



ACTIVATING A SCRIPT

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Rod Armentrout is in his seventeenth year as a member of the Willow Creek Drama Team and has 26 combined years of acting experience in university, non-professional and professional theater. He received his B.A. in theater from Iowa State University and his M.F.A. in performance from Purdue University. As the Associate Drama Director in the Creative Communications Department, Rod's responsibilities include acting, script development, directing and actor training. He lives in Schaumburg, IL with his wife, Deanna and their children, Erik and Anya.

Session Goals

- identify techniques for discovering movement (blocking) within a scene
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Activation based on dialogue

Activation based on textual givens

1. Character
2. RELATIONSHIP (Michael Shurtleff's 12 Guideposts)
3. PLACE (Michael Shurtleff's 12 Guideposts)

Activation based on EVENTS (Michael Shurtleff's 12 Guideposts)

Difference between DISCOVERIES (Michael Shurtleff's 12 Guideposts) and EVENTS

As Shurtleff said, "If you make a discovery important enough it becomes an event." He also said, "Events are discoveries that are made important to the point when changes in the relationship are effected."

Below are the opening moments of a scene that can perhaps serve as an illustration to clarify the difference.

In the first example Lisa makes a number of discoveries (new information, in bold), but does each discovery bring change (change effected by discovery, underlined)?

Example One-

(Setting: Living room—boxes all around needing to be unpacked. A woman sits on the floor behind a coffee table eating popcorn and watching a movie that we can hear, but not see. **There is a knock on the door.**)

LISA: (LISA continues to watch and eat) Who is it?

BETSY: **It's me! Open up!**

LISA: (still watching and eating) Betsy?

BETSY: **Yeah.** (LISA continues to watch the movie, stands, goes to door, opens it) **Hi!**

LISA: Hi. (LISA returns to her place on the floor and continues watching.)

BETSY: (**steps inside, holding a pizza box**) I hope you haven't eaten.

In the second example Lisa makes the same number of discoveries (new information), but each discovery now has a higher level of importance and therefore effects change.

Example Two-

(Setting: Living room—boxes all around needing to be unpacked. A woman sits on the floor behind a coffee table eating popcorn and watching a movie that we can hear, but not see. **There is a knock on the door.**)

LISA: (LISA disengages from the movie and stops eating) Who is it?

BETSY: **It's me! Open up!**

LISA: (LISA reaches for the remote on the coffee table and shuts off the movie.) Betsy?

BETSY: **Yeah.** (LISA'S head drops forward and hangs for a slight pause. Then she lifts her head, sets the remote on the coffee table, stands, goes to the door and opens it.) **Hi!**

LISA: Hi. (LISA remains at the door with BETSY.)

BETSY: (**steps inside, holding a pizza box**) I hope you haven't eaten.

A CHANGE OF LIFE

By Donna Lagerquist

Pete sitting on couch, watching TV eating a bowl of cereal.

HOLLY: *(from off stage)* **H** Ouch! **P** *(HOLLY enters carrying a laundry basket)*

PETE: What happened? *(HOLLY sets basket down)*

HOLLY: I just smashed my knuckles. This laundry basket is bigger than our doorway and I can't seem to remember that. **PH** *(looking in bowl)* What are you eating?

PETE: Trix. **H** Why don't you flip it around?

HOLLY: Flip what around? *(HOLLY folding towels on the coffee table)*

PETE: The basket. What fruit is melon colored but shaped like a pear?

HOLLY: *(thinks)* A mango? **P**

PETE: That's it! Its mango. They have mango **P** in here now! I hate mangos.

HOLLY: Since when do you buy Trix cereal?

PETE: Since today, it was on sale. Man, I used to love these when I was a kid.

HOLLY: My mom never let us buy cereal that was any color except brown.

PETE: The box said "new improved wilder colors!" Wilder flavors!

HOLLY: I'd say mangos are pretty wild.

PETE: Yeah, well, they ruined it. **P** *(puts bowl down)*

HOLLY: There's some oatmeal cookies in the jar.

PETE: Nah, too late. **P** Want some help folding? *(he grabs some towels)* **H**

HOLLY: Why is it too late?

PETE: *(folding towel)* Mango has covered my tastebuds. Anything I eat right now will taste like it's laced in mango. It'll just end up ruining the oatmeal cookies too.

HOLLY: **H** No, honey . . . *(teaching him)* look...1,2,3 See? **P**

PETE: Why?

HOLLY: So they all look the same.

PETE: What difference does it make? They're towels. *(not understanding)*

HOLLY: They all go on the same shelf.

PETE: Yeah. *(Still folding them wrong)*

HOLLY: So, they should all be folded the same way.

PETE: Can't some be... **H**

HOLLY: *(takes his towels)* No, I'll fold them.

PETE: *(pause)* **P** You know there is nothing good on TV during the day?

HOLLY: I know. I never have it on.

PETE: *(to TV)* I was watching this one show. This guy says he used to be married to his boss's wife until she cheated on him with her secretary's son.

HOLLY: Pete. I really don't want to hear it. It's junk.

PETE: You should have seen what was on before that! They had a whole program -

HOLLY: **H** When are you going back to work? **P**

PETE: When they call...why? I thought you liked me being home.

HOLLY: I do. I do. I do. Its just...well, different.

PETE: Different is good. Besides, I'm on reserve. They are paying me to stay home! **H**

HOLLY: That's good. **P**

PETE: But...

HOLLY: But what?

PETE: There was a "but" in your "that's good"

HOLLY: But-we both know what “reserved” means—it's the last step before “laid off”. **P**

PETE: Not necessarily.

HOLLY: **H** Pete...

PETE: Not necessarily. Things could turn around.

HOLLY: I'm used to things a certain way.

PETE: I know. We'll be okay.

HOLLY: I'm used to you traveling, being gone, 4 days a week. I'm not saying I like it...I'm just saying I'm used to it and well...change is different.

PETE: Not good?

HOLLY: Not yet.

PETE: Why?

HOLLY: Pete, **H** since you've been home you've been stir crazy or something. You're rearranging my cabinets, and sitting where I need to vacuum and buying groceries at the store and...folding towels for the first time in 10 years! **P**

PETE: You used to complain that I wasn't around to help!

HOLLY: I guess I got used to you not being around.

PETE: You want me to go!

HOLLY: No...no honey. I love having you home...I do...it's just that change is...hard for me...like mangos are for you. **H** I'll get used to it. **P**

PETE: I'll never get used to mangos.

HOLLY: I have plenty of brown cereal in the pantry.

PETE: I moved it to the lazy susan.

HOLLY: You did What?

PETE: Kidding.

HOLLY: **H** I hate change, but I love you. **P** (*drier buzzes*) **H** Next load. (*begins to exit*)

PETE: **P** Holly, (*he runs up and turns basket* **H** so her hands won't get smashed) we'll be okay. Change CAN be good. (*she walks out with ease*)

Fade to Black

Activation based on Impulses and Activities

1. Watch for impulsive, instinctive responses
2. Impel, Compel and Repel
3. Include activities

Exercise Two-

MOMMING

By Ingrid DeSanctis

CAROLINE's kitchen. LINDA and her sister CAROLINE are focused downstage at the spot where CAROLINE'S daughter KATE has just stormed out.

LINDA: Well that went well.

CAROLINE: Did you see that?

LINDA: (*obviously very sarcastic*) That went really well.

CAROLINE: She stormed out.

LINDA: She did. (*LINDA goes back to looking at her people magazine.*)

CAROLINE: I was saying very important things.

LINDA: Very important.

CAROLINE: (*pause*) What just happened?

LINDA: Honestly? (*beat*) It wasn't your best work.

CAROLINE: What?

LINDA: It just wasn't your best mom work. And I have seen you in some pretty good mom moments. *(silence)* Like when Joey fell on the swing set and cut his arm open. You were calm, got him to the ER. Or when Tina bombed at the swim meet, you gave her that speech about how she's always a winner to you and her dad. But today.....

CAROLINE: What?

LINDA: You were pointing at her. A lot. I'm not sure that worked.

CAROLINE: She was being belligerent.

LINDA: But....the finger in the face of a teenager?

CAROLINE: She wants to date an 18 year old!

LINDA: Yeah. I heard that.

CAROLINE: She's 16.

LINDA: *(sarcastically)* It's crazy isn't it?

CAROLINE: It is. *(beat)* What?

LINDA: I think his name was Greg.

CAROLINE: This is different.

LINDA: You're right. It is TOTALLY different.

CAROLINE: This is very different.

LINDA: Of course.

CAROLINE: It is.

LINDA: *(really focuses on her sister now)* He was 18. You were 16.

CAROLINE: Different.

LINDA: He was a senior, you were a sophomore.

CAROLINE: But that was a different era.

LINDA: Right. How many years have you been married now?

CAROLINE: *(gets back to the real issue at hand)* She stormed out.

LINDA: She did.

CAROLINE: She was completely irrational and called me terrible things.

LINDA: She did.

CAROLINE: She said I was controlling.

LINDA: You are a mom, you are supposed to be controlling.

CAROLINE: And irritating.

LINDA: Gosh. I can't imagine. You irritating?

CAROLINE: You're supposed to be on my side.

LINDA: *(Stops teasing her now.)* Okay. Sorry.

CAROLINE: *(beat)* Maybe she's right. I'm a terrible mother.

LINDA: She's not right.

CAROLINE: I lose my temper, they drive me crazy and I point.

LINDA: Your sixteen year old is mad at you.

CAROLINE: They're always mad at me. All three of them.

LINDA: They're teenagers. They're supposed to be mad at you. I've been mad at mom for 32 years. *(CAROLINE laughs a bit.)* Good you're laughing. *(New beat)* You are a great mom. I mean it.

CAROLINE: I raised them wrong.

LINDA: Why?

CAROLINE: They talk back.

LINDA: Okay.....

CAROLINE: They're moody.

LINDA: They're teenagers!

CAROLINE: Have you met the Harrison's? Their TEENAGE sons are always smiling.

LINDA: They're strange people. What teenager is always smiling?

CAROLINE: The Harrison's.

LINDA: So what?

CAROLINE: My kids fight with each other all the time. And Kate is losing it.....last week it was the cell phone, this week it's the boyfriend.

LINDA: Next week it will be the car.

CAROLINE: I think it's me.

LINDA: It's not you.

CAROLINE: Sometimes I don't think I was meant to be a mom.

LINDA: What are you talking about? You make them pancakes every Saturday morning. You make sure they don't spend all day on the computer and you hug them even when they act like . . .

CAROLINE: Stop it.

LINDA: You stop it. The secret 's out. They know you're not perfect. That's what I like best. They know you're real. And you know they love you. They don't say it enough, but they do. *(offstage sound)*

CAROLINE: I think that's her.

LINDA: Great. I'm leaving.

CAROLINE: What am I gonna say?

LINDA: You're asking me?

CAROLINE: Yes.

LINDA: Wow. Okay. You are going to say what you *always* say. That you love her. That she is the best kid in the world. But she is not allowed to storm out. So take her cell phone away for a week. Then hug her. Tight. *(LINDA starts gathering her stuff to leave.)* But let her date this kid. He sounds adorable.

CAROLINE: No. He is too old for her.

LINDA: Okay. Okay. She's your daughter.I have to go.

CAROLINE: *(they move to hug each other)* You'd be a great mom.

LINDA: I'd be a great mom because I've spent years watching you. (*with a smile*) I learned from the best.

CAROLINE: Get outta here. I need to talk to my daughter.

LINDA: Call me. I love you.

CAROLINE: Me too.

LINDA: (*she turns and points at her*) And no pointing.

FADE TO BLACK

Books and Resources

Audition

Michael Shurtleff

Bantam Books, 1978 (New edition by Walker & Company, 2003)