

## #001 Who What & Why (TRANSCRIPT)

Charlie Sandlan ([00:02](#)):

Hello everybody, my name is Charlie Sandlan and you are listening to my very first podcast episode. Now, before we launch into the show and I get into the who, the what and the why I am doing this, I want to ask you a question, okay? It's a question that I pose to all of my students that study and train with me at the Maggie Flanigan Studio in New York City, where I have been training and shaping actors for the last, I mean, almost 20 years now. And the question is this, what's the vision of the type of actor that you want to be? And I'm not talking about the superficial shit, the fame, the celebrity, the Oscar, the Tony, the publicity, all the accolades that come certainly with success in this business. But I want to know that the type of actor you want to be, the type of work that you want to be doing two years from now, 10 years from now, 40 years from now.

Charlie Sandlan ([01:11](#)):

And as you think about this question, hopefully the word artist comes to the surface for you because that's what I'm passionate about. I am consumed with the actor as artist and it has been the core of my life's work, I don't think enough actors take themselves seriously. So this is going to be a show for you, for those of you that hit play and put the phone in your pocket, those of you that consider yourself artists that want to know what it means to as an actor live an artistic life, and to deepen your understanding of the word artistry. The show is called Creating Behavior, stick around everybody we start now.

Charlie Sandlan ([02:04](#)):

(singing)Theme Music, Not Enough by Lawrence Trailer

Charlie Sandlan ([02:27](#)):

Well, hello, my fellow daydreamers welcome to episode one of Creating Behavior. I'm Charlie Sandlan, I guess i'm a little bit in shock that I'm here talking to you right now, that I've made this happen. It's been something that I've been working on now... This really is actually a product of the pandemic. It's the product of quarantine. I am talking to you from Guatemala, where I have been here for the last, well going on seven weeks now. I came down here with my fiance, we had a wedding scheduled for March 14th, to make a long story short COVID had infected the wedding party and we had to cancel the wedding about an hour before it was to start. So I can do a completely different episode on the tragedy and heartbreak of canceling your wedding on your wedding day. So yeah, this is where I'm at.

Charlie Sandlan ([03:33](#)):

And I guess part of this quarantine has been challenging myself to figure out what the fuck I'm going to do with this time and with my life and this opportunity that I think we all have to rebirth ourselves in some way. And I'll just start by talking a little bit about myself. I am an acting teacher, I train professional actors for a living. I started really pursuing an acting career from a

very, very early age. And I went to undergrad, I got my BA in theater from Purdue University and I graduated there in 1992 and kind of just trolled around New York City.

Charlie Sandlan ([04:27](#)):

I moved there right after school and just, I think, maybe many of you can relate to this, I got a job bartending and I was waiting tables and catering and cobbling together a life in New York and trying to audition. And back at that time, you had to get backstage to get the actual newspaper, would come out every Thursday, and you try to get auditions. And I spent about five years doing a lot of free theater, a lot of off, off, off, off, off, off Broadway and honing my skills and realize that a BA in theater really didn't do anything for me. I knew that I needed more, that I wanted more and I didn't feel like an artist really, somebody that really had mastered their craft. Because I didn't really know what craft was essentially.

Charlie Sandlan ([05:18](#)):

So I decided to go to grad school and back in 1998 I got accepted into Rutgers and I went there, got my MFA in acting and I studied under Bill Esper and Maggie Flanigan. Their entire program was dedicated to the full two year progression of the Meisner technique, a technique created by Sanford Meisner that really instills in an actor all of the fundamentals of acting, provides you with a solid core and technique. But I think the main thing that I got out of that experience was my relationship with Maggie Flanigan. She was the greatest teacher I've ever had, she was a truth teller, she had a bullshit detector that just, I mean, my God. She had a bar that was so high that she just would refuse to lower and our job as students was to meet her, is to meet her at her bar. And she challenged us to really to look at ourselves and ask ourselves, how serious are we and what are we up for, if we really want to do this for a living?

Charlie Sandlan ([06:29](#)):

And it was a profound experience and I got out of Rutgers really well trained. And stayed in New York, and I moved out to LA for a couple of years and I found myself with time on my hands, so we're talking 2003 now, 2004. And I had time on my hands and there was this a studio, an acting studio in Santa Monica that was looking for somebody to teach Meisner. And I said to myself, "Well, fuck, I got my MFA in this, I could certainly teach it." And I did what most acting teachers do, right? You pull out your notes from classes that you took while you were in school and I try to cobble together a real clear understanding of kind of the Meisner technique and in a way that I could talk about when I went in and interviewed for this spot.

Charlie Sandlan ([07:26](#)):

To make a long story short, I started teaching out at this studio and I had never really thought of myself as a teacher. It's not something that I really ever considered with my life, I wanted to be an actor and it's the only thing I ever wanted to be in my life was an actor. So I'm teaching this class out there and I knew that what I was doing was crap. I was bullshitting my way through it. I mean, my students didn't know, but I knew because I knew what good teaching was, I mean, I had a master teacher, somebody that had devoted her tire professional career to the art of teaching.

Charlie Sandlan ([08:03](#)):

But this was the thing, the more that I did it, the more that I would have a class and I would leave the studio, I was so inspired, I was jacked up. I felt as satiated creatively as I did when I walked off of a set or I walked out of a rehearsal and it actually kind of threw me, it unnerved me a little bit. And it was giving me something to do with my time I had, I had free time and I didn't think much of it I just knew that [inaudible 00:08:33] enjoyed it, and I also knew that I wasn't very good.

Charlie Sandlan ([08:37](#)):

So fast forward a year and I started really saying to myself, "Man, I love this. I think I could be good at it if I worked hard, but fuck, I'm not a teacher. It's not something that I really ever thought of doing with my life." And so now I'm hitting about 35, 34, 35 years old. And I started to really come to a existential crisis in my life. I really enjoyed teaching, and I realized that I had some very strong, very deep opinions about the art form about craft, because I had been mentored and I had been inspired by the teachers in my life, particularly Maggie.

Charlie Sandlan ([09:26](#)):

So in 2005, I took a bold step, after some soul searching, I called Maggie up and I said, "Maggie, I think I want to teach. I think I'm a teacher." And I said, "I was wondering if you would mentor me." She had just opened her studio in 2001, she left Rutgers and she opened up the Maggie Flanigan studio in New York City in Manhattan in 2001 and so her studio had only been open for about four years. And I asked her if she would mentor me as a teacher, because I knew that I wanted to be good at it. And then if I wanted to be good then I actually had to learn how to teach, which is what I think that most acting teachers don't do really. And she said yes, she said, "Get on a plane, move back to New York and sit in my class."

Charlie Sandlan ([10:17](#)):

And so I did it. I mean, fuck, I packed up my stuff, left my girlfriend there at the time, we tried to do the long distance relationship, of course, that didn't work. So I end up back in New York and for the next, I want to say seven, eight years, I watched every single hour that Maggie taught. Every single class, every single day, nine, 10 hours a day, 12 hours a day for about seven years. I watched about, I don't know, well, over 5,000 hours of her teaching. Gobbled up every single thing that I could, I was like a sponge. And the more I did, the more I was like, "I love this. I want to be able to mentor and shape actors, artists." And it has become my life's work. And it wasn't really until I got to about the age of 37, 38, that I realized that that was the reason why I was put on this earth. I am a teacher and I love it.

Charlie Sandlan ([11:24](#)):

And to be able to talk about the one thing that inspires me, that thrills me, my passion, to talk about acting, to take a room full of students that really come to the studio, come to me not knowing anything really about what it means to be a first rate actor and to be able to instill in them, not only just craft and technique, but a way of looking at themselves, the way of

conducting themselves, the way of approaching an artistic life has filled me such satisfaction, creative satisfaction. And Maggie was getting ready to retire and so she asked me if I wanted to take over the studio. And so in 2012, I bought the Maggie Flanigan studio and took it over. And it is now one of the top acting conservatories in the United States. And I spend my time doing what I love.

Charlie Sandlan ([12:25](#)):

Which brings me now, I guess, to the quarantine and where I'm at here in 2020, and over Zoom and on the IG platform I've been talking to all of my students and everybody in my community about how to try to feel artistic in this time. And my job has always been to try to give to my students, to give them things to think about, to challenge them, to help them try to feel artistic. And if that's just for an hour a day right now, then that's what it is. But what I was finding as I was sitting down here with just nothing but time on my hands is, well, how do I fit into that? What am I doing that's artistic right now, other than trying to be as much of a teacher and a presence to my students. And then I start thinking to myself, when's the last time I operated outside of my comfort zone? When is the last time that I actually have done something that scares the fuck out of me? And honestly it's been a long time.

Charlie Sandlan ([13:38](#)):

I mean, I have been walking into a classroom every single day for almost 18 years, confident in what I'm doing, walking into that room and being the one that is centered and calm and confident so that I can help shape a room full of people that are insecure and scared and nervous and unsure about what they're doing and it's safe. And I started feeling like a hypocrite and I have had many people over the years say to me, "Charlie, you should do a podcast. You're so passionate, you love acting, you say so much in your classroom and it resonates in a deep way." And of course, I have my standard response really for anything that is put to me in that way, it's the eye roll and that kind of shrug of the shoulders and my three favorite words, what's the point.

Charlie Sandlan ([14:40](#)):

So that's my response, "Fuck it, what's the point? I have nothing to say, nothing to offer. Who's going to listen to it? I don't even know anything about podcasting." I mean, for God's sakes, when I got my MacBook, I actually deleted Garageband from my computer because I was like, "I'm not a musician, I'll never need this." So I knew nothing about it. And it was this time here that that made me challenge myself like, "Step up here, why don't you do something that's a little scary? Why don't you put yourself on the line? It's an opportunity." And so out of that came this show and what became and started off as just this, ugh, man, it took everything I had to look into it, to study it, to learn about all things podcasting. It actually over time, over these last many weeks became something I'm very, very passionate about because my vision has started to clear up.

Charlie Sandlan ([15:49](#)):

So what is the show? What's the show going to be? Creating Behavior, well, first off the title comes from the fact that that is what your job is as an actor. It's what I say to my students all the

time, your job as an actor is to create behavior and the best actors do that organically. They have the ability to create organic, vivid, fully realized human behavior. The hacks, those that aren't artists, they indicate it, they perform it. Well, I'm interested in how you create behavior for a living, I'm interested in what it means to be a serious actor.

Charlie Sandlan ([16:31](#)):

Acting and artistry, and artistry is really nothing more, nothing less than the care with which you work, your attention to detail. So my idea for this show is this, every week I'm going to talk to you about the art of acting. I'm going to explore different parts of the creative process with you. I'm going to try to offer you as much as I can, what I've only been offering to my students at the Maggie Flanigan studio. I want to instill in you an insatiable desire for intellectual curiosity. We're going to answer your questions. I'm interested in what you're curious about, the things that you want me to address. So I will bring on questions that you guys have every week.

Charlie Sandlan ([17:30](#)):

And so it's going to be a mix of solo shows, it's also going to be a mix of interviews. I'm going to bring on not just actors, but artists and talk about their artistic process, the struggle of creativity and how these artists navigate through that difficult challenge. I'm also going to give you some books to read, books that I think that are important artists and other art forms. I think that you cannot bring more to your art than what resides inside of you. And so you've got to continually feed that beast in you, there's got to be a desire in you to continually educate yourself, to understand something more about the human condition.

Charlie Sandlan ([18:20](#)):

So I'll bring on some quotes, I'll bring on some important artists in other art forms that I think might be a source of inspiration for you. I might read a poem for God's sakes, I don't fucking know. There might be a, I don't know, really interesting article in the arts and leisure section of the New York Times, or an article in The New Yorker or a particular performance that I feel is incredibly profound and we'll talk about it. So I guess we're going to cover all things art, all things acting.

Charlie Sandlan ([18:58](#)):

I guess, now the question is, why. Why am I doing this? Why do I think this is important? And I will start off with just saying this, most actors are lazy. They don't work on themselves. I mean, acting is the only art form where you don't have to train in order to call yourself an actor and actually even make money at it, right? You can make money at this business and have never taken an acting class in your entire life. That's what infuriates me because you can't do that in other art forms.

Charlie Sandlan ([19:34](#)):

It'd be like me saying, "You know what? I want to be a rock star, so I'm going to go out and buy some tight leather pants, a microphone, and a long scarf and learn how to gyrate my hips and I'm

ready to go." Not really understanding that the successful musicians in any genre have been working on their art really since they were kids. I mean, my God, Bruce Springsteen was working on the guitar when he was like nine, 10, 11 years old, he was obsessed with it. He was obsessed with mastering his instrument. And that's what most actors don't do, they don't master their instrument. They don't train, they don't develop their body or their voice or their emotional temperament so that they can walk on stage eight shows a week or 20 takes on a set and do rich complicated work.

Charlie Sandlan ([20:36](#)):

And the thing about acting is that everybody thinks they can do it. You look at acting and you look at a good performance and you go, "Oh my God, aren't they just being themselves, they just memorize their lines?" I can't even tell you how many people think that memorizing lines is what it's all about, that's where the real difficulty is. Like, "How do you, how do you memorize all those lines?" It's got nothing to do with acting, zero, it's a tedious skill. But the best acting, the virtuosity of it, isn't really apparent.

Charlie Sandlan ([21:18](#)):

Do you know if I go to the Joyce Theater in New York City and I watched Savion Glover tap, or I go to the MET and I listened to Anna Netrebko sing an aria, I know that there is no fucking way I could ever do anything close to that, you just sit and your jaw drops because their simplicity, their ease, their grace with which they work it's stunning. I don't sit there and go, "Oh yeah, now I want to be a tap dancer and go buy some tap shoes and start fiddle fucking on a piece of wood because I watched Savion Glover tap." I know I will never, ever, ever be able to do anything like that, I don't possess that skill.

Charlie Sandlan ([22:03](#)):

But see, acting people think that they can do it because behind the really best of acting is simplicity, ease, and grace. The best acting looks effortless. I mean, wouldn't you want to know how to be able to do that, don't you want to know how to be able to do that? What does it take? So that's the who, what and why, and I want Creating Behavior to be a roadmap for you as you navigate towards answering that question that I posed to you at the beginning of the show, what is the vision of the type of actor that you want to be? And I'm excited about sharing everything I know with you. And hopefully that does something for you.

Charlie Sandlan ([22:54](#)):

So let's wrap this baby up and end episode one, shall we? So thank you, thank you, thank you, fucking thank you, those of you that stuck with me that are still listening to me now, I promise to give you a hundred percent of myself every single week, and to help you along your artistic journey. I want to thank Lawrence Trailer who offered me what is now the theme music for this show. He is one of my students, he is a very talented actor and incredible musician. You can find out more about him at [lawrencetrailermusic.com](http://lawrencetrailermusic.com). You can listen to the full song, Not Enough on this show's website, [creatingbehaviorpodcast.com](http://creatingbehaviorpodcast.com). I want your questions, I want you to email anything you want me to talk about, things you want to address, things you're curious about.

Feedback, criticism, you name it, I'll take it all. Okay, I want you guys to have a good week. I want you to play full out with yourself, find ways to operate outside your comfort zone and don't ever settle for your second best. My name is Charlie Sandlan, peace. (singing) Not Enough by Lawrence Traylor.