewed about his recent directing debut here's what the late Alan Rickman had to say:



**PASS THE
HORSEBACK
TEST**

BE:

- SUPPORTIVE
- ENCOURAGING
- COLLABORATIVE

but not
obsequious or phony

Actors are Vulnerable

THEY CAN BE DEFENSIVE...



Bradley Whitford said that he's learned that when a director approaches him with a note he has three responses in succession:

Fuck you!
I suck...
Ok what?

Fuck you!
I suck...
Ok, what?

This is who you are meeting — you can help by giving them courage

GIVE THEM
COURAGE

YOU HAVE A SECRET POWER.....

YOU CAST THEM

YOU CHOSE THEM!

- YOU BELIEVE IN THEM
- YOU KNOW THEY CAN DO IT
- YOU KNOW WHY THEY CAN DO IT
- YOU KNOW WHY YOU CAST THEM

Make sure you Know Why you cast them – WRITE DOWN what qualities and skills you cast them for

we will refer back to it

THIS IS A GIFT YOU CAN GIVE THAT KEEPS ON GIVING....