

EPISODE #011 Transcript

Charlie Sandlan (00:02):

We're going to talk to Sea Shimooka today. We're going to discuss her experience on The CW show, Arrow, playing Emiko Queen. We're going to talk about what it means to be an actor of Japanese, Hawaiian descent in a business that has whitewashed Asian Americans for decades. And we're going to talk about struggle. It's an honest and really open conversation. So put the phone back in your pocket. Creating Behavior starts now.

Charlie Sandlan (00:37):

(music playing)

Charlie Sandlan (01:00):

And hello my fellow daydreamers from Weehawken, New Jersey. Trish and I made the move. We did it. We're unpacked. I'm actually sitting here at my desk, in my office, watching the boats and the barges go down the Hudson River and gazing at the Manhattan skyline. It's fucking beautiful. And I know Trish does not agree with me here but I am really glad that I am not in the city right now. And she wants to go back. She can't wait to go back. She's hung up on the zip code. She's hung up on the Manhattan address and I get it. And I get it. I was in New York for 28 years. But there's something really calming and really peaceful about the water. And I'm able to sit out on our balcony if you can fucking believe that, we have a balcony and watch the boats go by.

Charlie Sandlan (02:00):

It's really peaceful, very calming to my soul and to my spirit. So I'm glad we're here. Trish is getting used to it. And I just got to keep praying and hoping that she comes around to my side. Because I really don't want to move in a year which I had to kind of make that promise to her in order to even just get out of the city. She was like, "Charlie, I'm only going to do this for a year." I'm like, "Sure babe. Sure. Sure." I just say whatever I need to, to

make it happen. I find that a very effective way of communicating with a spouse.

Charlie Sandlan (02:35):

Anyway, before I share with you my interview with Sea, I wanted to talk about a major anniversary last week. And that was the 30 year anniversary of the signing of a major piece of legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act. And it certainly changed life in a very, very significant way for our fellow citizens with disabilities. But there was a great article in The New York Times. It was published on July 19th. I think you all need to read it. It's titled After #OscarsSoWhite Disability Waits for its Moment. And it talks about actors that have disabilities are rarely, rarely used in the theater on film and television. And when they are used, and I use that word in a derogatory way, it's as a token gesture because they want to throw in a disabled person because the show's about a disability or the episode is about a particular disability. But very rarely is somebody cast just because they're a good fucking actor.

Charlie Sandlan (03:45):

And there were a lot of essays from really, really talented people. Ali Stroker talks very eloquently in this piece. She won a Tony a couple of years ago for playing Ado Annie in Oklahoma. And she talked about the fact that she has learned to develop ninja patience. And she was talking about how she would watch all of the impatience that her able-bodied friends and colleagues would have about things. And how little they understood what real patience is about. Especially if you're confined to a wheelchair and you have to struggle with just the daily functions of life that we take for granted. Certainly I take for granted. And she said, "If you can't accommodate me then you can't and you don't get me." And she has gone so far as to say, "I will no longer ever do a piece of theater where I have to be carried on stage. You need to accommodate my disability or I'm not going to do the show." And I think that's important.

Charlie Sandlan (04:57):

Marlee Matlin also writes in this article. Now Marlee Matlin, she won an Oscar in 1987 for playing a deaf woman in the film, Children of a Lesser God. And that even had people criticizing her saying, "Well, why should she be nominated for an Oscar? She's deaf playing a deaf person. Where's the acting?" And oftentimes you'll see able-bodied actors, most of the time really, able-bodied actors playing disabled people. There have been 59 actors nominated or who have won Oscars for playing someone with a disability. And just off the top of my head I mean, there's Sean Penn and I am Sam, Daniel Day-Lewis in My Left Foot, Al Pacino, Scent of a Woman. Jamie Foxx did it with Ray. And I just think it's a good time, certainly on this anniversary to as actors educate yourself, educate ourselves and begin to start to fight and champion for more work and more inclusion to our disabled artists. It's important. Now let's get to my interview with Sea Shimooka. I hope you find it insightful and learn a few things. Because I certainly did. Hear you go.

Charlie Sandlan (06:15):

When did you leave the studio?

Sea Shimooka (06:17):

I left the studio in 2018.

Charlie Sandlan (06:20):

2018. You did the first year of the work with me and then you had a break.

Sea Shimooka (06:27):

I did. I left.

Charlie Sandlan (06:29):

What'd you leave to go do?

Sea Shimooka (06:32):

Right after the first year, I booked Arrow as a series regular.

Charlie Sandlan (06:36):

Yeah. [crosstalk 00:06:37].

Sea Shimooka (06:37):

Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (06:39):

I watched all those videos of you working out and doing the stunt and the physical work for that. That was amazing. And it looked grueling to me. And so you auditioned for that while you were in school. What was that like? What was it like working through that? How did that go?

Sea Shimooka (06:58):

That was a crazy thing. Because I was in your class which was like six hours a week plus rehearsals and plus like a movement class I think. And then I was working as a waitress at abcV. And then what else? And then auditioning. So I felt like I had no time and I just got this audition in. And I had auditioned for that casting director before actually for a different role on the show the year before. And I remember my agent emailing me being like, "This is perfect for you." And she was half Japanese, half Caucasian kind of tough like early... She ended up being 30 on the show but I was 24 at the time. And yeah, I remember getting it and I was like, "Okay. So I prepped it like crazy. I made my roommate who honestly hated me at the time, run it about a million times. Like pretty much what you said not to do, to like say it out loud.

Charlie Sandlan (07:59):

Great. You worked on your lines out loud. My God.

Sea Shimooka (08:01):

I did because I was so nervous. I was so nervous because I was like, "You're right. This role is for me. I've got it." The first scene was kind of the tough girl. They really wanted like a sassy, tough, she's confronting the Green Arrow and she's telling him to like fuck off. And the second scene was this really kind of emotional scene with one of the other characters describing how she's kind of responsible for her dad's death. And for some reason I was like, I've got that scene. And the first scene scared me more. Because I was like, "I don't know how to be tough." I always like push too much.

Sea Shimooka (08:42):

And so anyway, I go into the audition room and no one else was there. Like no one else was in the waiting room. It's just me and Findley Davidson who is now the head of The CW in New York. And yeah, I go in and she just made the environment so... Like I haven't ever experienced it with another casting director. She just made it so warm. She's just like, "Take your time. Here are the lights. I'm going to read with you. Let's do it a couple of times." And I'm just like, "Okay. Great." So I just felt so...

Charlie Sandlan (09:17):

You don't get that very often, do you?

Sea Shimooka (09:18):

No. You don't. Especially having moved to LA now it's different. I think a little bit the casting directors in New York work with you a bit more, whereas in LA it's kind of more cut and dry in my experience. Anyway, so I go in, I do the first scene, she gives me a couple notes and then I do the second scene and I for some reason, just like really sank into it. And I was like, there. And I felt great. And then I didn't hear anything. I was like...

Charlie Sandlan (09:45):

For how long?

Sea Shimooka (09:46):

For like three weeks.

Charlie Sandlan (09:47):

Yeah. Then you think I don't have it. I didn't get it.

Sea Shimooka (09:49):

Yeah. I didn't think so. And then my manager calls me and she's like, "So they forgot about you. They went a bunch of different directions. Your tape was sent to LA but they were like, they're changing the ethnicity. They were just really redoing the character and they forgot about you." But then they ended up going back to the half Japanese, half Caucasian for this character. And so then my tape was rewatched and then they were like, "Okay. We have a bunch of more notes for you." So I go back in and they were like, "We only want you to do the first scene." So I was like,

"Thank God. I don't have to cry again." And so then I do that first scene again. And then she tells me, she's like, "I need you to come back in again but I need you to get your makeup done. I need you to do your hair this way. I need you to buy some different clothes." And so I had no...

Charlie Sandlan (10:41):

That would have been a third call back.

Sea Shimooka (10:44):

Yeah. It would have been my third call back now. Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (10:46):

So now you are going to get to know and you know it's serious when you get that note.

Sea Shimooka (10:50):

Yeah. And I was like, "My God." So I had all these notes from the showrunner for the first scene. They were like, "We need to believe she could kill someone in cold blood. She needs to be this." But it was interesting because the lines were a little bit sassy whereas they wanted someone who's just very, very strong and not sassy. So I was like, "Okay. Don't play into that." So yeah, I ended up coaching with my guy that I knew from NYU, who's a dream, Ted Sobrusky. And yeah, we just kind of went over it and he was like on vacation and then took it. And anyway, we just talked over the phone.

Sea Shimooka (11:26):

I have someone come over to do my makeup. I booked it from this app and they come and do this cake full of makeup. And I was like, "My God. I look like a hooker." Yeah. I mean, I didn't wear that much makeup really in school. And anyway. And so then I had a push-up bra and I go in and I'm so fucking nervous. And I had the two heads of castings Meg Simon and Findley Davidson sitting there. And they were just like, "You got this." They were just like, "You've got it." And I just was like, "I do. You're right. I do." And then yeah, they worked with me and for like an hour on one scene and then I ended up getting it and right

away I had to fly to Vancouver. I was in a play at the time. I had to not do the last show. It was really stressful because I had to move everything in like a week.

Charlie Sandlan (12:18):

Right. I remember that. You were doing a show with a lot of studio alone, weren't you?

Sea Shimooka (12:22):

Yeah. I was doing The Year of the Solar Eclipse

Charlie Sandlan (12:25):

That's right.

Sea Shimooka (12:26):

Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (12:26):

So you fly out to Vancouver and start training. You start doing stunt work. Were you scared?

Sea Shimooka (12:41):

There are so many things I kind of regret about that job. But it was a huge learning experience for me. Yeah. I didn't have a support network that I had in place. I was alone in Vancouver and I ended up having this like cystic acne flare up and I never had acne in my life before. And I just was beat down emotionally, just my self esteem was gone. And I just started this new show. I didn't know the cast really well. And yeah. It was hard. The only thing that was really fun for me was the training. They gave me a nutritionist. I was in archery lessons. I had this incredible stunt team. I had a personal trainer. That for me, I felt really comfortable in because I've been sporting my whole life. But the acting was difficult. And if you watch the show, you'll see this progression from the first episode through the finale of like, you're basically watching me in acting class and struggling through it. And then towards the end I can actually watch it. But yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (13:53):

What do you regret about it?

Sea Shimooka (13:56):

I wish I had more self confidence and I wish I actually used the training I paid so much money and put so much work into. I wasn't preparing right. I got a script and I read the lines. I kind of knew the basic thing. I didn't emotionally prepare a lot of the scenes. I was so in my own head of how I looked. My skin was so bad. They had to put a face filter on my face in post. Yeah. And so that really broke me down and I didn't reach out for help or anyone. And I came on this podcast to be an open book and just to say it was my first job. I learned a lot and it's learning experience and I will forever know now that the training really matters and that's something to fall back on. When I feel uncomfortable on set or I didn't feel connected to my cast at all, I think having prepared something and really done the work the way I was taught would have been a safety net for me. Whereas I just...

Charlie Sandlan (15:10):

Do you think you just went back to kind of the old habits that you had before you started training is because they were familiar and they were just comfortable and it was like, "I'm in crisis. My body's in crisis. And I just need to get fucking through this."

Sea Shimooka (15:24):

Yeah. Pretty much. I didn't really want to be there. And unfortunately it was the biggest opportunity and I'm so grateful. But it was really my self esteem that really broke me down. And yeah, I relied on stuff that I learned at NYU that wasn't that helpful. And I graduated from NYU with a theater degree. And to be honest, I don't think that training was... I was in the Strasberg Studio and it didn't resonate with me. It didn't work for me. And so I went to your studio to learn a different technique which I have used it now. I've used it after the show and I've used it in auditions that I've had and I've gotten really close to parts because it's a different way of working and it felt yeah, more truthful and honest for me.

Charlie Sandlan (16:16):

Yeah. So that's what it does for you. It grounds you in a truthful way in an organic way. Always remember to listen [crosstalk 00:16:23].

Sea Shimooka (16:23):

Yeah. I wasn't listening on the show. I wasn't. I was so in my own head of like how... Yeah. It just was important that...

Charlie Sandlan (16:30):

Even if you've been waiting for your cues and you're worried about how you sound and how you look and...

Sea Shimooka (16:35):

I mean, midway through, I had this actor that came on the show who was really helpful for me. He was a veteran, Adrian Paul, a British actor. He was on, I think, Outlander or Highlander, Highlander. And he was like, "Stop pushing these scenes. Don't push this." Because I had to be this really formidable villain and he was just like, "Strength isn't always about power." He is like, "It's about intelligence." You have more knowledge than me in this scene. You have something that is more powerful. And I just was like, "My God, you're right." I'm totally just like pushing aggression and all these scenes where he was like, "Hold back. There's another way to be powerful." And I was just like, duh.

Sea Shimooka (17:25):

He was the kindest. That was one actor I really connected, only really connected with on the show. And he was a guest star for a couple episodes and he played my kind of father figure. And he was kind of like a father figure to me on the show which was really wonderful. But everyone was great. It's just when you're on a show for so long, I think you just kind of you're set in your own ways and this new person on the show you don't really think you... You know what I mean?

Charlie Sandlan (17:51):

What was it like to come into a world that's been... They were on for what? Six, seven seasons before you. It's like high school. There's cliques and there's dynamics that you don't even know

anything about that you just get thrust into, people like certain people, don't like certain people. What was it like to enter onto a set and not know anybody?

Sea Shimooka (18:13):

Yeah. I think every set is different. I've worked a couple of times after it and it's interesting how different cast kind of adapt to you, to a guest star. Like I was on McGuyver and they were just like, "You want to get a drink after?" And I'm like, "Yeah." It's just a different kind of... People lived there. They were relocated and they had families, they had kids and they're not interested on kind of like bringing someone new into the fold because they have their life, they have their stuff. So it wouldn't have been a problem I think for me if I was in New York or LA because I had other people. But since I knew no one, it was really difficult for me to literally go to work and come home and then have like four days off with no one and seeing no one and just kind of... Yeah, it was hard.

Charlie Sandlan (19:03):

You know what I like about what you're doing with your career and you're young, you're starting out is that you collaborate with your friends, you create your own work. I know you worked with Rebecca Knox on Cavity and you've written your own shorts called Berlin, which I think is in pre production. I read your lookbook and the script last night. It seems like a very personal, very autobiographical, very vulnerable thing to create and start to try to put together. Can you just talk about this movie and what it's like to put pen to paper and try to make something happen because you have to as an actor.

Sea Shimooka (19:49):

Yeah. I actually took this class called Screenwriting for Actors One-on-One when I was in New York in 2017. And one of the assignments was to basically write something and pitch it to her. And it's a two week class. And I was like, "Well, what am I going to write about?" And I had gone to Europe the year before and I

had this kind of wild experience in Berlin. Ended up being out of this couple's house in the morning, really early. And I didn't have my contacts in, my phone was locked. And it was like my first day there, second day. And I was terrified. Because I was like, how the fuck am I going to get home? And I was crying on the street. And this man actually got me home. And he ended out that...

Sea Shimooka (20:48):

He was like, "Where do you live?" And I was like, "I don't know." And he was like, "Is there a restaurant you went to yesterday?" And I was like, "Yes. Yes, Craig's Burger." And then he Googled it. And he got me on the Auburn train. And then he walked me home and it was the nicest thing ever. Anyway, it was one of the most terrifying things in my life. First, it was a class assignment but then I kept looking back at it over the next couple years and I was like, "I could write something about my coming out experience." Because God, that has been a lot.

Sea Shimooka (21:28):

I am now in a relationship with a woman who I've fallen in love with. But for the most of my 26 years, I have really struggled with romance, with anything because I didn't accept who I was and I had so much kind of shame about being queer. And so I wanted to kind of meld those two things together and write a script that was deeply personal and was about my kind of this... It's fictional because not everything happened in the script obviously. But yeah, the character goes to Berlin. She is supposed to go there with her best friend she's wanting to have this romantic relationship with. And then that friend bails out of fear and she's just left alone and she's kind of put on this wild night of really facing her sexuality. And she kind of faces all these emotions that I have faced in my life. And all in a span of one night. And then at the ending, she's kind of on the way to self-acceptance, which has kind of been my path.

Charlie Sandlan (22:42):

I'm curious as to, you mentioned the shame that came from coming to terms with your sexuality. And is this a product of growing up and being parented a certain way or what was that journey for you and did you know you were gay at a young age?

Sea Shimooka (23:06):

Yeah. Pretty young actually. Pretty much my whole life. And it was funny. My girlfriend just we went to my parents' house and we all went to dinner and my girlfriend's like, "So did you always know Sea was gay?" And my mom's like, "No." And then it's like silent. And then she was like, "Yeah. I had a feeling." And then my girlfriend's like, "When?" And she was like, "Well, about second grade." And I'm like, "How? I'm really feminine." And she was like, "Well, you never swooned over boys like most girls did." I guess that's true. I don't know. But yeah, I've always known and...

Charlie Sandlan (23:50):

But you struggle with it. You struggled.

Sea Shimooka (23:51):

Yeah. My mom, she was a single mom for most of my life and she kind of just gave me advice on how to be. I think she didn't know for sure but she was always kind of giving me tips for men and how to date them and how to get them. And I just was always like, "This is wrong." And I didn't really have a lot of queer content like there is today to be like, "There's feminine women out there who like feminine women and that's normal." I don't know. It's accepted. And yeah, when I was younger, I just kind of was like, "I don't look like the stereotype of what a lesbian is. So I must not be."

Sea Shimooka (24:35):

And I just was so ashamed and I dated men and if they liked me, that's what I should do. And that's how I was. Yeah. And it was really difficult and it wasn't until I moved to New York and I had a lot of gay friends, I didn't have gay friends growing up. But when I was in New York my whole circle of friends were queer and I still struggled. But it was easier than it was growing up in kind of

Northern California suburb. And then I wouldn't say I've fully accepted it until I fell in love for the first time.

Charlie Sandlan (25:17):

Interesting story. Your current girlfriend is the first time you've fallen in love period, with anyone?

Sea Shimooka (25:22):

Ever. Ever. Yeah. Ever.

Charlie Sandlan (25:22):

Wow. Congratulations. That's great. That's really great. Falling in love is such a wonderful human experience.

Sea Shimooka (25:32):

It is. And also it really opens you up because I remember being in your class and you were saying, you're like, "You have a wall of plexiglass in front of you. You are so guarded." And I'm like that was so true because I was hiding my whole life. I didn't want people to be close to me because I didn't want them to really find out who I was. In my script I have this follower motif kind of that's following her around. And it is really what it felt like. Because I never want it to be found out. I didn't want someone to whisper and be like, "I think she likes girls or something." I just was always hiding it and being ultra feminine. And yeah. I don't know.

Charlie Sandlan (26:15):

Well, how has coming out changed you as an actor and as an artist? It must've shifted something in you completely.

Sea Shimooka (26:22):

Dramatically. Even my team had said something. They knew in the beginning, right when they signed me, they were like, "You're really good with comedy." Which I don't believe them. But they were like... Yeah. And then when there were some really heavy hitting romantic scenes or emotional, there was kind of a wall up and they were like there's something you're not dealing with.

There's something that's blocking you from really connecting with someone else. And I was like, "All right. What do you mean?" And then having gone into your class, my God, I can't even describe, I

think it was really, really being present with other people which I didn't do before I think and really allowing them to see me.

Charlie Sandlan (27:10):

Well, it certainly took a while for you to find your voice, your backbone. And I think that's one thing that Meisner really does for you in the first year. It helps you find your voice. It helps you find your backbone. It helps you get comfortable expressing yourself, standing up for yourself and watching you really come to life. For the first time in those early months was amazing. Because you were completely distanced from that part of yourself. And then once that dam broke, you could see you're a force to be reckoned with. Like you have something to say.

Sea Shimooka (27:53):

Yeah. I remember, so a time that I covered myself in raw meat.

Charlie Sandlan (28:00):

The good old raw meat. Meisner and the raw meat. I tell you, they go hand in hand. Anybody who studied the Meisner Technique knows what we're talking about.

Sea Shimooka (28:08):

Yeah. The raw meat moment. Was I naked? I feel like I was in an underwear and like a bra or something that I remember being covered in the raw meat and fake blood. And as being a vegetarian for over 13 years, I was kind of gagging while I was doing it that exercise and just sobbing. But after that I was like, you know what? There's nothing more embarrassing or crazy that I can do. Because I just did that in front of a bunch of people. And that opened me up and I was like, "You know what? Fuck it. Let's go." Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (28:43):

Yeah. It's important as an actor to know that you are capable of deep rich behavior. And certainly when you come to study in a series class, you don't really know what you're capable of. You don't know what exists inside of you. And so what did that nine

months do for you in terms of putting you in touch with your potential and your humanity, your vulnerability?

Sea Shimooka (29:13):

Yeah. It really opened up the flood gate for me because it's so funny that I wanted to be an actor because I was pressing so much emotion. And being an actor is all about connecting, being vulnerable, sharing part of yourself with the world. And being in your class, it did that for me. It really broke that wall down in front of me. And I was able to just deeply connect with someone else and really listen to them which I think any other acting school doesn't teach you really how to listen. And I think being in your class and really responding like this before you have to think up everything...

Charlie Sandlan (29:48):

On your impulses.

Sea Shimooka (29:55):

Yeah. That really changes you. And really, I don't know, you have to be available. You have to be open. Otherwise it doesn't work. And I miss it. I really wish I did the second year. Unfortunately I didn't get to do that. But I recommend to anyone, don't pay a bunch of money at NYU. Go to the Maggie Flanigan Studio because it's great.

Charlie Sandlan (30:17):

Yeah. Listen. Most BFA programs, it's a hodgepodge of things. So it's broad theater appreciation. So you learn a little bit about a lot and you end up still not really knowing how to work.

Sea Shimooka (30:34):

Totally. I didn't know how to work. And there is the way to work that really gets you to the right spot and you have to do it every time. And that's something I'm still learning. It's sometimes you put out this killer tape and you're like, "I'm going to get it and you hear nothing." And so it just kind of really sets you back and you're like, you don't want to try every time. You're just like, you are putting your vulnerable self out there and you're not getting

anything. So I had to really shift my mind in the past couple of months, be like, "It's the artist where you're getting better every time. You should be proud putting your work out there and just walking away.

Charlie Sandlan (31:15):

That's right.

Sea Shimooka (31:15):

It doesn't matter if you look at...

Charlie Sandlan (31:16):

You have to approach everything like an artist and not like a beggar with your hand out, "Please like me, please book me, please call me back." And so actors they put their self worth, they put their inner self-worth into whether or not they get called back or book a job. And half the time it's got nothing to do with you.

Sea Shimooka (31:40):

Yeah. It's funny because I was in part of the casting process for my film. We had a casting director from New York who cast our film and she went through about 1,000 tapes and then she sent us her favorites and we got to choose. And I watched so many girls do this one, one of the lead parts. And it was funny because there were some really good tapes and really good actresses. And they had no idea that we love them. But we went a different direction. And the reason we went in a different direction was because of the story yet some of these girls were fantastic.

Charlie Sandlan (32:18):

And all they know is they didn't get a call back. And so they think, I did something bad.

Sea Shimooka (32:22):

Yeah. And that's how I had operated before. Because I was like, they hated me. My God. And it's something I'm still working on. But this is like an advice for all the actors that are listening and you have to separate your self esteem from getting recognition or call backs or booking a job because otherwise you're not going to

make it. You're going to break down. You're going to be depressed.

Charlie Sandlan (32:46):

Well, how do you do that for yourself? How do you keep yourself healthy mentally?

Sea Shimooka (32:49):

Honestly, I just go in, I take with my girlfriend, I have a fun laugh. We have fun. And then I just stop thinking about it. I take a bath. I've been meditating. I do a lot of yoga. And I mean, that's what everyone says but it is helpful to get in your body and really breathe. And yeah. And just not focusing on it. And doing a project on my own has shifted my focus a bit away from booking and not booking. Because I have my own project to worry about. I am in control. I'm in the driver's seat. I'm starring in it, I'm producing it, I'm co-directing and I've written it. And so it feels like I have some sort of like grip on my life. Whereas sometimes it does feel like you're at the hands of people you don't even know, people you're not in the room with and you... Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (33:42):

You know what I would love to get your advice on, because I think there are so many actors out there that know they've got a script or they've got an idea. They've got a community of people that they don't even necessarily realize that they have, right? Whether that's a DP or an editor or someone that's going to direct this community of people. How did you put this film together? Because that lookbook is really professionally done. That really was impressive to me.

Sea Shimooka (34:16):

I did it. Thank you.

Charlie Sandlan (34:16):

And I'm curious how you learned all of that and what's the advice you have to actors that might just feel lost right now and not knowing how to create something.

Sea Shimooka (34:33):

It's funny because I have gotten so much help from people that I know that I've either worked with before. Rebecca was my roommate and she had written her own scripts. And she heard directed for that film we had worked with before. And I remember just going out to dinner with him and I just brought up the idea and I was like, "We should do something together. I have a lot of stories. And I was working on this thing. And can I just send it to you?" And by the way I have just reread that draft, not great, not great. And that was a year ago but having his DP over a year now has had this like, because he's in New York and I'm in LA, email correspondence, notes, phone calls, it's gone through 50 drafts so far. And just getting friends to read it and give me their opinion.

Sea Shimooka (35:19):

And I was like, okay. I didn't realize I was explaining everything out, feeding it to the reader where they can just make their own educated assumptions of the story. And everyone that I've worked with on this is people in my life I've worked with before. And just asking for a simple read. I'm like, "It's going to be 20 minutes." They'll do it. They want to because you're going to help them on their script. And my advice is write something. It's not going to be good. It won't be. It's going to be shit. And then send it to someone, get a little notes, rewrite it. Send it to someone else, rewrite it again. Because every single time you rewrite it, it is going to change and your character is going to be more fleshed out. The story is going to be better. You're going to have all these different actual screenwriting techniques into it. I've learned a lot from the internet, honestly. I've learned...

Charlie Sandlan (36:17):

Like self educated.

Sea Shimooka (36:19):

Yeah. I've educated myself. And I did take that screenwriting class which to be fair was helpful for me. Because I didn't realize that someone who works at a production company has this checklist that they go through every time they read a script and then they

point it. You know what I mean? And I have now entered my film in five different writing competitions. And I'm a finalist in one of them and I've paid every single time for feedback. And so I'm editing while I go. And I was like, "I never even thought about this." And the whole writing thing it's going to get to a place eventually you just have to enjoy the ride of it all. Because I like to write, I like to put down a story that I haven't seen or really I don't get to audition for that much. I really love that gritty kind of like sexual scary. Like very Gaspar Noé kind of film. And yeah, I just wanted to write it for myself and from a queer eye. Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (37:23):

Right. How would you describe the importance of relationships as an actor in this business? Certainly given what you've accomplished so far, how important are relationships?

Sea Shimooka (37:36):

Yeah. They are really important. Because my whole kind of projection of my artistic, not even artistic, just career. It was so funny. I auditioned in this one-on-one class for the head of ABC. And it was because I was told to do that by this teacher I had and I ended up getting in the ABC diversity showcase. So I ended up getting my manager and then everyone kind of wants to help you along the way. And it can really domino for you. I think relationships are super important. And the director of my film is someone I've known for three years. And he's just willing to put his blood, sweat and tears into this project because he believes in it but also because we're buddies and it's really easy to work with. And yeah. Relationships are everything. And maintain them and be just a good human because otherwise, no one's going to want to work with you. And yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (38:44):

You were just talking about how you've learned so much. I'm wondering what you've learned about what it means to be a professional. Like what's that mean to you now as opposed to two years ago?

Sea Shimooka (38:58):

Yeah. You really only have one job on set. It's really to come to set, be prepared, have your lines down but also being able to connect and really share that story. To be honest, I'll have to say there's no amount of training that's going to put you on set. You can't learn that in school.

Charlie Sandlan (39:28):

No. It's baptism by fire. You got to get on the set.

Sea Shimooka (39:32):

You have to because I totally didn't... Like continuity. That is something.

Charlie Sandlan (39:37):

It's huge. You can get to completely fuck up an entire day by not knowing it.

Sea Shimooka (39:44):

You can. And my first big scene, it was a train wreck. Because I was picking up glasses here, using this hand and it was this emotional scene. And I was worried about the continuity. And that is something that is now second nature having worked for 13 episodes and then have done other jobs. But that will become second nature. So there is part of like, give yourself some slack on your first job in being on set. Because you really won't really know how to train for that until you're there. But yeah, being a professional is just being on time, being a good human on set. I mean, I just think all actors that you should be grateful to be there and like...

Charlie Sandlan (40:25):

You have to treat the crew well too. You can't be an asshole.

Sea Shimooka (40:28):

That's the thing. Don't treat the crew poorly. And I don't know, why wouldn't you want to connect with the people you're connecting with. So don't isolate yourself in your trailer or just... I don't know. To me, I see what a really good working professional does. And then I also have seen like not. But I was also part of that problem.

I wasn't that prepared and that's something that is part of your professional job.

Charlie Sandlan (40:56):

It is. It is. In getting ready to talk with you, I started to just do a little more work and digging into the whole subject of whitewashing. And I thought it would be a good topic to talk with you about. And I told you this off mic, I saw somebody with a t-shirt and all it said were the names, Scarlett, Matt, Emma, Tilda. That was it. It was an Asian American actress. And she was wearing that shirt. And I thought, "This is the White guy in me." She just must really love those actors. And that wasn't it at all. It has to do with those four White actors taking the part of a character that should be cast as an Asian American. Scarlett Johansson did it in Ghost in the Shell. Matt Damon did it in The Great Wall. Emma Stone got ripped because she did Aloha. Tilda Swinton, I mean, my God, Doctor Strange.

Charlie Sandlan (42:05):

I mean, I think her character is called the Ancient One for God's sake. She shaved her head. And this is like in the last couple of years. And I didn't know this. Asian Americans make up 5.6% of the population but you only make up 1% of major character work on film and television. I'm just wondering, if you have any thoughts about this subject. Because usually Asian Americans you are playing a couple of things. You are like tech nerds or assistants, doctors. Most of the men are emasculated. They're desexualized. Women are playing masseuses, they're playing prostitutes, submissive, right? Fragile, all of these stereotypes that we have attached to Asian Americans.

Sea Shimooka (42:54):

Yeah. It's funny because with the whitewashing, it's funny that this big actors would take a role that's not meant for them.

Charlie Sandlan (43:04):

That's what shocked me than everything else. That those actors actually took the part not so much the studios because that's just

embedded, indoctrinated White supremacy. But like you're an artist. You didn't read it. You didn't know.

Sea Shimooka (43:19):

Maybe they were like, "Well it could be a White person." I don't know. They just needed money. Who knows? But it's not right. And they shouldn't have done it. And I think Scarlett Johansson did not do the movie. She did. She did do it. Right?

Charlie Sandlan (43:33):

No. She did do it. Yeah.

Sea Shimooka (43:36):

She did do. Yeah. Okay. Well I don't know what...

Charlie Sandlan (43:37):

A black wig I think.

Sea Shimooka (43:39):

I don't know what people are thinking. I don't also know the people who they surround themselves with because wouldn't anyone else raise a flag to them? Who is their team? Somewhat blame all around.

Charlie Sandlan (43:51):

And Kal Penn posted some of the racist character breakdowns that he got. And here are a couple, Gandhi look alike, snake charmer, Pakistani computer geek in perpetual state of perspiration. And these are character breakdowns.

Sea Shimooka (44:14):

I would definitely say there are stereotypes especially for a young Asian woman as well. Like I'm a fourth Asian and I consistently go out for hackers. Anything in tech, someone who's obsessed with Instagram, fashionistas, there's just this very social media obsessed or tech obsessed, I'm always going out for that. And they will usually want a fast paced kind of speech pattern or something. And I'm like, I just want to do action films, I don't want to do that.

Charlie Sandlan (44:48):

And how do you feel about that? I realize now, now this is all part of my own self-education as a White, progressive liberal, who is certainly racist because I'm White. And all is born out of our White exceptionalism, White superiority, White supremacy. And I'm just wondering like, does it frustrate you? Do you feel like, God, fuck, am I ever going to get to do some really good shit?

Sea Shimooka (45:18):

Yeah. I have to say though that there are opening up things. Yes, there are a bunch of stereotypes and it is for every minority race. And I do have to compliment some offices though. They will see you for the lead role that was written Caucasian. And maybe you won't get it but they will see you for it. Which has been nice. I know that CW does do that. They really open up their doors to that. But I also have to say, it starts with a lot of the writing, the writers rooms. Because it's White people, White...

Charlie Sandlan (45:54):

Most writing rooms are White.

Sea Shimooka (45:56):

Yeah. They're writing from an experience that they don't have and therefore they're tacking a stereotype onto it because that's all they know. That's the reality they have. So if you could change the writers' rooms, if you could have an Asian, Latino, African American writer in those rooms and be like, you know what? They don't have to be this stereotype. Why don't we just make them a human. I don't know.

Charlie Sandlan (46:22):

Interesting you say that. You might enjoy this article. You might've read it. It came out a couple of years ago. It was in The New York Times. And it was by Thessaly La Force, the Features Director for T, the style magazine for the New York Times. And the title of the article was Why do Asians Remain Largely Unseen in Film and Television? I'm just going to read this quote because I want everybody to hear it and I want to see what you think of this. And this is from her article. "I think that you refuse to see us, to look at

us for who we are. As with so many other minorities in America, you are comfortable enjoying the work we make. But representation is about demanding more. And more leading Asian American actors, more films in which we are allowed the everyday banalities of our existence, the anxieties of boredom, the simple gestures of affection. It's about showing that you are like us, not the other way around, not adjacent, not other."

Sea Shimooka (47:25):

I totally agree. It's a great quote. There have been more Asian led films. Recently there's Crazy Rich Asians. There's the Mulan movie. But I also have to say those movies are about their race. There's a huge race element to it. Whereas just like the African American communities asking like, can we just play people versus like, why do you have to talk about my race the entire time?

Charlie Sandlan (47:58):

Right. I was also watching Sandra Oh in Sideways. Did you ever see Sideways?

Sea Shimooka (48:03):

Yes.

Charlie Sandlan (48:03):

It's great. She plays Thomas Haden Church's girlfriend. And there's this scene where he cheats on her or something, and she breaks his nose, punches him in the face. And she was fully alive. And I just remember thinking to myself, you just don't see that very often that Asian American actors get a chance to just play...

Sea Shimooka (48:21):

Be.

Charlie Sandlan (48:22):

That's right, be.

Sea Shimooka (48:23):

Sandra Oh is a force though. I watched Killing Eve. That's one of my favorite shows and she...

Charlie Sandlan (48:29):

Do you know Suzanne Heathcote is the showrunner? She studied with me at the Maggie Flanigan Studio.

Sea Shimooka (48:35):

Is she really?

Charlie Sandlan (48:36):

Yeah.

Sea Shimooka (48:36):

My god.

Charlie Sandlan (48:37):

She's the showrunner for Killing Eve.

Sea Shimooka (48:40):

Well, congrats to her. Because that is a really well-made, well-acted show. And it just...

Charlie Sandlan (48:44):

She's great.

Sea Shimooka (48:45):

Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (48:45):

There are a lot of really great, I mean, Constance Wu I think is really talented.

Sea Shimooka (48:49):

Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (48:50):

Pun Bandhu, his career has been incredible. He went to Yale. He has a great quote. He says, "We're the information givers. We're the geeks. We're the prostitutes." And yeah, I don't know. To me, it's embarrassing certainly I think and it needs to change.

Sea Shimooka (49:12):

It does need to change and I totally agree. I definitely believe it needs to start with the script. I think it needs to start with the writers who needs to write different stories and give those writers an opportunity. And that's why I want to write. I have other ideas in the works and hopefully I'm going to write from my experience but also open up the casting to anyone else. It doesn't have to be part

Asian woman. It can be beautiful Indian actress or whatever. It Doesn't have to be based on race.

Charlie Sandlan (49:43):

Well, I figured we could wrap this up here but before we do, I want to quiz you.

Sea Shimooka (49:47):

No.

Charlie Sandlan (49:51):

Yeah. Just to see if you remember. It will help you. This will be like a little mini coaching. What's the definition of acting?

Sea Shimooka (50:01):

Wait. I know this one.

Charlie Sandlan (50:02):

I know.

Sea Shimooka (50:03):

Yeah. It's truthfully doing in under imaginary circumstances.

Charlie Sandlan (50:07):

That's right. Acting is doing everything.

Sea Shimooka (50:08):

Yeah. Acting is doing.

Charlie Sandlan (50:11):

That's right. What's the bedrock of acting? What's everything rests on?

Sea Shimooka (50:16):

Listening.

Charlie Sandlan (50:17):

That's right. Truly listening.

Sea Shimooka (50:19):

I know that.

Charlie Sandlan (50:19):

Yes really answering, really responding. Do you remember what the principle of acting is?

Sea Shimooka (50:28):

No.

Charlie Sandlan (50:35):

The pinch and the ouch.

Sea Shimooka (50:39):

Don't ouch more than you pinched.

Charlie Sandlan (50:41):

That's right. Don't ouch louder than you pinched.

Sea Shimooka (50:43):

Louder than you pinched. Yeah.

Charlie Sandlan (50:45):

I don't do anything other than the other makes me do it. What's the smallest unit of acting?

Sea Shimooka (50:49):

I know this one. Moments.

Charlie Sandlan (50:52):

Yeah. Tell me, for you as an actor to be listening, present and in the moment.

Sea Shimooka (50:58):

What does it mean for me?

Charlie Sandlan (51:00):

Yeah. What does it mean for you?

Sea Shimooka (51:05):

Really being alive. I don't know. You're really in the scene. You're really doing something than just reading lines off the paper. I don't know. I was just talking to my girlfriend about this. Because I have to audition to... The first scene is the sex scene that I just got a new audition and I'm like, "Great. How am I going to do this?" But it was funny because we were talking in the car and she's like, "I'm going to be really jealous. I just don't want to see you straddling some guys and girl, wherever. That's going to make me crazy." And especially in my film, there's two sex scenes. And she's like, "I'm going to hate this." And I was like, you know what?

Sea Shimooka (51:49):

I have to say, I've experienced it in your class. I worked with [Pedro 00:51:53] twice and there was this connection. There was

like a connection. I really saw him and he really saw me. And I really don't know how to describe it but it wasn't sexual. I didn't want to run off with him. And I think when you're really listening, when you're really in the moment, you really have that ability to... Energy is passed between each other. And that's what I think happens when really good acting takes place. And if you don't have that, I think it's watching shit.

Charlie Sandlan (52:31):

My fellow daydreamers. I don't think I could say it any better than that. So let's just leave it there. Thank you for sticking around, keeping that phone in your pocket. Sea, thank you for coming on and talking with me. I really appreciate it. You were really honest and it meant a lot. You could follow Sea on Instagram @seashimooka You can follow this show @creatingbehavior You can follow my conservatory program @maggieflaniganstudio Go to my website <https://www.creativebehaviorpodcast.com>. Leave me a message. I use SpeakPipe. So say something provocative. Give me one of your opinions. One of your many opinions. Show me that you're taking all this in. You can subscribe and follow this show wherever you get your podcasts, share it with your friends please. [Lawrence Trailer 00:53:14], thank you for the music. My friends, you know the drill. Be disruptive. Don't settle for being misinformed. Stay resilient and don't ever settle for your second best. My name is Charlie Sandlan and this is Creating Behavior. Peace.

Charlie Sandlan (53:49):

(singing)