

# Directing Actors & Camera

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- Screenwriting is like pushing a rock up a hill
- And directing is running downhill with the rock behind you.
  - *Chris McQuarrie*

# Director's Key Responsibilities on Set

- Works with the actors to get a performance
- Decides where to put the camera



# Development & Pre-Production



# Communication

- A competent director communicates information.
- A GOOD director communicates information and feelings.



# Where to Start

- Analyze the script.
  - *Understand the characters and the events.*
- Visualize the film:
  - *How will you tell the story with the camera?*



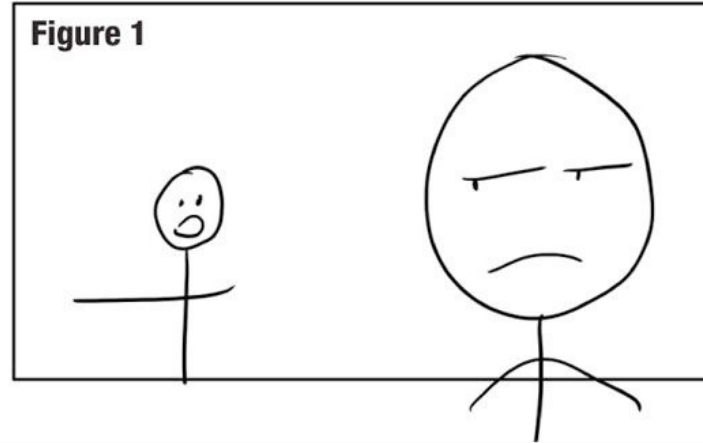
# Camera Decisions

- Convey information and/or feeling
- Choose the shot and consult with Director of Photography to consider:
  - *Size*
  - *Composition*
  - *Angle*
  - *Duration*
  - *Color*
  - *Perspective*
  - *Movement*



# Storyboard

- Include:
  - *major shots, angles and action involved in the script – main dramatic moments*
  - *camera movement*
  - *frame and perspective*
  - *stick figures too!*





# Storyboard Practice

EXT. RUNOFF TUNNEL - EARLY MORNING

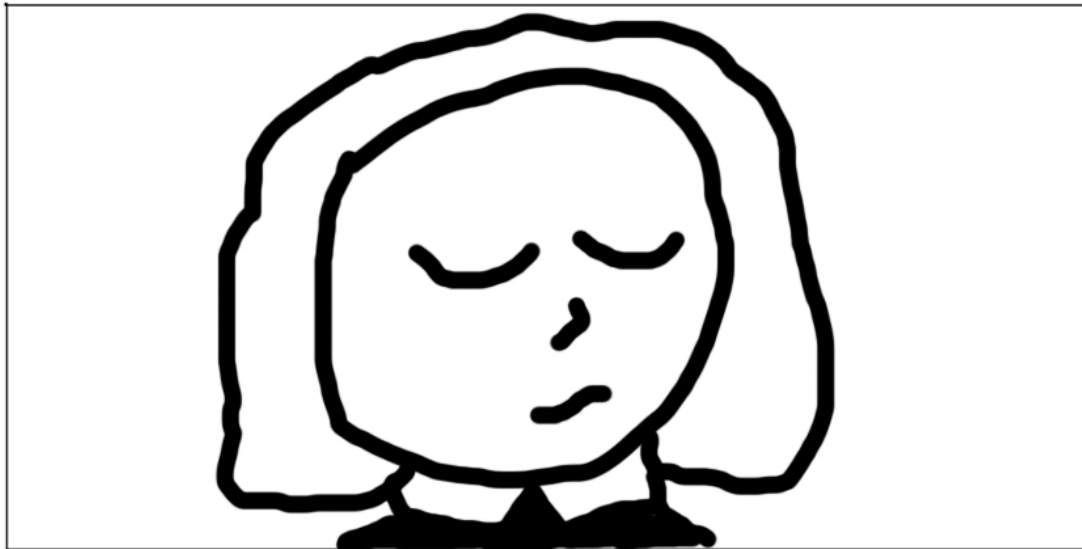
A gaping hole in the concrete side of a freeway. On the embankment beside the hole BRENDAN FRYE squats, shoulders hunched. His dark eyes behind thin glasses watch the shallow stream of water which flows into the tunnel.

THE WATER

not more than six inches deep. Just beneath the surface a young woman's pale blue arm in gaudy bracelets bats against the edge of her body like a docked boat. A pebble plinks into the water beside it.<sup>1</sup>



Scene:  Shot:  Camera and description:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kvs53CJCA3E>

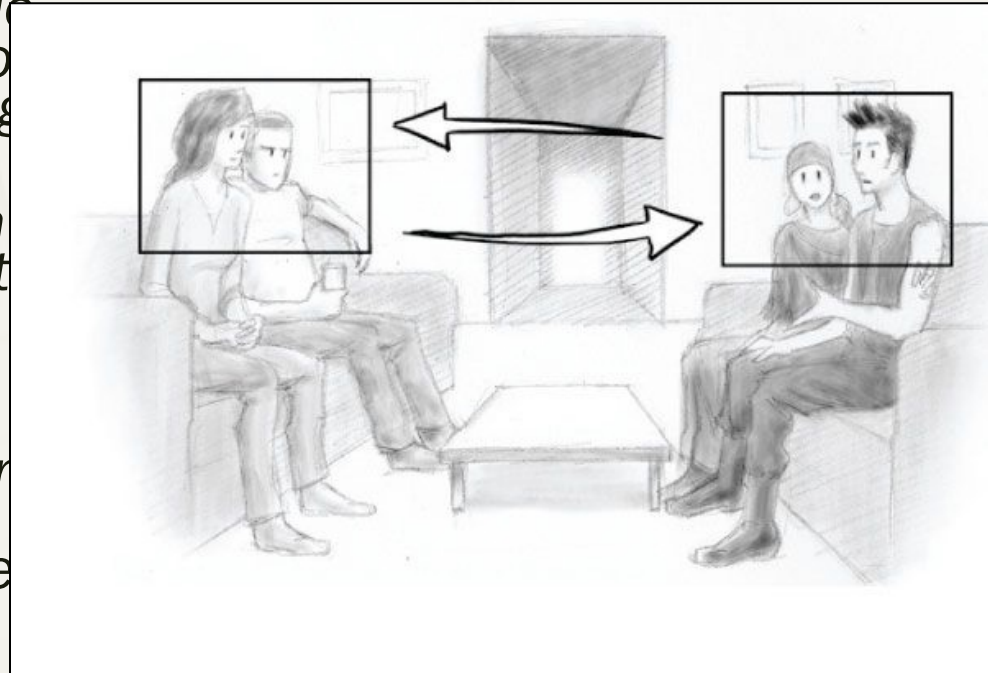
# Planning the Shots

## ■ Master Shot

- The whole scene from beginning to end
- Usually a long shot

## ■ Coverage

- Multiple angles and framings of the same scene



# Shot List

- Use the storyboard to make a list of all the shots required for a scene
- Be efficient, combine storyboard panels into one shot when possible

Scene	Shot	Frame	Set Up	Movement	Description
1	1	MS	1	Moves along wall	Reveals Brendan's feet
1	2	ECU	2	Dolly out	Brendan stares
1	3	LS	3		Brendan stares at dead body in the water
1	4	MS	4		Dead body's legs bob in the water
1	5	CU	2	Dolly in	Brendan stares
1	6	CU	4		Dead body's face obstructed by her hair
1	7	CU	4	Dolly in	Dead body's arm with bracelets
2	1	CU	1		Hand with the same bracelets places note in locker
			2		Same locker, Brendan walks into focus from the background and reaches the locker. Note drops to ground when he opens locker.
2	2	CU		Tilt down	
2	3	ELS	3		Brendan with note at locker
2	4	CU	2		Hands open note

# Directing Performance

## ■ Blocking

- *Where do you want the actors to be positioned in the scene? Where do they move?*

## ■ Helping actors master production techniques

- *Hitting Marks*
- *Don't look at the camera*
- *Matching action*



# Directing Performance

## ■ Insight

- *Help the actors understand their character, understand the scene, and understand why their character is taking the action in the scene.*

## ■ Use Action Verbs

- *Don't just expect a "result." Convince, insist, discourage, etc, etc are good directions to give an actor. NOT "Be Angry."*

## ■ Do one take for safety.

## ■ Tell them to never stop acting before you say cut.



# Directing Performance

- Director's possible thoughts for a Scenario Take 1:
  - *Okay I need that to go faster*
  - *They are saying this word wrong*
  - *They don't understand what that line means*
  - *They need to pause here and here*
- What should the director do?





A director is an arbiter of truth –  
*Ivan Reitman*

# Advanced Directing

- *How do you conform to genre?*
- *How do you play with conventions of genre?*
- *How do you establish tone?*
- *How do you want it to look?*



# Beyond Camera and Actors

- What kinds of questions must a director be ready to answer for what crew?

Wes Anderson – Centered <https://vimeo.com/8930284>

# The Director

- Camera
- Actors
- What else?



# Acting for the Camera

*With any part you play, there is a certain amount of yourself in it. There has to be, otherwise it's just not acting. It's lying.*



# Screen vs. Stage

- Film has multiple takes
- Film is shot out of order
- The crew is your audience
- Film is smaller, more subtle. Imitating real life.





# Understand the Script



- Read, re-read and then read again, and not just your own lines.
- Learn lines, and then forget them (kind of).
- Text vs. Subtext
- Motivation:
  - *Objective: What do I want, specifically?*
  - *Obstacle: What is inhibiting me from getting what I want?*

CAL

Hello?

TRACY

Hi, Cal.

TRACY

So... I m in the basement. I m trying to get the water heater working cause the pilot s out and I don t know how to relight it.

TRACY

I m sorry to bother you, I just... what do I do?

CAL

It s fine, it s fine. I m glad you called. Here: I ll walk you through it.

(then)

Do you see the little grey door?

TRACY

Yeah.

CAL

Pull it down.

TRACY

Okay, it s down.

CAL

Now, you see the red button? I wrote push on it?

TRACY

I got it. CAL  
Push. Now turn that to the right and stick the match in.

TRACY

Oh, there it goes!

CAL

Good. Now just close the door and you re good to go.

TRACY

Well, thanks, Cal. I... appreciate your help.

CAL

No, anytime. Call anytime with stuff like that. Talk to you later?

TRACY

Yeah. And... thanks again.



Clip from Crazy Stupid Love



Clip from Film Riot

*An actor's job is to know the breadth of human possibility and the depths of their own possibilities. They must pull from this well and surprise us.*



# Develop a Character

## Research and Practice

- Know your own body and be comfortable with it. This makes it possible to create things that are NOT you. Be aware of how you move, talk, react and feel in response to situations.
- Practice getting out of your comfort zone to become less inhibited and more relaxed in front of the camera.
- Poor actors are guarded.
- Good actors are perceptive. Observe what is natural for you and others.
- Decide your character's traits. Watch, observe, and ultimately try mimic traits in others: Walk, mannerisms, voice, etc.



Clip from the Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien - Gary Oldman

# Performing the Scene



- Listen actively.
- Give the impression that what your character is hearing purely of that moment; hearing the line for the first time.
- Don't play "taking turns": Are you speaking your lines in re-action to your cue line, or are you simply reciting your line because it's your turn? React to the moment.
- Be brave, the quickest way to improve your acting is to realize that your first choice will usually be the easiest for you to do - not the best one for the part. Look beyond your initial choice.



BBC  
three  
new

DOCTOR WHO SPECIALS

ROLL

150A  
18/160

SLATE

896

TAKE

1 A  
S

DIR. EUROS LYN  
DOP. RORY TAYLOR

FILTERS:

12.5.09

VIS. FX N°

18/160-1

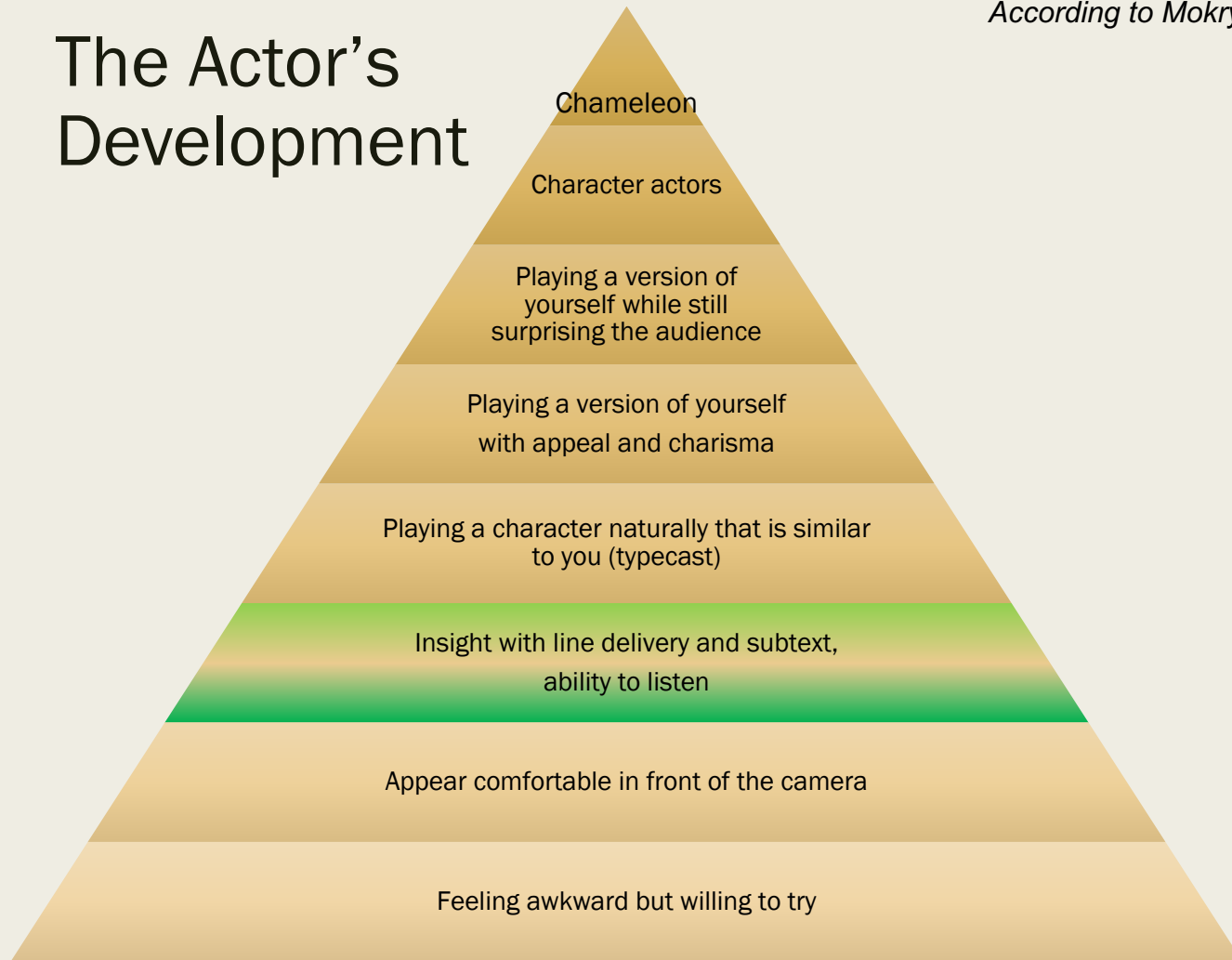
DAY 1

Clip from Doctor Who Confidential

# The Actor's Development



# The Actor's Development





Clip from American Fable

# Thank you!

- [www.austinstudentfilm.com](http://www.austinstudentfilm.com) – Vanessa A. Mokry, LASA Film
- Clip from Brick – Rian Johnson - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kvs53CJCA3E>
- Wes Anderson – Centered <https://vimeo.com/89302848>
- Clip from Crazy Stupid Love
- Clip from Film Riot
- Clip from The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien
- Clip from Doctor Who Confidential
- Clip from American Fable