
Chapter 16: Assignment 16

1. What should be your process to find the strongest actors for your project?

The process to finding the strongest actors for the project is to go through the casting process. This requires bringing on a casting director who will be able to filter out 100 to 200 actors needed for the film so as the director, only around 10 needs to be seen for callbacks saving a lot of time. Then, for the callbacks, seeing the actors and how they audition will help determine how well they are to work with and how well they take instruction.

2. What is the job of the casting director?

The job of the casting director is to help the filmmakers filter through hundreds of different actors and help provide a short list of the strongest actors for the film.

3. What is the best way to handle the audition process?

During the audition process of the 10 or so actors who come back for the call backs, always be positive with them and allow them to first try the read in their own creative way. If it is not what you are looking for, say it was great and ask them to try reading in a different way. This will also allow the filmmaker to determine how well they will work with the actor and how they take instruction.

4. What is the purpose of a table read?

The purpose of the table read provides the opportunity for the whole cast and the director to sit around a table and read through the script together several times. This will allow everyone to meet and get into their character.

5. What type of language is most useful when directing actors on-set and why?

The type of language that is most useful on set when directing is to use action words i.e. verbs and not adjectives. If a director uses adjectives e.g. be more happy, the actor will then get into their heads and start making faces rather than doing actions that will show that they are happy thus not providing what is needed to make the scene work. The idea with films is to show an emotion through action rather than explaining it.

6. Why is it important to understand the purpose of a scene BEFORE discussing it with your actors?

In understanding the purpose of a scene, it means that the director has thought through what actions the actors must take to convey this purpose. If the purpose of the scene is for one actor to show their love for the other actor, they could do this by a kiss, or a hug, these are actions that can show this and deliver a scene where the audience understands what is going on. However, if the director does

not understand this about the scene they are about to shoot, then it is hard to determine what the actors must do, from their actions, to convey the purpose or the emotion of the scene.

7. What is the purpose of Uta Hagen’s “six questions a director must be able to answer”?

The purpose of Uta Hagen’s questions is to provide the actor with the background to the scene (the first four questions) and the point and key actions of the scene. This information will provide the actor what they need to deliver their performance.

8. Why is it important that you as a director, as well as the actor, understand a character’s background when playing a scene, even if that background is not explicitly stated in the script?

It is important to understand a character’s background when playing a scene even if it is not explicitly stated to allow the actor to provide the emotional moment of the scene e.g. if a character grew up poor and hungry and the scene requires them to be sitting down to a feast amongst rich people with impeccable manners, they could eat a little more quickly and noisily to convey that this is not something that was usual for them. This shows that they are not from within the same circle that these people came from but we didn’t have to tell the audience that this person grew up poor and hungry.

9. How do you keep actors from getting bored of doing the same thing over and over again?

Allow them to get up and have a break to do whatever they need to stay in the creative mode. Also, try and have stand-ins to do the non-acting work such as blocking a scene for lighting which means that the actors don’t have to be standing around for a long time.

10. Write 500 words on your own philosophy of working with actors. How do you plan to handle them? What will be your process?

My philosophy in working with actors is to allow them the freedom to explore their own creativity as much as possible within the vision of the story as determined by the director, time and budget constraints of production. By having this collaboration between the director and actor, trust develops which means that the director can get more out of the actor to enhance the story and brings another perspective to the production. The actors are a key component in the filmmaking process and it is very important to get their best performances for the film to bring out the story.

As a new director, the standard practices would be followed such as in the casting process which includes auditions, table reads, rehearsals and then shooting on set. The casting process is very important to ensure that the right actors are cast. An example of this is where having a great casting agent is very useful who has access to named actors who could truly help make or break a film based on their name recognition and social media following, or, the casting agent has an eye for someone who would be a great fit for the role and matches perfectly enhancing the film or even knows an actor that the director likes working with and is a good fit for one of the roles.

The audition process is also critical as it identifies how an actor would work with the director such as how the actor can take instruction and if they can gel with each other; otherwise, it can end up being a nightmare for the production. By having a strong relationship between actor and director it would allow shooting to go a lot more smoothly if the right expectations have been set, and there is a natural bond and the actor is committed to working towards the vision of the story thus reducing the risk of delays in production through creative differences.

In handling actors, extra discussions during pre-production would be had with them to provide the background of their character and the purpose of each scene. This would allow them to internalize the character they are playing and to engage in those emotions necessary. There would be discussions as to the actions required for each scene from the actor to convey the purpose of the scene and allowing time for the actors to have any of their questions about the story answered which would enhance a scene or the development of the character. It would also allow the director to incorporate any feedback from the actors that would enhance the production such as different actions that they feel would convey the emotions much better.

To be an actor requires them to constantly be in touch with their emotions which makes being an actor difficult and requires them to be very sensitive. Mindful of this, to ensure that they are always in a creative mode, they would be allowed to take breaks if needed and to require the use of stand-ins when they did not need to be acting for things such as blocking for lighting and sound.