

## EPISODE #10 (Transcript)

Charlie Sandlan (00:02):

My friends, I have a lot to talk about today. So put the phone in your pocket, Creating Behavior starts now.

Charlie Sandlan (00:36):

And hello my fellow daydreamers from New York City, where my final days as a Manhattanite are coming to an end and it's leaving me with some mixed feelings about this city that I have called home for the most part for the last 28 years. I had a short stint in LA in 2003, 2004, 2005. I was in New Brunswick, New Jersey for grad school for three years. But other than that, I have spent my entire formative adult life here in Manhattan and on Tuesday, Trish and I are moving to Weehawken, New Jersey, right across the river, on the river actually, a very nice place. We needed more room. Both of us are working from home. I'm working from home. I'm teaching from here, I'm doing this show and Trish is stuck in the bedroom doing seven to 10 hours of life coaching every day in the bedroom, on the bed, on the floor, on a chair.

Charlie Sandlan (01:49):

So, her body is a wreck. Her back hurts. Her neck hurts. So the time has come and we're going to get more space. It's going to be cheaper. We're going to save a lot of money, which right now at this point in our lives, we actually have to do. So I'm actually okay with it. Trish, you'd think, we're moving halfway across the world, but really we're an eight minute ferry ride into Manhattan. So I think once we get out there, she's going to be okay. It's the anxiety of not knowing, I think, that's driving her crazy. So we've got that going on. We're packing up the boxes and I turned 50 on July 5th and I don't even really know what to make of it. I mean, 50 is such a, it's a big number because I'm not a kid and I'm not old.

Charlie Sandlan (02:48):

I feel like I'm in the prime of my life. And you know, Trish is always quick to remind me that I have the emotional maturity level of a 17 year old kid. So, I've got that going for me, which is good. So I turned 50 and I also wrapped up a school year with my first year and second year students who have endured a lot over the last four months. You know, you start something and you have this idea of how it's going to finish and how it's going to end and how you're going to feel as you start seeing the finish line. And my students who were months away from finishing two years of hard work and certainly my first years who, who had been working really hard since September had to adapt, had to ask themselves what they're up for.

Charlie Sandlan (03:45):

Do I want this bad enough? Do I want to finish what I started? And I had a lot of students that quit. I had a lot of students who said, fuck it, this isn't what I signed up for. This isn't what I want to do. This isn't how I envisioned finishing my training and they just stopped after putting in well over a year and a half of hard work. And, I guess what I would say to all of you that are listening is, if you start something that you're passionate about or that you think is important to you and you don't finish it, what does that say about how important it was to you in the first place? So my students, they taught me a lot. They were an example of what conviction, what passion, what determination, what grit and backbone means. And I will never forget it.

Charlie Sandlan (04:42):

So that's my life right now. And as I've mentioned on, on previous episodes, I have been working very hard to educate myself on my racism. It's important for me as a white man. It's important for me as an artist, as a teacher, as a collaborator, as it should be for all of you to continue to educate and confront your indoctrinated bigotry. And I have been, and I'll just mention two books right now that I am currently just really kind of pouring over. One is Robin DeAngelo's book, White Fragility. I think it's a must-read if you're

white and I'm learning about some terms that I never heard of before. And one in particular that I think applies to me and might apply to many of you, white or otherwise, it's called, aversive racism.

Charlie Sandlan (05:48):

And aversive racism, and I'll just read a part of a book here. She says, "Aversive racism is a manifestation of racism that well intentioned people who see themselves as educated and progressive are more likely to exhibit. It exists under the surface of consciousness, because it conflicts with consciously held beliefs of racial equality and justice." And here's some examples of how aversive racism, which I think I certainly have functioned from exists: rationalizing racial segregation, as unfortunate, but necessary to access good schools, rationalizing that our workplaces are virtually all white because people of color just don't apply, avoiding direct racial language and using racially coded terms, such as urban, underprivileged, diverse, sketchy, and good neighborhoods. Denying that we have few cross racial relationships by proclaiming how diverse our community or workplace is. And attributing inequality between whites and people of color to causes other than racism.

Charlie Sandlan (07:09):

And so I've been trying to reflect on and how this has cropped up in my own life. I always refer to my childhood, my hometown as sheltered. Yes, I grew up in a very sheltered community. I lived in a bubble and I have described my childhood and my home in Cincinnati, Ohio like that, my entire life. And I now, at the age of 50, realize that that is racist. Sheltered from what? Sheltered from black people? Sheltered from the dangerous part of town? You know, you never went to Clifton. You never went over the Over The Rhine, because that wasn't safe. And I think about my own anxiety and my sense of danger if I just find myself in the presence of a number of black people. It's unconscious, I can feel my anxiety. I can feel myself, maybe just looking around, making

sure I know where my phone is, putting my hand on the back of my jeans to feel my wallet, to make sure it's secure.

Charlie Sandlan (08:26):

I mean, this is all just stuff that's so instinctive. It happens so quickly. It happens so instantaneously that unless you are able to step back and be challenged to think about where this is coming from, you are just complicit in your white silence. And I think about all of the art that I have consumed over the course of my life from theater to film, to television, and the fact that it is all produced, directed, curated through the white experience because white is the norm for humanity. That's what we've established as racist, that being white is the human norm. It is what we value and anything that is not, that is less than. And, I think about all the actors that I always talk about or used to talk about as a teacher, all white. Let's talk about Pacino and DeNiro and Hackman and Hoffman and Meryl Streep. And even the black theater that we go to in New York City and across this country has been curated by white people. It's been picked by a white board of directors, and it has been directed by white people.

Charlie Sandlan (09:51):

And if you are active on social media, if you have your finger on the pulse of your artistic community, then you are aware of the Dear White Theater letter that was posted on Instagram and throughout social media a few weeks ago, really calling out and accusing all of us who engage in acting in the theater. And this country of our racism had to really kind of take that in. And they followed that up last week with a list of demands, which I think is incredibly reasonable and it's a great starting point. And it's where we have to begin; renaming half of the Broadway theaters, putting term limits on artistic boards, making sure that 50% of casts and creative teams are black indigenous people of color. I think that's the bare fucking minimum. It was signed by over 300 artists.

Charlie Sandlan (11:07):

They demand that we collectively, as a theater community, stop working with IATSE, which is the labor union for the Broadway theaters, unless they make changes to their systemic issues, to stop using the Casting Society of America until they end their racist policies, to end the security of Broadway shows by the police. These are just a few of the demands that they're making. If you don't know what I'm talking about, if you don't know what this letter is and what it says, then you need to go read it. You need to go find it and educate yourself. There's no excuse for you as an actor or an artist to not know about this.

Charlie Sandlan (12:01):

And I'll just wrap up this particular topic with another book, Layla Saad's, *Me and White Supremacy*. It's a workbook, really. It requires you to write, to be deeply reflective and painfully honest, if not, it's not going to be helpful and you won't accomplish anything. But there are three areas that are particularly painful and it's the subject of white silence, white superiority and white exceptionalism. And I'm just going to give you one example for me as a teacher. And you might have experienced this as a student in a classroom or on set or on stage. If I'm teaching a person of color and their speech does not sound the way I think speech should sound, white, articulate, good diction. If you have a regionalism, if it sounds like you're just on the street, if it sounds thuggish, well then here I am as your white teacher to point out to you that your speech needs to be cleaned up, that your speech is too regional.

Charlie Sandlan (13:18):

You're not going to work the way that you want to work, you're only going to be seen a certain way if you don't clean up your speech. And really what I'm saying there is you need to sound more white. So if you are a collaborator, if you are a teacher, if you are an artist, you need to start thinking about these things. You need to start discovering where it has insidiously wrapped

itself around how you work and how you create and the way you collaborate. It's important and we have to start changing.

Charlie Sandlan (13:55):

Let's get to some other things, shall we? Now I have told you before that, one of the great ways to educate yourself is to read the obituaries in the New York Times. And you can go back into their archives and pull up any major artist that's died in the last hundred years and read their obituary. But back in May, Jimmy Cobb, the great jazz drummer, Jimmy Cobb, passed away at the age of 91. He was the last remaining musician who performed on really what is considered the greatest jazz album of all time. It certainly is the greatest selling album of all time, Miles Davis' Kind of Blue. And if you don't know that album, or if you have never listened to it, fucking get onto your Spotify and listen to Kind of Blue. It had one of the greatest collections of jazz music talent that has ever been brought together. Not only did you have Miles Davis on the trumpet, you had Jimmy Cobb on the drums. Cannonball Adderly. You had John Coltrane on saxophone. You had Paul Chambers on bass. Had Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly on piano. And it is an extraordinary body of work.

Charlie Sandlan (15:21):

And Jimmy Cobb has this great quote that you can read in his obituary, which I think can apply to all of you actors out there who audition and audition and you're saying to yourself, "Fuck, am I ever going to get an opportunity? When's this going to happen for me?", as you could try to carve out your career. And he said this, "You have to be at the right place at the right time with the right stuff. And then you got a chance." And Jimmy Cobb was living in New York City and one night in 1958, he gets a call from Miles Davis, about six o'clock and Miles Davis says, "Listen, I need a drummer. Can you get here for the gig?" And Jimmy says, "Yeah, where is it?" "Boston." He packs up his bag. He hops in the car. He drives five hours to Boston. He gets to the gig around midnight right when they were getting to play, around midnight. And the

rest is history. If you pull up that album and you listen to that song, you'll understand why Jimmy Cobb was one of the great drummers of his or any generation. So there's a little something that I learned by reading the New York Times.

Charlie Sandlan (16:46):

Now I'd like to get into kind of the heart of the show here. The title of our episode today is, What Do You Do With Those Lines? So you're an actor, you get a script, maybe you get four or five pages for an audition. Sometimes it's more than that, you get all these lines. Well, I can tell you what most hack actors do. Most hack actors will memorize their lines the way they want to say them and this might be something that you can relate to. You get the script and you just start figuring out how you want to say your lines. You start working on your vocal inflections. You start figuring out, okay, I'm going to punch this word here. I'm going to punch this word here. And you start saying your lines out loud and you memorize them that way. And you get locked in to how you're going to do it. And then you go into the audition or you go into rehearsal and you do exactly what you memorized. You say the lines the way you memorize them, the way they sounded when you were looking in the mirror. And I will tell you it's not good, not good at all for a number of reasons.

Charlie Sandlan (18:13):

Now, when I train actors and I train professional actors, and this is in the two year progression of Meisner's work, I train you to work on lines in two different ways. And one way is to memorize these lines that you have by rote with no line inflection, no, almost mechanical, just straight on dead, robotic texts, memorize them that way so you don't get locked into anything. And I guess the best example of an actor that worked this way was the great Paul Muni. And if you don't know who Paul Muni was, you should. He was a character actor before the term character actor even existed. He worked back in the 1930s, 1940s. He was a five time Academy Award nominee. He actually won an Academy Award in

a 1930s for the film, *The Life of Louis Pasteur*. He was the original Scarface and he was one of the rare actors. Now this is back when the studio system had complete and utter control of the actors that they signed.

Charlie Sandlan (19:28):

There was no freedom to pick and choose whatever you wanted to do. But Paul Muni was one of the very, very few actors back in the 1930s, who actually was able to choose what parts he wanted. He was consumed with how a character moved, how a character behaved, how a character looked. He did his own makeup. He was really truly transformational. Now what Paul Muni would do is he would memorize all of his lines before first rehearsal down pat, 100% locked down and he did that so that when he got into contact, when he got into rehearsal, when he got on set, he was free. He wasn't worried about lines. He was able to be free and impulsive and spontaneous and not locked in to anything. And so for him, what freed him up was getting those lines down cold, but not memorized with any kind of line inflections. It's certainly one way to work at a basic level.

Charlie Sandlan (20:33):

Now another example of the opposite end of the spectrum here is the great actress, Laurette Taylor and Laurette Taylor is considered one of the finest actors we've ever had. She was a raging alcoholic, unfortunately, and her career never really went where it could have gotten. I think her biggest claim to immortality was her Broadway performance in Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie*, back in the late forties. She originated the role of Amanda Wingfield. And if you want to get a sense of how she worked and what her genius was, you should read John Lahr's great biography of Tennessee Williams called *Pilgrimage of the Flesh*. I think the first 40 or 50 pages deal directly with *Glass Menagerie*, the opening of *Glass Menagerie* and working with Laurette Taylor.

Charlie Sandlan (21:35):

Now what Laurette Taylor would do is she wouldn't memorize a god damn thing. She didn't give a fuck about the lines. She would get into rehearsal and she would just say whatever came to her mind, she would even speak her blocking out loud. You know, she'd have a line and then she would say, okay, now I'm going to go over here and I'm going to pick up this tea cup and put it on this table over here. And all of the actors on stage are like, what the fuck is going on? It scared the hell out of everybody. It scared the hell out of Tennessee. It scared the hell out of all the actors that were working, the director. But for her, she wasn't concerned about the lines because she wanted to see what happened in the moment. She wanted to get a feel for the subtext for what's happening in the moment. And what was remarkable about her is that she ended up having all of her lines down by the time the show opened, but it was a harrowing process for everybody else that was involved with her.

Charlie Sandlan (22:32):

Now I personally wouldn't recommend working that way, but these are two examples of how you can work. And when you train with me, you really learn both of those ways. We learn them by rote and mechanically in first year, so that you can just get out of your head, be free and impulsive and improvise and break out of line readings where you get to align and you think it has to mean this. And I guess if I could have you taken away anything from this is that you have to understand that lines can mean anything. It is what a person means, not what a person says that is the most important thing. It's all about subtext. And if you get locked into thinking, Oh yeah, the line is, "I want to fucking punch you in the face", and you think, Oh, I got to be upset there. I've got to be angry there because that's the line, you're going to end up with something that's very cliched and very cookie cutter and no good.

Charlie Sandlan (23:46):

The other way that I train actors to deal with lines is to memorize them by osmosis. You memorize them. Once you know how to

work and you know how to implant meanings, and you know how to particularize moments and break down beats and actions, you start reading through the scene in a real open way so that you can see what associations start to come to the surface for you. Don't sit down and start to just memorize cold. You start taking yourself through the material. And once you start to have a deeper understanding of the previous circumstance and the acting relationship and understand perhaps what you want in this scene, well, what starts to come to the surface for you and when you learn how to do homework on the other person's lines, when you start to do homework on the meaning of what's being said to you, you're going to be more informed about how to work off of them when you get into contact.

Charlie Sandlan (24:47):

There can also be this pressure when you get a scene, when you have a lot of lines. Fuck, it's time to act. I've got to do this now. I've got to perform. And all of a sudden, you turn on this acting switch and you start acting. Remember, acting is effortless and one of the things that can free you up is to embrace the idea that the burden of the scene is never on you. It's not your job to get in there and do some big thing. It's about being truthful and having the craft and the ability to let these lines come out however they come out, which means do you have to be present and you have to be able to listen and all these fundamental things that I've talked about before. But you need to be malleable to the nuances of another person's behavior, to what's being said to you, to how it's being said to you. The moment needs to be all consuming so that you're not anticipating, thinking ahead, oh, I've got this line coming up. I've got this beat change. Fuck, it's this moment that I'm uncomfortable with. I don't like it. And you start thinking ahead and when you do that, you're not present. You're not in the moment and that's no good.

Charlie Sandlan (26:07):

The other thing that you want to avoid, and this is always ... you cannot let the text anesthetize you. And what I mean by anesthetized is, you go to the dentist, you get a shot on novocaine and it deadens you, it numbs you. Well, text can't do that. And that means you have to know how to do homework on the meaning of not only what's being said to you, but what you are saying from moment to moment to moment. And of course this comes out of your ability to craft, understanding the previous circumstance, the acting relationship, the objective. But if you are in the same continual condition, you're not working off the other actor. And that homework is crucial because that is what is going to pinch you in every moment. The meaning of what's being said to you. So you've got to do homework on that. And if you play the text, meaning you adjust to all those obvious line readings, oh, the line is I'll kill you yet. I'll kill you yet. I'll rip you out of me, taking advantage of me. That is a line from an old Meisner scene. And you think to yourself, oh, I better be angry there. I've got to be pissed off.

Charlie Sandlan (27:28):

It's going to deaden you. It's going to make it impossible for anything authentic or original to happen in the moment. I also call it hedging against the text, where the text, the lines function as a super ego. Well, I can't say this. I can't say it that way. I can't laugh here. That would be inappropriate. I can't do that. No, the line's got to mean this. And you start manipulating yourself in order to fit what you think a line should mean. Don't ever do that. It's amateurish. Now I understand that much of what I'm saying here requires that you possess some sort of craft and a technique and that you have a way of working so that every time you do get material, every time that you do stare at pages and pages of texts, that you know how to work.

Charlie Sandlan (28:19):

It's very important when you sit down with lines, with a scene that you don't work on a script cold, detached from an intellectual

place where like I sit down and I start marking off beats and dryly writing down actions. You don't want to do that. You want to start with the fundamental questions first that I talked about back in episode five. Get that previous circumstance pinned down, get yourself emotionally related because as you work yourself through moments, through your lines, through the other person's lines, it's got to be filtered through how you feel. And if you can remember that it's about the emotional line of the scene, it is about behavior, that you need to get the behavior first and be able to see and envision the behavior first and the lines, your lines run through your behavior.

Charlie Sandlan (29:18):

You don't want to be an actor that just goes from queue to queue to queue to queue. It is hackish. I love that word. I use it a lot because that's the most of what we see in this business is a lot of hack acting. But hack acting is just queue to queue to queue and what you need to be able to do when you're working on lines, is to figure out how to go from impulse to impulse to impulse. I got the evil cat, Mia, meowing here. I have to go get her. Hold on one second.

Charlie Sandlan (29:54):

I'll tell you, all I do is I get up. I let the cat out. She goes to the litter box. She comes back. She meows. I let her back in the bedroom with Trish. It's just an ongoing traffic jam here between Wally and Mia.

Charlie Sandlan (30:07):

Anyway, as I was saying, you've got to get the behavior first. So you got to be able to envision and daydream and see what that is. And then you sit down and you do homework on actions and the meanings of what's going on. But if you just sit down dryly and just start working on how you're going to say your line, this is going to be nothing interesting, nothing authentic, nothing surprising. That's going to happen to you. And I'll just finish up with a couple of other thoughts. Don't confuse intensity for being

good. And a lot of young actors starting out think that that's what good acting is all about. It's about your intensity. It causes you to force. It causes you to push. Oftentimes you'll go to that kind of default emotional response, which is anger or rage, which is kind of, of all our emotions, one of the more easily accessible, but it's not about being intense. It's about being truthful.

Charlie Sandlan (31:22):

And the other thing I would just say too, is that unless you have really fully trained your instrument and are comfortable being fully and freely alive, and have really worked on that, there can be a fear of behavior, a fear of being deeply experientially alive. And even though that might be something that scares you, there has to be a part of you that has a deep wish for that as an actor and as an artist, something that you really want, to be able to live through something in a deep way and in an experiential way. And that requires courage. It requires grit. It requires humility and empathy. And if you can envision that and see that as the type of actor you want to be, then really work hard to fulfill that vision for yourself.

Charlie Sandlan (32:22):

And one more thing, I keep thinking of these things as I talk. The lines, the text should always be subverted to what is going on inside of you, not the other way around. You don't want to manipulate or try to alter your inner life to fit a line. That's adjusting to the text and that is hackish. But the text always subverted to what is going on inside of you and when you can really work that way, when you can improvise that way in the moment to be able to let go of whatever homework you might have worked out for yourself, and to let the lines, to let the moment come out of whatever's happening there in the moment, that's when something surprising can happen. That's when you can do something that is really just inspiring and you can blow the lid off the ceiling of a scene and that's what you want.

Charlie Sandlan (33:26):

So there's my 2 cents when it comes to dealing with all those lines. I thought I would close out the show today with a quote. A quote from one of the great character actors of our time, gone way too soon. Philip Seymour Hoffman. He was a man of the theater. He was a champion of young actors. He was transformational. He left a body of work that is incredibly inspiring. And he also was a drug addict and it got him and he is no longer with us and it is a fucking crime. But I'm going to leave you with a quote that he gave during an interview after one of his Golden Globe victories. And it's this.

Charlie Sandlan (34:28):

"When you're first starting out, you have to act wherever you can. You can't be picky. You really have to act wherever you can and wherever you get a chance to act and that might even be just in an audition room." And this is something a teacher told me years ago, and he's right. "Even if you're auditioning for something you know you're never going to get, or you might have read it. You might not have even liked it, but you know that you have to go. If you get a chance to act in a room that somebody else has paid rent for, then you were given a free chance to practice your craft. And in that moment, you should act as well as you can, because if you leave the room or the theater or wherever you are and you've acted as well as you can, there's no way that the people who have watched you will forget it."

Charlie Sandlan (35:19):

Well, my fellow daydreamers, I want to thank you for hanging out with me, keeping that phone in your pocket. Please subscribe to this show, follow it, share it with your friends. Review it, if you can. You can follow me on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, Google, you name it, wherever you get your podcasts you can find this show. You can also leave me a voice message on my website, [CreatingBehaviorpodcast.com](http://CreatingBehaviorpodcast.com). I am using SpeakPipe. All you got to do is press a button and you can leave me a comment, a thought. You can ask me a question, something you'd like me to

answer, and I will get it on the show. Follow me on IG at Creating Behavior. Thank you, Lawrence Trailer for the music as always. My friends, you

Charlie Sandlan (00:02):

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Charlie Sandlan (00:36):

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Charlie Sandlan (01:49):

So, her body is a wreck. Her back hurts. Her neck hurts. So the time has come and we're going to get more space. It's going to be cheaper. We're going to save a lot of money, which right now at this point in our lives, we actually have to do. So I'm actually okay with it. Trish, you'd think, we're moving halfway across the world, but really we're an eight minute ferry ride into Manhattan. So I think once we get out there, she's going to be okay. It's the anxiety of not knowing, I think, that's driving her crazy. So we've got that going on. We're packing up the boxes and I turned 50 on July 5th and I don't even really know what to make of it. I mean, 50 is such a, it's a big number because I'm not a kid and I'm not old.

Charlie Sandlan (02:48):

I feel like I'm in the prime of my life. And you know, Trish is always quick to remind me that I have the emotional maturity level of a 17 year old kid. So, I've got that going for me, which is good. So I turned 50 and I also wrapped up a school year with my first year and second year students who have endured a lot over the last four months. You know, you start something and you have this idea of how it's going to finish and how it's going to end and how you're going to feel as you start seeing the finish line. And my students who were months away from finishing two years of hard work and certainly my first years who, who had been working really hard since September had to adapt, had to ask themselves what they're up for.

Charlie Sandlan (03:45):

Do I want this bad enough? Do I want to finish what I started? And I had a lot of students that quit. I had a lot of students who said, fuck it, this isn't what I signed up for. This isn't what I want to do. This isn't how I envisioned finishing my training and they just stopped after putting in well over a year and a half of hard work. And, I guess what I would say to all of you that are listening is, if you start something that you're passionate about or that you think is important to you and you don't finish it, what does that say about how important it was to you in the first place? So my students, they taught me a lot. They were an example of what conviction, what passion, what determination, what grit and backbone means. And I will never forget it.

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Charlie Sandlan (07:09):

And so I've been trying to reflect on and how this has cropped up in my own life. I always refer to my childhood, my hometown as sheltered. Yes, I grew up in a very sheltered community. I lived in a bubble and I have described my childhood and my home in Cincinnati, Ohio like that, my entire life. And I now, at the age of 50, realize that that is racist. Sheltered from what? Sheltered from black people? Sheltered from the dangerous part of town? You know, you never went to Clifton. You never went over the Over The Rhine, because that wasn't safe. And I think about my own anxiety and my sense of danger if I just find myself in the presence of a number of black people. It's unconscious, I can feel my anxiety. I can feel myself, maybe just looking around, making

sure I know where my phone is, putting my hand on the back of my jeans to feel my wallet, to make sure it's secure.

Charlie Sandlan (08:26):

I mean, this is all just stuff that's so instinctive. It happens so quickly. It happens so instantaneously that unless you are able to step back and be challenged to think about where this is coming from, you are just complicit in your white silence. And I think about all of the art that I have consumed over the course of my life from theater to film, to television, and the fact that it is all produced, directed, curated through the white experience because white is the norm for humanity. That's what we've established as racist, that being white is the human norm. It is what we value and anything that is not, that is less than. And, I think about all the actors that I always talk about or used to talk about as a teacher, all white. Let's talk about Pacino and DeNiro and Hackman and Hoffman and Meryl Streep. And even the black theater that we go to in New York City and across this country has been curated by white people. It's been picked by a white board of directors, and it has been directed by white people.

Charlie Sandlan (09:51):

And if you are active on social media, if you have your finger on the pulse of your artistic community, then you are aware of the Dear White Theater letter that was posted on Instagram and throughout social media a few weeks ago, really calling out and accusing all of us who engage in acting in the theater. And this country of our racism had to really kind of take that in. And they followed that up last week with a list of demands, which I think is incredibly reasonable and it's a great starting point. And it's where we have to begin; renaming half of the Broadway theaters, putting term limits on artistic boards, making sure that 50% of casts and creative teams are black indigenous people of color. I think that's the bare fucking minimum. It was signed by over 300 artists.

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They demand that we collectively, as a theater community, stop working with IATSE, which is the labor union for the Broadway theaters, unless they make changes to their systemic issues, to stop using the Casting Society of America until they end their racist policies, to end the security of Broadway shows by the police. These are just a few of the demands that they're making. If you don't know what I'm talking about, if you don't know what this letter is and what it says, then you need to go read it. You need to go find it and educate yourself. There's no excuse for you as an actor or an artist to not know about this.

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And I'll just wrap up this particular topic with another book, Layla Saad's, *Me and White Supremacy*. It's a workbook, really. It requires you to write, to be deeply reflective and painfully honest, if not, it's not going to be helpful and you won't accomplish anything. But there are three areas that are particularly painful and it's the subject of white silence, white superiority and white exceptionalism. And I'm just going to give you one example for me as a teacher. And you might have experienced this as a student in a classroom or on set or on stage. If I'm teaching a person of color and their speech does not sound the way I think speech should sound, white, articulate, good diction. If you have a regionalism, if it sounds like you're just on the street, if it sounds thuggish, well then here I am as your white teacher to point out to you that your speech needs to be cleaned up, that your speech is too regional.

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You're not going to work the way that you want to work, you're only going to be seen a certain way if you don't clean up your speech. And really what I'm saying there is you need to sound more white. So if you are a collaborator, if you are a teacher, if you are an artist, you need to start thinking about these things. You need to start discovering where it has insidiously wrapped

itself around how you work and how you create and the way you collaborate. It's important and we have to start changing.

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Let's get to some other things, shall we? Now I have told you before that, one of the great ways to educate yourself is to read the obituaries in the New York Times. And you can go back into their archives and pull up any major artist that's died in the last hundred years and read their obituary. But back in May, Jimmy Cobb, the great jazz drummer, Jimmy Cobb, passed away at the age of 91. He was the last remaining musician who performed on really what is considered the greatest jazz album of all time. It certainly is the greatest selling album of all time, Miles Davis' Kind of Blue. And if you don't know that album, or if you have never listened to it, fucking get onto your Spotify and listen to Kind of Blue. It had one of the greatest collections of jazz music talent that has ever been brought together. Not only did you have Miles Davis on the trumpet, you had Jimmy Cobb on the drums. Cannonball Adderly. You had John Coltrane on saxophone. You had Paul Chambers on bass. Had Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly on piano. And it is an extraordinary body of work.

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And Jimmy Cobb has this great quote that you can read in his obituary, which I think can apply to all of you actors out there who audition and audition and you're saying to yourself, "Fuck, am I ever going to get an opportunity? When's this going to happen for me?", as you could try to carve out your career. And he said this, "You have to be at the right place at the right time with the right stuff. And then you got a chance." And Jimmy Cobb was living in New York City and one night in 1958, he gets a call from Miles Davis, about six o'clock and Miles Davis says, "Listen, I need a drummer. Can you get here for the gig?" And Jimmy says, "Yeah, where is it?" "Boston." He packs up his bag. He hops in the car. He drives five hours to Boston. He gets to the gig around midnight right when they were getting to play, around midnight. And the

rest is history. If you pull up that album and you listen to that song, you'll understand why Jimmy Cobb was one of the great drummers of his or any generation. So there's a little something that I learned by reading the New York Times.

Charlie Sandlan (16:46):

Now I'd like to get into kind of the heart of the show here. The title of our episode today is, What Do You Do With Those Lines? So you're an actor, you get a script, maybe you get four or five pages for an audition. Sometimes it's more than that, you get all these lines. Well, I can tell you what most hack actors do. Most hack actors will memorize their lines the way they want to say them and this might be something that you can relate to. You get the script and you just start figuring out how you want to say your lines. You start working on your vocal inflections. You start figuring out, okay, I'm going to punch this word here. I'm going to punch this word here. And you start saying your lines out loud and you memorize them that way. And you get locked in to how you're going to do it. And then you go into the audition or you go into rehearsal and you do exactly what you memorized. You say the lines the way you memorize them, the way they sounded when you were looking in the mirror. And I will tell you it's not good, not good at all for a number of reasons.

Charlie Sandlan (18:13):

Now, when I train actors and I train professional actors, and this is in the two year progression of Meisner's work, I train you to work on lines in two different ways. And one way is to memorize these lines that you have by rote with no line inflection, no, almost mechanical, just straight on dead, robotic texts, memorize them that way so you don't get locked into anything. And I guess the best example of an actor that worked this way was the great Paul Muni. And if you don't know who Paul Muni was, you should. He was a character actor before the term character actor even existed. He worked back in the 1930s, 1940s. He was a five time Academy Award nominee. He actually won an Academy Award in

a 1930s for the film, *The Life of Louis Pasteur*. He was the original Scarface and he was one of the rare actors. Now this is back when the studio system had complete and utter control of the actors that they signed.

Charlie Sandlan (19:28):

There was no freedom to pick and choose whatever you wanted to do. But Paul Muni was one of the very, very few actors back in the 1930s, who actually was able to choose what parts he wanted. He was consumed with how a character moved, how a character behaved, how a character looked. He did his own makeup. He was really truly transformational. Now what Paul Muni would do is he would memorize all of his lines before first rehearsal down pat, 100% locked down and he did that so that when he got into contact, when he got into rehearsal, when he got on set, he was free. He wasn't worried about lines. He was able to be free and impulsive and spontaneous and not locked in to anything. And so for him, what freed him up was getting those lines down cold, but not memorized with any kind of line inflections. It's certainly one way to work at a basic level.

Charlie Sandlan (20:33):

Now another example of the opposite end of the spectrum here is the great actress, Laurette Taylor and Laurette Taylor is considered one of the finest actors we've ever had. She was a raging alcoholic, unfortunately, and her career never really went where it could have gotten. I think her biggest claim to immortality was her Broadway performance in Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie*, back in the late forties. She originated the role of Amanda Wingfield. And if you want to get a sense of how she worked and what her genius was, you should read John Lahr's great biography of Tennessee Williams called *Pilgrimage of the Flesh*. I think the first 40 or 50 pages deal directly with *Glass Menagerie*, the opening of *Glass Menagerie* and working with Laurette Taylor.

Charlie Sandlan (21:35):

Now what Laurette Taylor would do is she wouldn't memorize a god damn thing. She didn't give a fuck about the lines. She would get into rehearsal and she would just say whatever came to her mind, she would even speak her blocking out loud. You know, she'd have a line and then she would say, okay, now I'm going to go over here and I'm going to pick up this tea cup and put it on this table over here. And all of the actors on stage are like, what the fuck is going on? It scared the hell out of everybody. It scared the hell out of Tennessee. It scared the hell out of all the actors that were working, the director. But for her, she wasn't concerned about the lines because she wanted to see what happened in the moment. She wanted to get a feel for the subtext for what's happening in the moment. And what was remarkable about her is that she ended up having all of her lines down by the time the show opened, but it was a harrowing process for everybody else that was involved with her.

Charlie Sandlan (22:32):

Now I personally wouldn't recommend working that way, but these are two examples of how you can work. And when you train with me, you really learn both of those ways. We learn them by rote and mechanically in first year, so that you can just get out of your head, be free and impulsive and improvise and break out of line readings where you get to align and you think it has to mean this. And I guess if I could have you taken away anything from this is that you have to understand that lines can mean anything. It is what a person means, not what a person says that is the most important thing. It's all about subtext. And if you get locked into thinking, Oh yeah, the line is, "I want to fucking punch you in the face", and you think, Oh, I got to be upset there. I've got to be angry there because that's the line, you're going to end up with something that's very cliched and very cookie cutter and no good.

Charlie Sandlan (23:46):

The other way that I train actors to deal with lines is to memorize them by osmosis. You memorize them. Once you know how to

work and you know how to implant meanings, and you know how to particularize moments and break down beats and actions, you start reading through the scene in a real open way so that you can see what associations start to come to the surface for you. Don't sit down and start to just memorize cold. You start taking yourself through the material. And once you start to have a deeper understanding of the previous circumstance and the acting relationship and understand perhaps what you want in this scene, well, what starts to come to the surface for you and when you learn how to do homework on the other person's lines, when you start to do homework on the meaning of what's being said to you, you're going to be more informed about how to work off of them when you get into contact.

Charlie Sandlan (24:47):

There can also be this pressure when you get a scene, when you have a lot of lines. Fuck, it's time to act. I've got to do this now. I've got to perform. And all of a sudden, you turn on this acting switch and you start acting. Remember, acting is effortless and one of the things that can free you up is to embrace the idea that the burden of the scene is never on you. It's not your job to get in there and do some big thing. It's about being truthful and having the craft and the ability to let these lines come out however they come out, which means do you have to be present and you have to be able to listen and all these fundamental things that I've talked about before. But you need to be malleable to the nuances of another person's behavior, to what's being said to you, to how it's being said to you. The moment needs to be all consuming so that you're not anticipating, thinking ahead, oh, I've got this line coming up. I've got this beat change. Fuck, it's this moment that I'm uncomfortable with. I don't like it. And you start thinking ahead and when you do that, you're not present. You're not in the moment and that's no good.

Charlie Sandlan (26:07):

The other thing that you want to avoid, and this is always ... you cannot let the text anesthetize you. And what I mean by anesthetized is, you go to the dentist, you get a shot on novocaine and it deadens you, it numbs you. Well, text can't do that. And that means you have to know how to do homework on the meaning of not only what's being said to you, but what you are saying from moment to moment to moment. And of course this comes out of your ability to craft, understanding the previous circumstance, the acting relationship, the objective. But if you are in the same continual condition, you're not working off the other actor. And that homework is crucial because that is what is going to pinch you in every moment. The meaning of what's being said to you. So you've got to do homework on that. And if you play the text, meaning you adjust to all those obvious line readings, oh, the line is I'll kill you yet. I'll kill you yet. I'll rip you out of me, taking advantage of me. That is a line from an old Meisner scene. And you think to yourself, oh, I better be angry there. I've got to be pissed off.

Charlie Sandlan (27:28):

It's going to deaden you. It's going to make it impossible for anything authentic or original to happen in the moment. I also call it hedging against the text, where the text, the lines function as a super ego. Well, I can't say this. I can't say it that way. I can't laugh here. That would be inappropriate. I can't do that. No, the line's got to mean this. And you start manipulating yourself in order to fit what you think a line should mean. Don't ever do that. It's amateurish. Now I understand that much of what I'm saying here requires that you possess some sort of craft and a technique and that you have a way of working so that every time you do get material, every time that you do stare at pages and pages of texts, that you know how to work.

Charlie Sandlan (28:19):

It's very important when you sit down with lines, with a scene that you don't work on a script cold, detached from an intellectual

place where like I sit down and I start marking off beats and dryly writing down actions. You don't want to do that. You want to start with the fundamental questions first that I talked about back in episode five. Get that previous circumstance pinned down, get yourself emotionally related because as you work yourself through moments, through your lines, through the other person's lines, it's got to be filtered through how you feel. And if you can remember that it's about the emotional line of the scene, it is about behavior, that you need to get the behavior first and be able to see and envision the behavior first and the lines, your lines run through your behavior.

Charlie Sandlan (29:18):

You don't want to be an actor that just goes from queue to queue to queue to queue. It is hackish. I love that word. I use it a lot because that's the most of what we see in this business is a lot of hack acting. But hack acting is just queue to queue to queue and what you need to be able to do when you're working on lines, is to figure out how to go from impulse to impulse to impulse. I got the evil cat, Mia, meowing here. I have to go get her. Hold on one second.

Charlie Sandlan (29:54):

I'll tell you, all I do is I get up. I let the cat out. She goes to the litter box. She comes back. She meows. I let her back in the bedroom with Trish. It's just an ongoing traffic jam here between Wally and Mia.

Charlie Sandlan (30:07):

Anyway, as I was saying, you've got to get the behavior first. So you got to be able to envision and daydream and see what that is. And then you sit down and you do homework on actions and the meanings of what's going on. But if you just sit down dryly and just start working on how you're going to say your line, this is going to be nothing interesting, nothing authentic, nothing surprising. That's going to happen to you. And I'll just finish up with a couple of other thoughts. Don't confuse intensity for being

good. And a lot of young actors starting out think that that's what good acting is all about. It's about your intensity. It causes you to force. It causes you to push. Oftentimes you'll go to that kind of default emotional response, which is anger or rage, which is kind of, of all our emotions, one of the more easily accessible, but it's not about being intense. It's about being truthful.

Charlie Sandlan (31:22):

And the other thing I would just say too, is that unless you have really fully trained your instrument and are comfortable being fully and freely alive, and have really worked on that, there can be a fear of behavior, a fear of being deeply experientially alive. And even though that might be something that scares you, there has to be a part of you that has a deep wish for that as an actor and as an artist, something that you really want, to be able to live through something in a deep way and in an experiential way. And that requires courage. It requires grit. It requires humility and empathy. And if you can envision that and see that as the type of actor you want to be, then really work hard to fulfill that vision for yourself.

Charlie Sandlan (32:22):

And one more thing, I keep thinking of these things as I talk. The lines, the text should always be subverted to what is going on inside of you, not the other way around. You don't want to manipulate or try to alter your inner life to fit a line. That's adjusting to the text and that is hackish. But the text always subverted to what is going on inside of you and when you can really work that way, when you can improvise that way in the moment to be able to let go of whatever homework you might have worked out for yourself, and to let the lines, to let the moment come out of whatever's happening there in the moment, that's when something surprising can happen. That's when you can do something that is really just inspiring and you can blow the lid off the ceiling of a scene and that's what you want.

Charlie Sandlan (33:26):

So there's my 2 cents when it comes to dealing with all those lines. I thought I would close out the show today with a quote. A quote from one of the great character actors of our time, gone way too soon. Philip Seymour Hoffman. He was a man of the theater. He was a champion of young actors. He was transformational. He left a body of work that is incredibly inspiring. And he also was a drug addict and it got him and he is no longer with us and it is a fucking crime. But I'm going to leave you with a quote that he gave during an interview after one of his Golden Globe victories. And it's this.

Charlie Sandlan (34:28):

"When you're first starting out, you have to act wherever you can. You can't be picky. You really have to act wherever you can and wherever you get a chance to act and that might even be just in an audition room." And this is something a teacher told me years ago, and he's right. "Even if you're auditioning for something you know you're never going to get, or you might have read it. You might not have even liked it, but you know that you have to go. If you get a chance to act in a room that somebody else has paid rent for, then you were given a free chance to practice your craft. And in that moment, you should act as well as you can, because if you leave the room or the theater or wherever you are and you've acted as well as you can, there's no way that the people who have watched you will forget it."

Charlie Sandlan (35:19):

Well, my fellow daydreamers, I want to thank you for hanging out with me, keeping that phone in your pocket. Please subscribe to this show, follow it, share it with your friends. Review it, if you can. You can follow me on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, Google, you name it, wherever you get your podcasts you can find this show. You can also leave me a voice message on my website, [CreatingBehaviorpodcast.com](http://CreatingBehaviorpodcast.com). I am using SpeakPipe. All you got to do is press a button and you can leave me a comment, a thought. You can ask me a question, something you'd like me to

answer, and I will get it on the show. Follow me on IG at Creating Behavior. Thank you, Lawrence Trailer for the music as always. My friends, you

Charlie Sandlan (00:02):

My friends, I have a lot to talk about today. So put the phone in your pocket, Creating Behavior starts now.

Charlie Sandlan (00:36):

And hello my fellow daydreamers from New York City, where my final days as a Manhattanite are coming to an end and it's leaving me with some mixed feelings about this city that I have called home for the most part for the last 28 years. I had a short stint in LA in 2003, 2004, 2005. I was in New Brunswick, New Jersey for grad school for three years. But other than that, I have spent my entire formative adult life here in Manhattan and on Tuesday, Trish and I are moving to Weehawken, New Jersey, right across the river, on the river actually, a very nice place. We needed more room. Both of us are working from home. I'm working from home. I'm teaching from here, I'm doing this show and Trish is stuck in the bedroom doing seven to 10 hours of life coaching every day in the bedroom, on the bed, on the floor, on a chair.

Charlie Sandlan (01:49):

So, her body is a wreck. Her back hurts. Her neck hurts. So the time has come and we're going to get more space. It's going to be cheaper. We're going to save a lot of money, which right now at this point in our lives, we actually have to do. So I'm actually okay with it. Trish, you'd think, we're moving halfway across the world, but really we're an eight minute ferry ride into Manhattan. So I think once we get out there, she's going to be okay. It's the anxiety of not knowing, I think, that's driving her crazy. So we've got that going on. We're packing up the boxes and I turned 50 on July 5th and I don't even really know what to make of it. I mean, 50 is such a, it's a big number because I'm not a kid and I'm not old.

Charlie Sandlan (02:48):

I feel like I'm in the prime of my life. And you know, Trish is always quick to remind me that I have the emotional maturity level of a 17 year old kid. So, I've got that going for me, which is good. So I turned 50 and I also wrapped up a school year with my first year and second year students who have endured a lot over the last four months. You know, you start something and you have this idea of how it's going to finish and how it's going to end and how you're going to feel as you start seeing the finish line. And my students who were months away from finishing two years of hard work and certainly my first years who, who had been working really hard since September had to adapt, had to ask themselves what they're up for.

Charlie Sandlan (03:45):

Do I want this bad enough? Do I want to finish what I started? And I had a lot of students that quit. I had a lot of students who said, fuck it, this isn't what I signed up for. This isn't what I want to do. This isn't how I envisioned finishing my training and they just stopped after putting in well over a year and a half of hard work. And, I guess what I would say to all of you that are listening is, if you start something that you're passionate about or that you think is important to you and you don't finish it, what does that say about how important it was to you in the first place? So my students, they taught me a lot. They were an example of what conviction, what passion, what determination, what grit and backbone means. And I will never forget it.

Charlie Sandlan (04:42):

So that's my life right now. And as I've mentioned on, on previous episodes, I have been working very hard to educate myself on my racism. It's important for me as a white man. It's important for me as an artist, as a teacher, as a collaborator, as it should be for all of you to continue to educate and confront your indoctrinated bigotry. And I have been, and I'll just mention two books right now that I am currently just really kind of pouring over. One is Robin

DeAngelo's book, *White Fragility*. I think it's a must-read if you're white and I'm learning about some terms that I never heard of before. And one in particular that I think applies to me and might apply to many of you, white or otherwise, it's called, aversive racism.

Charlie Sandlan (05:48):

And aversive racism, and I'll just read a part of a book here. She says, "Aversive racism is a manifestation of racism that well intentioned people who see themselves as educated and progressive are more likely to exhibit. It exists under the surface of consciousness, because it conflicts with consciously held beliefs of racial equality and justice." And here's some examples of how aversive racism, which I think I certainly have functioned from exists: rationalizing racial segregation, as unfortunate, but necessary to access good schools, rationalizing that our workplaces are virtually all white because people of color just don't apply, avoiding direct racial language and using racially coded terms, such as urban, underprivileged, diverse, sketchy, and good neighborhoods. Denying that we have few cross racial relationships by proclaiming how diverse our community or workplace is. And attributing inequality between whites and people of color to causes other than racism.

Charlie Sandlan (07:09):

And so I've been trying to reflect on and how this has cropped up in my own life. I always refer to my childhood, my hometown as sheltered. Yes, I grew up in a very sheltered community. I lived in a bubble and I have described my childhood and my home in Cincinnati, Ohio like that, my entire life. And I now, at the age of 50, realize that that is racist. Sheltered from what? Sheltered from black people? Sheltered from the dangerous part of town? You know, you never went to Clifton. You never went over the Over The Rhine, because that wasn't safe. And I think about my own anxiety and my sense of danger if I just find myself in the presence of a number of black people. It's unconscious, I can feel

my anxiety. I can feel myself, maybe just looking around, making sure I know where my phone is, putting my hand on the back of my jeans to feel my wallet, to make sure it's secure.

Charlie Sandlan (08:26):

I mean, this is all just stuff that's so instinctive. It happens so quickly. It happens so instantaneously that unless you are able to step back and be challenged to think about where this is coming from, you are just complicit in your white silence. And I think about all of the art that I have consumed over the course of my life from theater to film, to television, and the fact that it is all produced, directed, curated through the white experience because white is the norm for humanity. That's what we've established as racist, that being white is the human norm. It is what we value and anything that is not, that is less than. And, I think about all the actors that I always talk about or used to talk about as a teacher, all white. Let's talk about Pacino and DeNiro and Hackman and Hoffman and Meryl Streep. And even the black theater that we go to in New York City and across this country has been curated by white people. It's been picked by a white board of directors, and it has been directed by white people.

Charlie Sandlan (09:51):

And if you are active on social media, if you have your finger on the pulse of your artistic community, then you are aware of the Dear White Theater letter that was posted on Instagram and throughout social media a few weeks ago, really calling out and accusing all of us who engage in acting in the theater. And this country of our racism had to really kind of take that in. And they followed that up last week with a list of demands, which I think is incredibly reasonable and it's a great starting point. And it's where we have to begin; renaming half of the Broadway theaters, putting term limits on artistic boards, making sure that 50% of casts and creative teams are black indigenous people of color. I think that's the bare fucking minimum. It was signed by over 300 artists.

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You're not going to work the way that you want to work, you're only going to be seen a certain way if you don't clean up your speech. And really what I'm saying there is you need to sound more white. So if you are a collaborator, if you are a teacher, if you are an artist, you need to start thinking about these things. You need to start discovering where it has insidiously wrapped

itself around how you work and how you create and the way you collaborate. It's important and we have to start changing.

Charlie Sandlan (13:55):

Let's get to some other things, shall we? Now I have told you before that, one of the great ways to educate yourself is to read the obituaries in the New York Times. And you can go back into their archives and pull up any major artist that's died in the last hundred years and read their obituary. But back in May, Jimmy Cobb, the great jazz drummer, Jimmy Cobb, passed away at the age of 91. He was the last remaining musician who performed on really what is considered the greatest jazz album of all time. It certainly is the greatest selling album of all time, Miles Davis' Kind of Blue. And if you don't know that album, or if you have never listened to it, fucking get onto your Spotify and listen to Kind of Blue. It had one of the greatest collections of jazz music talent that has ever been brought together. Not only did you have Miles Davis on the trumpet, you had Jimmy Cobb on the drums. Cannonball Adderly. You had John Coltrane on saxophone. You had Paul Chambers on bass. Had Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly on piano. And it is an extraordinary body of work.

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And Jimmy Cobb has this great quote that you can read in his obituary, which I think can apply to all of you actors out there who audition and audition and you're saying to yourself, "Fuck, am I ever going to get an opportunity? When's this going to happen for me?", as you could try to carve out your career. And he said this, "You have to be at the right place at the right time with the right stuff. And then you got a chance." And Jimmy Cobb was living in New York City and one night in 1958, he gets a call from Miles Davis, about six o'clock and Miles Davis says, "Listen, I need a drummer. Can you get here for the gig?" And Jimmy says, "Yeah, where is it?" "Boston." He packs up his bag. He hops in the car. He drives five hours to Boston. He gets to the gig around midnight right when they were getting to play, around midnight. And the

rest is history. If you pull up that album and you listen to that song, you'll understand why Jimmy Cobb was one of the great drummers of his or any generation. So there's a little something that I learned by reading the New York Times.

Charlie Sandlan (16:46):

Now I'd like to get into kind of the heart of the show here. The title of our episode today is, What Do You Do With Those Lines? So you're an actor, you get a script, maybe you get four or five pages for an audition. Sometimes it's more than that, you get all these lines. Well, I can tell you what most hack actors do. Most hack actors will memorize their lines the way they want to say them and this might be something that you can relate to. You get the script and you just start figuring out how you want to say your lines. You start working on your vocal inflections. You start figuring out, okay, I'm going to punch this word here. I'm going to punch this word here. And you start saying your lines out loud and you memorize them that way. And you get locked in to how you're going to do it. And then you go into the audition or you go into rehearsal and you do exactly what you memorized. You say the lines the way you memorize them, the way they sounded when you were looking in the mirror. And I will tell you it's not good, not good at all for a number of reasons.

Charlie Sandlan (18:13):

Now, when I train actors and I train professional actors, and this is in the two year progression of Meisner's work, I train you to work on lines in two different ways. And one way is to memorize these lines that you have by rote with no line inflection, no, almost mechanical, just straight on dead, robotic texts, memorize them that way so you don't get locked into anything. And I guess the best example of an actor that worked this way was the great Paul Muni. And if you don't know who Paul Muni was, you should. He was a character actor before the term character actor even existed. He worked back in the 1930s, 1940s. He was a five time Academy Award nominee. He actually won an Academy Award in

a 1930s for the film, *The Life of Louis Pasteur*. He was the original Scarface and he was one of the rare actors. Now this is back when the studio system had complete and utter control of the actors that they signed.

Charlie Sandlan (19:28):

There was no freedom to pick and choose whatever you wanted to do. But Paul Muni was one of the very, very few actors back in the 1930s, who actually was able to choose what parts he wanted. He was consumed with how a character moved, how a character behaved, how a character looked. He did his own makeup. He was really truly transformational. Now what Paul Muni would do is he would memorize all of his lines before first rehearsal down pat, 100% locked down and he did that so that when he got into contact, when he got into rehearsal, when he got on set, he was free. He wasn't worried about lines. He was able to be free and impulsive and spontaneous and not locked in to anything. And so for him, what freed him up was getting those lines down cold, but not memorized with any kind of line inflections. It's certainly one way to work at a basic level.

Charlie Sandlan (20:33):

Now another example of the opposite end of the spectrum here is the great actress, Laurette Taylor and Laurette Taylor is considered one of the finest actors we've ever had. She was a raging alcoholic, unfortunately, and her career never really went where it could have gotten. I think her biggest claim to immortality was her Broadway performance in Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie*, back in the late forties. She originated the role of Amanda Wingfield. And if you want to get a sense of how she worked and what her genius was, you should read John Lahr's great biography of Tennessee Williams called *Pilgrimage of the Flesh*. I think the first 40 or 50 pages deal directly with *Glass Menagerie*, the opening of *Glass Menagerie* and working with Laurette Taylor.

Charlie Sandlan (21:35):

Now what Laurette Taylor would do is she wouldn't memorize a god damn thing. She didn't give a fuck about the lines. She would get into rehearsal and she would just say whatever came to her mind, she would even speak her blocking out loud. You know, she'd have a line and then she would say, okay, now I'm going to go over here and I'm going to pick up this tea cup and put it on this table over here. And all of the actors on stage are like, what the fuck is going on? It scared the hell out of everybody. It scared the hell out of Tennessee. It scared the hell out of all the actors that were working, the director. But for her, she wasn't concerned about the lines because she wanted to see what happened in the moment. She wanted to get a feel for the subtext for what's happening in the moment. And what was remarkable about her is that she ended up having all of her lines down by the time the show opened, but it was a harrowing process for everybody else that was involved with her.

Charlie Sandlan (22:32):

Now I personally wouldn't recommend working that way, but these are two examples of how you can work. And when you train with me, you really learn both of those ways. We learn them by rote and mechanically in first year, so that you can just get out of your head, be free and impulsive and improvise and break out of line readings where you get to align and you think it has to mean this. And I guess if I could have you taken away anything from this is that you have to understand that lines can mean anything. It is what a person means, not what a person says that is the most important thing. It's all about subtext. And if you get locked into thinking, Oh yeah, the line is, "I want to fucking punch you in the face", and you think, Oh, I got to be upset there. I've got to be angry there because that's the line, you're going to end up with something that's very cliched and very cookie cutter and no good.

Charlie Sandlan (23:46):

The other way that I train actors to deal with lines is to memorize them by osmosis. You memorize them. Once you know how to

work and you know how to implant meanings, and you know how to particularize moments and break down beats and actions, you start reading through the scene in a real open way so that you can see what associations start to come to the surface for you. Don't sit down and start to just memorize cold. You start taking yourself through the material. And once you start to have a deeper understanding of the previous circumstance and the acting relationship and understand perhaps what you want in this scene, well, what starts to come to the surface for you and when you learn how to do homework on the other person's lines, when you start to do homework on the meaning of what's being said to you, you're going to be more informed about how to work off of them when you get into contact.

Charlie Sandlan (24:47):

There can also be this pressure when you get a scene, when you have a lot of lines. Fuck, it's time to act. I've got to do this now. I've got to perform. And all of a sudden, you turn on this acting switch and you start acting. Remember, acting is effortless and one of the things that can free you up is to embrace the idea that the burden of the scene is never on you. It's not your job to get in there and do some big thing. It's about being truthful and having the craft and the ability to let these lines come out however they come out, which means do you have to be present and you have to be able to listen and all these fundamental things that I've talked about before. But you need to be malleable to the nuances of another person's behavior, to what's being said to you, to how it's being said to you. The moment needs to be all consuming so that you're not anticipating, thinking ahead, oh, I've got this line coming up. I've got this beat change. Fuck, it's this moment that I'm uncomfortable with. I don't like it. And you start thinking ahead and when you do that, you're not present. You're not in the moment and that's no good.

Charlie Sandlan (26:07):

The other thing that you want to avoid, and this is always ... you cannot let the text anesthetize you. And what I mean by anesthetized is, you go to the dentist, you get a shot on novocaine and it deadens you, it numbs you. Well, text can't do that. And that means you have to know how to do homework on the meaning of not only what's being said to you, but what you are saying from moment to moment to moment. And of course this comes out of your ability to craft, understanding the previous circumstance, the acting relationship, the objective. But if you are in the same continual condition, you're not working off the other actor. And that homework is crucial because that is what is going to pinch you in every moment. The meaning of what's being said to you. So you've got to do homework on that. And if you play the text, meaning you adjust to all those obvious line readings, oh, the line is I'll kill you yet. I'll kill you yet. I'll rip you out of me, taking advantage of me. That is a line from an old Meisner scene. And you think to yourself, oh, I better be angry there. I've got to be pissed off.

Charlie Sandlan (27:28):

It's going to deaden you. It's going to make it impossible for anything authentic or original to happen in the moment. I also call it hedging against the text, where the text, the lines function as a super ego. Well, I can't say this. I can't say it that way. I can't laugh here. That would be inappropriate. I can't do that. No, the line's got to mean this. And you start manipulating yourself in order to fit what you think a line should mean. Don't ever do that. It's amateurish. Now I understand that much of what I'm saying here requires that you possess some sort of craft and a technique and that you have a way of working so that every time you do get material, every time that you do stare at pages and pages of texts, that you know how to work.

Charlie Sandlan (28:19):

It's very important when you sit down with lines, with a scene that you don't work on a script cold, detached from an intellectual

place where like I sit down and I start marking off beats and dryly writing down actions. You don't want to do that. You want to start with the fundamental questions first that I talked about back in episode five. Get that previous circumstance pinned down, get yourself emotionally related because as you work yourself through moments, through your lines, through the other person's lines, it's got to be filtered through how you feel. And if you can remember that it's about the emotional line of the scene, it is about behavior, that you need to get the behavior first and be able to see and envision the behavior first and the lines, your lines run through your behavior.

Charlie Sandlan (29:18):

You don't want to be an actor that just goes from queue to queue to queue to queue. It is hackish. I love that word. I use it a lot because that's the most of what we see in this business is a lot of hack acting. But hack acting is just queue to queue to queue and what you need to be able to do when you're working on lines, is to figure out how to go from impulse to impulse to impulse. I got the evil cat, Mia, meowing here. I have to go get her. Hold on one second.

Charlie Sandlan (29:54):

I'll tell you, all I do is I get up. I let the cat out. She goes to the litter box. She comes back. She meows. I let her back in the bedroom with Trish. It's just an ongoing traffic jam here between Wally and Mia.

Charlie Sandlan (30:07):

Anyway, as I was saying, you've got to get the behavior first. So you got to be able to envision and daydream and see what that is. And then you sit down and you do homework on actions and the meanings of what's going on. But if you just sit down dryly and just start working on how you're going to say your line, this is going to be nothing interesting, nothing authentic, nothing surprising. That's going to happen to you. And I'll just finish up with a couple of other thoughts. Don't confuse intensity for being

good. And a lot of young actors starting out think that that's what good acting is all about. It's about your intensity. It causes you to force. It causes you to push. Oftentimes you'll go to that kind of default emotional response, which is anger or rage, which is kind of, of all our emotions, one of the more easily accessible, but it's not about being intense. It's about being truthful.

Charlie Sandlan (31:22):

And the other thing I would just say too, is that unless you have really fully trained your instrument and are comfortable being fully and freely alive, and have really worked on that, there can be a fear of behavior, a fear of being deeply experientially alive. And even though that might be something that scares you, there has to be a part of you that has a deep wish for that as an actor and as an artist, something that you really want, to be able to live through something in a deep way and in an experiential way. And that requires courage. It requires grit. It requires humility and empathy. And if you can envision that and see that as the type of actor you want to be, then really work hard to fulfill that vision for yourself.

Charlie Sandlan (32:22):

And one more thing, I keep thinking of these things as I talk. The lines, the text should always be subverted to what is going on inside of you, not the other way around. You don't want to manipulate or try to alter your inner life to fit a line. That's adjusting to the text and that is hackish. But the text always subverted to what is going on inside of you and when you can really work that way, when you can improvise that way in the moment to be able to let go of whatever homework you might have worked out for yourself, and to let the lines, to let the moment come out of whatever's happening there in the moment, that's when something surprising can happen. That's when you can do something that is really just inspiring and you can blow the lid off the ceiling of a scene and that's what you want.

Charlie Sandlan (33:26):

So there's my 2 cents when it comes to dealing with all those lines. I thought I would close out the show today with a quote. A quote from one of the great character actors of our time, gone way too soon. Philip Seymour Hoffman. He was a man of the theater. He was a champion of young actors. He was transformational. He left a body of work that is incredibly inspiring. And he also was a drug addict and it got him and he is no longer with us and it is a fucking crime. But I'm going to leave you with a quote that he gave during an interview after one of his Golden Globe victories. And it's this.

Charlie Sandlan (34:28):

"When you're first starting out, you have to act wherever you can. You can't be picky. You really have to act wherever you can and wherever you get a chance to act and that might even be just in an audition room." And this is something a teacher told me years ago, and he's right. "Even if you're auditioning for something you know you're never going to get, or you might have read it. You might not have even liked it, but you know that you have to go. If you get a chance to act in a room that somebody else has paid rent for, then you were given a free chance to practice your craft. And in that moment, you should act as well as you can, because if you leave the room or the theater or wherever you are and you've acted as well as you can, there's no way that the people who have watched you will forget it."

Charlie Sandlan (35:19):

Well, my fellow daydreamers, I want to thank you for hanging out with me, keeping that phone in your pocket. Please subscribe to this show, follow it, share it with your friends. Review it, if you can. You can follow me on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, Google, you name it, wherever you get your podcasts you can find this show. You can also leave me a voice message on my website, [CreatingBehaviorpodcast.com](http://CreatingBehaviorpodcast.com). I am using SpeakPipe. All you got to do is press a button and you can leave me a comment, a thought. You can ask me a question, something you'd like me to

answer, and I will get it on the show. Follow me on IG at Creating Behavior. Thank you, Lawrence Trailer for the music as always. My friends, you