

EPISODE #015 (Transcript)

Charlie Sandlan (00:02):

In the fall of 1988, I left Cincinnati, Ohio, and I headed off to college, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, where I got my BA in theater. It was in that fall that I met for the first time, Rich Rand. He was the first serious teacher, the first serious artist that I ever had. And over the last 32 years, he has not only become a very dear friend of mine, but he has been someone that I have turned to for advice, for guidance, for inspiration. And it's a privilege today to share with you a conversation with my friend and mentor, Rich Rand. So put the phone back in your pocket, Creating Behavior starts now. (singing)

Charlie Sandlan (01:11):

Well, hello, my fellow daydreamers. So today I am sharing with you a conversation I recently had with one of the more important artistic figures in my life, Rich Rand. Maggie certainly was, and is a defining force in my life. But Rich Rand was the first. At 18 years old coming to college and pretty much getting through my adolescence on bullshit charm and some personality, not really ever working hard, doing just enough to get by. Rich was the first serious artist that I ever encountered. He really laid the floorboard for me. He poured out the concrete, laid the foundation, if you will, for my work ethic, for my understanding and appreciation for what it means to be a transformational actor, an appreciation for the craft of stepping into a character and illuminating the human condition.

Charlie Sandlan (02:29):

I've known Rich now for 32 years, and I have been fortunate enough to be able to call upon Rich for so many different things, whether that was struggling with a part, trying to unlock something that was hindering me, whether it was reaching out to him as a teacher and gaining his insight on how to curate a conservatory

program, how to handle a collective of teachers, how to conduct myself. I have always used Rich as a personal model on how to conduct themselves. Now, I haven't always been able to live up to that and I can tell you that, but he's been an example for me. I find him to be one of the more fascinating people to talk to and to listen to. Even now and as I hit 50, I can sit and listen to him talk, and I will always learn something.

Charlie Sandlan (03:33):

He's not just a master teacher. He is a published playwright. He has written and directed and produced, starred in his numerous one-person shows that he has taken all over the United States and the world. He's a director, he's an actor, and he's one hell of a teacher. And so it's an honor to be able to just share with you some of our conversation. Now, if you want to appreciate on a deeper level this talk, I would hit pause. I would go get Sam Shepard's play Fool for Love and read it. It will aid you, I think, in our conversation because we do talk a little bit here on Fool for Love, on the character of Eddie and the psychology behind that part. So if you've read it, that's great. If not, you should grab the play and read it. So that being said, here's my conversation with Rich.

Charlie Sandlan (04:33):

You are a transformational character actor. You have a virtuosity when you work that I always have found just stunning. I'm just wondering if you could just talk to me about character acting, what it means to you, and I think it's the highest level of this art form.

Rich Rand (04:52):

Sure. I've only begun to articulate sort of the larger resonance, the larger theme of being a transformational actor. It sounds very pretentious, but really all it means is it's a whole body 360 degree experience. And by that, I just mean we look at context. I mean, context is now a buzzword. I mean, context comes home to roost in what we see going on in the streets and the kind of issues when we see it in a way that we experience fully then the full

impact. And that means the history of the event, the what things mean culturally and economically, and politically. We connect the past to the future.

Rich Rand (06:05):

We see this in Black Lives Matter finally, and we understand that it goes back to slave ships 400 plus years ago. We begin to understand that what we learned in a history class in elementary school or high school really was a narrative that was constructed, to facilitate a complete abdication of responsibility. And now we're going back and to make the leap, when you bring to life the world of a play, you're also bringing to life the history of the characters in the play and the play exists in a particular place and time.

Rich Rand (06:52):

And you really need to drill down deep, do your homework, do your research and understand that in your character body, you are rooted to this place, surrounded by these people, each of whom your character has a backstory, has shared complex backstory. You have to understand what's been passed on to you. The great plays, family plays Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller and there are also cultural plays, and you have to do the work to understand the way in which the playwright's life was channeled.

Rich Rand (07:41):

It's very direct when you're looking at an autobiographical play like Long Day's Journey Into Night, obviously it's a little different when you're looking at August Wilson's the journey of his work. And then you start listening to him speak, and you realize that what he did in terms of channeling a century also channeled the history, right? The history of marginalization, the history of racism, the history of violence against people of color. And it was an amazing body of work.

Rich Rand (08:24):

And as an actor, you want to be able to look back on your work, your body of work. So if you actually saw the physical experience, the physical bodies of the characters you've played, each one

would have their own unique journey. They would not all be the same. Audience witnessing your work would not see the same actor with the same physical habits, playing similar actions in the same way, with the same voice, regardless of the context. I mean, it's a different kind of acting, right?

Rich Rand (08:59):

But what you want to do really is you've got a bigger responsibility and to some degree you're channeling history. You are living history. You have to embody the life history, and you have to understand the world that swirled around the character, the atmosphere in the world of the play. And so I like dramaturgical research. The danger with dramaturgy is that it becomes kind of a ... It's a very esoteric PhD dissertation like art form.

Charlie Sandlan (09:42):

Correct. How do you know the difference between doing the kind of homework that actually is going to help you create behavior and getting caught up in the kind of research that just puts you in an English lit class? That's not going to really do anything for you.

Rich Rand (09:55):

Yeah. I mean, this is kind of a classic conflict. It's why a lot of directors and a lot of playwrights loathe dramaturges. As an actor, the dramaturge has to evoke within you a visceral felt empathic connection to what it was like on a sensory level, what life and death was like, what the daily life was like in a given place and time. And we will now be better at going back to early Restoration London, where it was a plague ridden, right. That teams was filled with dead bodies and we can begin to make a personal association that'll enable us to at least feel that, that kind of ever present life and death.

Rich Rand (10:56):

But you've got to actually feel it viscerally to be able to embody it and then play actions. It has to become your second nature. It's like you're doing a play in New York and if you've never been in New York, you got a lot of homework you're going to have to do.

But you walk the streets or you think of all those kinds of nitty gritty street plays, your American Buffaloes, and you sort of have to understand the place, the atmosphere, the given circumstance for the different characters in the play.

Rich Rand (11:42):

We have all of these expressions, right? You've got to walk the walk, so to speak, and it's translating research and translating ... It's what makes a history class good or bad is, is it just kind of facts, none of which root, none of which really have impact or can a great history teacher give you the felt sensations and an understanding of what the world looked like, what it felt like in a given time and place? So you do have to be able to do this on your own. You can't count on a dramaturge or a director, being able to make the world of the play of visceral reality, a felt palpable reality for you.

Charlie Sandlan (12:33):

So what's your process when you were approaching a script as an actor? Because I know it's different than approaching it as a director. Let's just say you were going to approach Eddie in Fool for Love. Where would you start? You read the script, you've read it a couple of times. And then what do you start to do for yourself?

Rich Rand (12:50):

Yeah, understanding Shepard's journey for me would be the first step. You can actually get by in that hotel room, in that play, if you just connect to the chemistry that you feel. When it was first produced Theater Row, I think it went from the Magic Theater to Theater Row. You had great actors who just could find that chemistry, right? The Eddie, May chemistry. You can make that play work without understanding sort of the larger resonance.

Rich Rand (13:36):

You've got the Old Man, the father. Now, that's never going to work unless you understand Shepard's, the lack of resolution that Sam Shepard felt to his own father. Because that's the running thread right through True West and Fool for Love is that he

couldn't reach his father, is that he felt abandoned. He had a strange life. I mean, he was an iconic figure in the Lower East Side of Manhattan doing early works at Caffe Cino and La MaMa. He was a cowboy and that was kind of he played that card. And so Eddie is kind of the cowboy he could have been. Though, ultimately I think he had a farm in, I don't know, North Carolina, South Carolina, where he lived with Jessica Lange, and he still carried with him some of that renegade cowboy.

Charlie Sandlan (14:38):

So what's the value in reading his other plays? If you're going to approach a part, reading a playwright's other plays and understanding the playwright's life and where this body of work comes from, like, how does that help you play Eddie?

Rich Rand (14:51):

Oh, well, his first marriage, you want to understand that. And you can find a lot of his monologues that were written for O-Lan and what it was like to live in the East Village, in the sixties and seventies where it was a very different world. He was a poet. He was a cowboy in hippy land, and that was kind of his ... He embodied the icon, which he later went on to play in a lot of his movies. I think Eddie, the relationship to his father is one thing, and the relationship to May is a different thing, but both his father and his first wife, that's who this is about.

Rich Rand (15:51):

And his inability because he leaves O-Lan for Jessica Lange and he's torn up and conflicted. This is his first love and he's going to destroy it and he does. And so you read his letters, there's a whole book. I think it was actually published after Fool for Love, but it's a whole book of letters to O-Lan's father. O-Lan's father was a surrogate father to him, so it helps to understand this because you got the Old Man in Fool for Love and that's the father he wished he had, or it's a combination of the father he did have, who never took responsibility for leaving and abandoning him and O-Lan's father, who was his surrogate father.

Rich Rand (16:52):

It's good to understand this, to know that he was kind of inextricably bound up and he could not cut loose. This is that love affair, right? That first love that you never forget all your life, that you can't cut loose. You're going to carry it with you for the rest of your life.

Charlie Sandlan (17:12):

And that's May and Eddie, and so you do this kind of research and it helps, I guess, what open up your imagination, and then you start to look at that script again, and other associations, ideas start coming to you?

Rich Rand (17:25):

Yeah. Well, you kind of understand that he was why he wrote the play. You kind of get a gut sense that he was never going to be able to move on in his life as a person in love, as a writer, as a performer, until he cut this. He had to cut this out of his heart, the guilt that he had done to her, what his father did to him that he left a way of life behind.

Rich Rand (18:03):

He was a struggling kind of writer, poet, theater maker in the East Village, living in a one room rent controlled apartment with his first wife and they have a kid and the relationship starts unraveling. And then he has some big breakthroughs. And this is kind of classic, right? He's looking stardom eyeball to eyeball, and this play is in a sense, an attempt to purge or resolve, or in some way, leave behind something he needs to leave behind if he's going to have this journey.

Charlie Sandlan (18:51):

And then you try to bring this to how you approach Eddie, and then you've got the whole physical life. So, how do you start dealing with the fact that you're a rodeo cowboy, you had broken bones, you've got physical issues. You've been riding in a truck how many thousands of miles across the country.

Rich Rand (19:13):

Yeah. Yeah. It's a great challenge on all those levels. So you do. Yeah. He talks about it. You have to find out what he carries around in his body from this fascinating way of life, rodeo rider, right? Dominating, roping, binding, and controlling, steers in a kind of public forum, it's kind of a strange, if you think about it. I mean, it kind of has this strange Darwinian, romantic Darwinian kind of struggle, right? To dominate the animal.

Rich Rand (20:01):

And then he drives 2,500 miles. He talks about it repeatedly and tears are streaming down his face. He keeps seeing her in his mind's eye. So he goes on this journey. I mean, it's a great role for all of those reasons, but if you leave out any of the work, you're not fully grounded or rooted in what made him create his character and put this character in this, I don't know, motel room in the Mojave Desert or wherever the hell they are. It is that last battle, but it's-

Charlie Sandlan (20:41):

Well, it seems like this is the kind of work that really separates a great transformational performance from just somebody that memorizes their lines and comes up with some odd walk, and does the part.

Rich Rand (20:59):

Absolutely. Absolutely. It's the degree to which the human beings in the play can connect to one another within that world.

Charlie Sandlan (21:11):

I know you talk a lot about animal imagery. I know you use it. So what do you use to help you?

Rich Rand (21:21):

Nature. To study nature, I mean, as an actor, you're studying human beings. It goes without saying, and if you live and work in New York, if you grow up in a big city, you can spend your life learning by just watching and observing and studying actively. Actively embodying humankind. It's a great gift. But at a certain point, sometimes you can stop living your life. There are these

great actors and they're technicians. They're very polished. They can play actions, they can break down script. They know how to work it, right? They have this kind of theatrical instinct, but it kind of rings false. It can be hollow.

Rich Rand (22:20):

I think we all know plenty of name actors and we see them in their marvelous virtuosos, but we don't feel viscerally engaged. We don't really feel that they are deeply grounded in the world of the play and the body and the history of the character. We don't feel that. And we come away and we say, "Yeah, that was good." But the great actors, there's this gripping degree of engagement that you feel in the audience because the forces at play within the character are working through their bodies.

Rich Rand (23:04):

You look at nature and you look at animals in nature, and you realize that there's something uncivilized about actor process, that it's dangerous to civilize it or to, in a sense, I do understand why acting texts and a lot of acting techniques, they're trying to distill it all down so that a student can get it. You take a year of class and you come away mastering the technique. I mean, I'm exaggerating a bit, but it's deeper. There's something that can't be taught, and it has to do with this felt sense of the forces that are working through the body of the character in the world of the play, that's closer to animal nature than civilized human kind.

Charlie Sandlan (24:06):

It's got to tap into your primitive unconscious, right?

Rich Rand (24:10):

Yep. Yep. You've got to be channeling. People say this all the time is, what's happening in a great performance is something is being crafted that the actor him or herself has learned to control or harness, but it is a larger force. It is something primitive, something that taps into the unconscious, and you go on the journey. So, I mean, I get it and I've done a lot of plays and yeah, I see good actors, competent actors, and they come off stage after

doing some knockdown drag out scene and they just shirk it off. They come out for their bow and they go put on ...

Rich Rand (25:04):

They really haven't been touched. They haven't been taken on the journey and you can kind of feel that in the audience. But if you really go on the journey, you're going to take that journey with you. That journey is going to change you, every role you do. If it's meaningful, if it's complex, it's going to alter the way in which you live your life just a little bit. And you need to allow for that, the decompression after rehearsal, the processing of what you experienced after the journey of a show.

Rich Rand (25:43):

You really have to take time to kind of decompress and self-regulate and make sense of who are you now? In what way has your work on this character, in this play changed how you experienced life? Because it does, we all know that, that you do a role and you come home at night and you have appreciation for your family. You suddenly look at your wife in a new way. You realize you better be way more sensitive with your kids. You just realize the weight of responsibility that goes with moment to moment behavior.

Rich Rand (26:33):

I think actor process can make that tangible. It can make you live a better life, make you contribute, consciously contribute to the creation of a better world through your behaviors in your little small world and through the larger channeling of whatever truths, whatever themes, whatever messages. You have the opportunity to contribute to the telling of a story.

Charlie Sandlan (27:10):

Well, how do you keep yourself healthy? Have you developed your own way of decompressing and keeping yourself grounded and centered?

Rich Rand (27:24):

Everything that we're going through now, if you watch the news and you see what's going on in the streets, you turn off the TV and you try to go to sleep and you realize that you're agitated, that you're upset, that your heart is breaking, right, or that you feel like your insides are ... You can't disengage. So the same is true if you're an actor. Now, there's an awful lot of condemnation about experiencing, experiencing in the way that I'm describing, which is through the totality of your being, the given circumstance in the play, because people don't know how to self regulate. They don't know how to come back to calm down. They don't know how to change their thinking. They don't know how to bring their bodies back to homeostasis.

Rich Rand (28:42):

Astronauts come back, they need to learn how to walk again. They go through a decompression chamber, but they actually need to learn how to walk because they've been in outer space with very little gravity. The same is true. After you go through a tumultuous, I don't know, double rehearsal where you're doing this, I don't know, really emotional scene, again and again and again, in film, on a stage. At the end of the day, man, you feel like your insides have been torn up, and you have to kind of know through an understanding of your mission, your larger purpose as an actor.

Rich Rand (29:30):

And also, you just have to know, you have to understand trauma. You have to understand how to change your neurology and stop living in fight or flight or freeze. You have to actually calm down, close your eyes, go to a place, and you learn how to master that. They don't teach that. But you have to learn in your own way, how to go on the journey and then how to recuperate and replenish and come back to yourself.

Charlie Sandlan (30:02):

What do you mean by understand trauma?

Rich Rand (30:05):

Actors put themselves through a kind of simulated traumas. You do any kind of play. You do All My Sons. You do Death of a Salesman. You do any of the great plays, my God, you're going to have to bring yourself back because you've experienced vicariously this kind of traumatic journey that has probably damaged and defined the life of your character in many cases. I mean, you look at the great plays, you don't have to do this. There are great Shakespearian tragedies that work. They work as radio plays. They work through the speech, through the sound, through the poetry.

Rich Rand (30:55):

But there are a lot of contemporary plays, you got to walk the walk and go on the journey, and then you have to know how to take care of yourself afterwards. It really is learning how to deal with trauma. Even if you go see a great play, 'Night, Mother, these plays catch you by surprise. For my father, he would talk about seeing the original production of Death of a Salesman with Lee J. Cobb. For me, I went to see 'Night, Mother and it was just I got half price tickets and I saw the play and I couldn't get up. I couldn't get up out of my seat. I went through a whole journey.

Charlie Sandlan (31:46):

Who was in that, do you remember?

Rich Rand (31:52):

Kathy Bates. Yeah. Oh my God, I'm forgetting the mother. But it was one of those experiences where it doesn't seem ... I mean, first of all, you've got a gender difference. There's a difference between a mother and her son, and a mother and her daughter. There's a very significant difference there. I didn't go into this play reading the reviews and thinking, "Oh my God, this is going to remind me of ..." But of course, plays hit you on a much deeper level. They hit you on a subliminal level, on a dream level.

Rich Rand (32:35):

And so I saw it played out a kind of manifestation of something that existed in my relationship to my own mother. And I didn't

realize it. And it broke through to the surface. I remember, and I was with my girlfriend at the time and she said, "Are you okay?" And I thought I was okay. I got up and I sort of felt my body walking out of the theater. I was not in my body, but I sort of was aware that there was this body walking out of the theater. It was mine.

Rich Rand (33:16):

I got outside and I couldn't walk, you know what it's like. It was a matinee. So you come out of five o'clock and you've got all of humanity coming home from work on the streets of 44th Street. And I had to just sit down on a parked car and I just sat there for about 20 minutes. I could feel the whole world walking by me, but in some level I was processing and trying to make sense of, why have I responded to this play? It was such a deep level. I kind of took me a long time to figure out that this was some hypothetical future that might be my life and so-

Charlie Sandlan (34:10):

That's deep. That's really deep.

Rich Rand (34:12):

Well, and I think great plays do that. I mean, there are plays that change people's lives. Waiting for Lefty, if you take it back to the great depression, Death of a Salesman probably, 'Night, Mother for many people on a personal level.

Charlie Sandlan (34:26):

You think it was the play, or was it the acting? Was it both?

Rich Rand (34:30):

I think it's the acting, because you see that play in a community theater, you're not going to have the same experience.

Charlie Sandlan (34:38):

Yeah, true.

Rich Rand (34:42):

I've proposed in my mind that I would like to do that play, but then you look at, wait a second. There's nobody that could do those roles.

Charlie Sandlan (34:55):

Do them justice, you mean.

Rich Rand (34:57):

Do them justice. Right. Nobody that would go on the journey.

Charlie Sandlan (35:04):

So what do you use? How did you train? What do you kind of call upon in terms of to see your own craft and approach? Like, how did you study?

Rich Rand (35:19):

I think your occupation, your career finds. You don't really choose it. It didn't. For me, my salvation, literally the thing that saved me was being able to put myself in other people's shoes. I grew up in Hollis, Queens. For me, I would get on my bicycle and I would just ride on a Saturday morning as far as I could go. And I would just ride through all of Brooklyn or I would ride over the 59th Street Bridge into Manhattan, 10, 11, 12 years old, or in the winter, I'd just get on the subway and I'd get out somewhere, and I'd just walk around.

Rich Rand (36:11):

I'd go to the Village or I'd go through Central Park or I'd go to the Bronx Zoo and I would just do this stuff alone. I went to school in Manhattan. I was on the subway, 6:30, 7:00 AM every day, blue collar, working class people, union jobs, secretaries, nurses, et cetera. And I would just put myself in their shoes.

Charlie Sandlan (36:35):

I tell my students all the time, I go that's your job is to step into the shoes of another human being, but that requires empathy. And so, would you just find yourself just daydreaming? Like where are they coming from? How did they end up here? Why are they dressed the way they are? Was it just your imagination just took off?

Rich Rand (36:52):

Yeah, yeah. Entire stories. I would create their whole life. I would just put them in context. They're coming from an apartment

building that looks like this. They got three kids. If I were looking through the window into their kitchen, I would have seen them an hour ago making coffee. And where are they headed? And I'd look at them, I study what they wear. Back in this day, which is kind of fascinating, there were like five newspapers in New York. Not so long ago, mid sixties.

Rich Rand (37:22):

And it was very political time. You could tell everybody's leanings '65, '68, '70, politics, people wore it. You could tell it from the articles they were reading in the New York Post or the Daily News or the Long Island Press or Newsday or the Times. You could tell everything you needed to know by how they dressed, what they read, the way in which they behaved. And for me that was a way of ... It was an escapist entertainment, but a lifesaving kind of way of life. It became the way I approach character.

Charlie Sandlan (38:02):

So what drives you? I mean, because you're constantly working on something. I mean, you've written one-person shows, you've performed them all over the country. You direct, you act, you've been teaching for what, 35 years?

Rich Rand (38:19):

Yeah. Well, I try not to get locked into any one thing. I try not to get too attached to any one role, teacher, mentor, director, actor. I try to mix it up. I try to stay in shape. Right now my role as a teacher is to bring this philosophy and techniques of transformation into the classroom, knowing that my students are going to carry this on. My students are going to impact the world.

Rich Rand (39:05):

My time, I've passed the midway point, my time on this earth and my physical, the challenges of doing what I'm now teaching get harder. So I really trust my students to start theaters and do great work and bring this message in their own way to their community and tell stories and create theaters and create approaches to creating theater that are holistic and transformative. So I think it's

dangerous to ... We have fantasies about everything, vacations, retirement. If I had enough money, I'd do ABC. Life should be as struggle.

Rich Rand (40:03):

I mean, I think that's really important because you have to kind of struggle to appreciate and to see all of the struggle that's taking place in the world, not just our little world or a corner of the world. You need to live boots on the ground and see the way other people are living and struggling to live, to understand the injustice and the inequity and to feel at least, okay, what do I want to give back? In what way can I contribute whatever that is?

Charlie Sandlan (40:44):

Yeah. I pose that question to my students all the time, especially when they're getting ready to go out like, what's your contribution going to be to this art form that you say you want to pursue and be a part of? Why should we listen to you?

Rich Rand (40:58):

Yep. Yep. Everybody's got to answer that in their own way. And they can't ... The answer has to find you, it has to come to you. You'll see something or read something and you'll get clarity as to this is what I'm meant to do. So you can change your destiny to some degree. But I think you got to listen, what speaks to you, what's meaningful to you?

Charlie Sandlan (41:37):

Which means you have to feed yourself, right? You have to continually, I tell them, you got to feed the beast. You can't bring more to your art than what resides inside of you and so you better have intellectual curiosity.

Rich Rand (41:50):

Yeah. And empathic curiosity.

Charlie Sandlan (41:55):

I like that word, that phrase, empathic curiosity.

Rich Rand (42:00):

Well, you've got to make space to listen to your students.

Charlie Sandlan (42:08):

Right.

Rich Rand (42:11):

They're going to change you now because they're going to be able to speak to you about things they've experienced and their families have experienced.

Charlie Sandlan (42:19):

They've changed me tremendously, especially in the last four or five months the pandemic, the killing of George Floyd, the pain, the anger, the rage, and they have challenged me to confront my own racism and my own limitations as a teacher, as a 50 year old white guy who has a responsibility to hold this group together to follow me. And I think they've shown me how much I don't know and how much I still need to learn and how much I still need to continue to educate myself so I can become a better teacher, better artist.

Rich Rand (43:04):

That's right. But the first step is to make room and give time for them to have a voice and tell you about their life in a way that previously would never find its way into an acting class. They have to be able to speak to kind of the struggle that their family and that they have carried around with them every waking moment. And people of color carry the weight and the struggle, and I think we're beginning to understand that we receive the projections. And if you can imagine the weight of that, of the narratives that are constructed about people of color, that they feel, they can read it on the faces of white America.

Charlie Sandlan (44:16):

And all of the art in this country. I mean, all of the theater, I mean, even black plays, black playwrights, it's curated by white boards of directors. It's curated by white artistic directors. It's directed by white actors. And there's so much more beyond Lorraine Hansberry and August Wilson, but yet we don't do enough homework at least in myself to find and search for those other

voices, those other artists and champion that kind of work. I just always chalk it up, well, you got Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, Eugene O'Neill. My God, I'm so limited. I'm so limited.

Rich Rand (45:11):

Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (45:12):

There's Katori Hall. There's Dominique Morisseau. There's Danaï Gurira. There's Suzan-Lori Parks. There's such a tremendous wealth of talent in the black community that we don't champion it enough.

Rich Rand (45:31):

Yeah. And different artistic visions, different life experiences. It's irreducible. I mean, you named a whole bunch of African American playwrights and they're all so different from one another. And they're trying to reach out and make us see something in different ways. So, recently I saw revivals of sweat and pipeline, and you've just got to bring these plays, academia and Midwestern life can become cloistered. It's really hard to understand blue collar factory life or inner city high school, and some of the pressures and the temptations.

Rich Rand (46:40):

Interestingly, I jump to John Lewis, who was a heroic figure to me. He wasn't in it for himself. He had no intention of being a politician. He had no intention of running for office. He was a preacher, and Martin Luther King was his mentor and he was there and he was doing the right thing. Being a representative in Georgia that found him, he didn't choose that. But he speaks, and just to get back to this, he talked about all of it early on. He talked about mental illness and accepting people regardless of their orientation, gender rights.

Rich Rand (47:29):

He talked about racism and injustice, but he saw all of it, the economic injustice and the lack of a voice. There's something

about having studied in seminary that he understood the whole complex integration of all of these different conflicts, all of these different trials, and that they're part of a zeitgeist. They're all rolled into one. Yes. You can say black lives matter, but there's an economic injustice. I mean, just take it back. We're into reparations, 40 acres and a mule. We have imprisoned and we have relegated and made it impossible for people of color, black people. We have destroyed their spirit. We have destroyed their heritage. We've destroyed their culture.

Charlie Sandlan (48:43):

Oh yeah, and raped their women for hundreds of years. And yeah, it's just one atrocity after another, and just build the racist policies to prop up white supremacy.

Rich Rand (48:59):

Right. So how do we make amends beyond reparations? But we have to be true to our word. Just go back to the contracts, the same thing with Native Americans. I mean, we're not really willing to go, wait a second. We have to be responsible for something that happened hundreds of years ago? Yeah. If you want to change the theme of our nation, right. So it's not about me, me, me, this kind of cutthroat capitalistic mentality and approach, the sense of service, the sense of contribution. You have to devote your life to making the world a better place, and that involves taking responsibility for the past and not just your past-

Charlie Sandlan (49:53):

What's the artist's responsibility in that, do you think, the actor's responsibility?

Rich Rand (50:01):

To really create work, to produce work, to find a way to give voice to important works. And I think we're going to see that coming out of this pandemic. I think we're going to see come to fruition great works that address these issues.

Charlie Sandlan (50:26):

Yeah. I agree with that. I agree. And you talked about John Lewis, clearly a hero of yours. And I talk to my students about the need for heroes, the need for inspiration. I'm just wondering, who are your artistic mentors, so to speak, any artists that you kind of go back to and reflect upon for inspiration?

Rich Rand (50:52):

I worked with a lot of great teachers and there were gifts, great gifts. Stella Adler would say, you would see her channeling in, she was a Jungian, not that she would necessarily acknowledge it, theme, this larger message, her own contribution to survivors of the Holocaust. She took care. She brought people over. She made sure that they would have a life. People don't remember that.

Charlie Sandlan (51:38):

Not what you hear about when you discuss Stella Adler, is it?

Rich Rand (51:43):

No, I mean, she had a huge ego and she would rant, but she was trying to inspire that sense of larger purpose through a deep understanding. So I studied acting with her for a couple of years, but it was her script analysis classes. She would talk about Odets. She would talk about A Doll's House. She would talk about Tennessee Williams. She spent summers with Tennessee Williams.

Rich Rand (52:14):

She was blunt. She was powerful. She confronted Stanislavski. She asked Tennessee Williams, "Tell me about Streetcar Named Desire." And she would really put his feet to the fire, but really who is Stanley? What does he represent? I mean, in her own confrontational kind of Eastern European abrasive manner, she wanted the truth and she expected nothing less from her students. And I learned a lot that you have to hold your feet to the fire if you're going to really learn to feel what's taking place in a great work of art.

Rich Rand (52:57):

We need to just bear witness in a big way to injustice, to racism, to inequality on all levels. We need people to tell their story, transgender people, people of all persuasions and orientations, people that don't fall neatly into compartments and categories who need a voice. And so I think we'll see a greater integration of these voices and these themes and these messages, creating theater companies and writing plays and entering into collaborations. And that's my hope. I think though, first and foremost, we need to listen. We need to give people an opportunity to share their stories. People who have not had a voice, and just listen.

Charlie Sandlan (54:00):

Well, my fellow daydreamers, thank you for sticking around and keeping that phone in your pocket. I'll tell you, I could listen to him talk anytime. So insightful. Please subscribe to the show, follow it to wherever you get your podcasts. You can visit my website, <https://www.creatingbehaviorpodcast.com> for content and links to all of these episodes. You can follow the show on Instagram @creatingbehavior, and you can follow my conservatory program @maggieflaniganstudio.

Charlie Sandlan (54:28):

Next week, my conversation with two-time Tony Award winning actor, Norbert Leo Butz, spread the word. And here's a quote from the great poet Ezra Pound, "I'm an artist. I'm here to live out loud." Lawrence Trailer, thank you for the music. My friends, be resilient, play full out with yourself, and don't ever settle for your second best. My name is Charlie Sandlan. Peace. (singing)