

Curriculum Support

for teaching in Creative Arts 7–12

Making meaning on-screen

The use of video as a medium in dance, drama, music and visual arts continues to gain in popularity at HSC level. Advances in technologies associated with digital cameras and editing programs now make video much more accessible to students and teachers in secondary schools.

The following article is a summary of workshop activities conducted by Colin Schumacher for the District Creative Arts Consultants in February. The workshop focused on the pre-production (scripting, visualisation, planning, negotiation, storyboarding, blocking, scheduling, casting, designing, crewing) and production (rehearsal, shooting) phases of video-making.

Teachers can use the following sequence of activities with students to develop skills and understandings in visualising, planning and storyboarding video narratives. These workshop activities are intended for small groups.

Pre-production: planning

1. Select a prompt cue (who, where, when and what categories) from a given list.

Example:

Who: surfer, pianist, mechanic, actor, politician, student

Where: beach, temple, pub, kitchen, shopping centre

When: late afternoon, dawn, midnight, midday

What: walking, rehearsing, gardening, cooking, debating.

Note: For the purposes of this article, the examples are:

Who: surfer

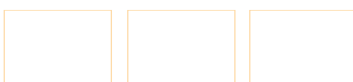
Where: beach

When: late afternoon

What: walking

2. Discuss the kinds of images, movement, music, symbols and/or atmosphere suggested by these words and the possible relationships between them.
3. Decide on a useful second character for the first (the protagonist) to relate to. This second character could be human, animal, a prop, set piece or part of the landscape that becomes a symbol (e.g. a mountain might become a symbol of foreboding).

Example: Second character: a dingo



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4. Discuss the shot sizes that you will use to shoot the landscape, the two characters, and any other important information.

5. Consider what you want to say to your audience. What might the sequence be about?

Example: An Australian surfie (**X**) enters the beach. (1)

A dingo (**Y**) enters the beach. (2)

The surfie halts, there is a moment of uncertainty for the surfie. (3)

The dingo hesitates. (4)

The surfie continues walking towards the surf. (5)

The dingo walks away. (6)

6. Decide on how much of the frame that the characters will need to occupy and their relationship to each other.

7. Consider the angle and perspective of the audience in its relationship to the content of the frame.

8. Decide whose narrative it is. Who or what do you want to feature in successive images during this videography?

9. Decide whether you will use subjective or objective camera to capture the narrative, i.e. the placement of the camera in relation to the character's action. The closer the camera is to a character's viewpoint, the more the audience identifies with this character's viewpoint and hence provides the subjective view.

Pre-production: blocking

10. Create blocking of all the action of the sequence from a bird's-eye-view.

Example: Figure 1 shows blocking of the sequence of the surfie and the dingo in the scene. (read this in combination with the bracketed number sequence from point 5 above)

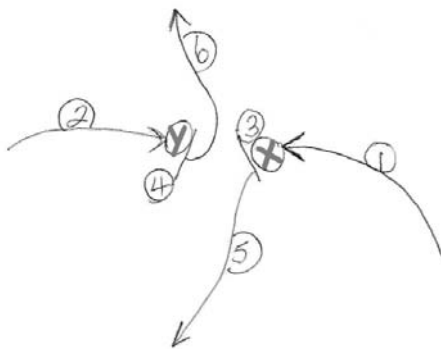


Figure 1

11. Create a camera blocking of all the action identifying the positions of the camera in order of shooting. The circled letters chart the order of blocked moves as they occur in the action. The "V" shapes are camera positions enclosing a letter and the order of the camera positions, e.g. the first blocked move is by the surfie (**X**) and will be covered by the first camera position A.

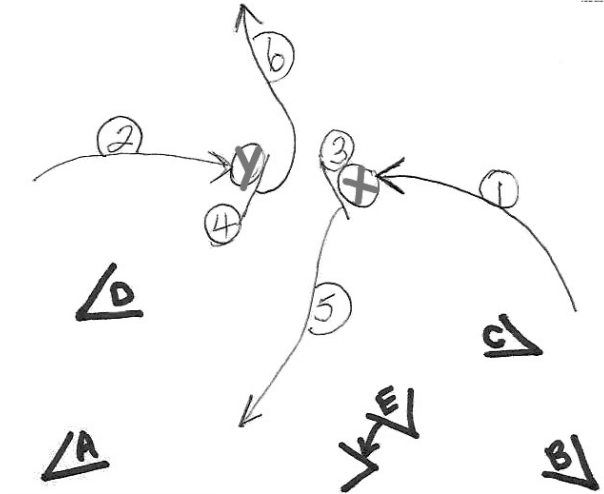


Figure 2

12. Decide how much time each image will be on-screen, to communicate what you are trying to say.

13. Write an outline of this sequence in 20–30 words or less as a description of the experience for your audience.

Example:

While entering a beach, a surfie encounters a dingo and after an awkward momentary stand-off, the surfie enters the water and the dingo retreats.

Pre-production: storyboarding

14. Storyboard the action like a comic strip with each frame representing a shot to be recorded.

Production: shooting and review

15. Choose five shots of the action and shoot them.

16. Review and discuss:

Is the video meaning clear and evocative?

Is there a level of proficiency of the technical control of the equipment?



Has the completed vision adequately captured the original intention and aesthetic influence? If not are re-shoots necessary?

The structured process in the activities above is useful for cast and crew to visualise and prepare for the sequence of shooting. This approach is an industry standard and also applicable for visual arts, dance, drama and music as a non-narrative form.

There are other methods to capture footage, edit and make meaning on-screen. These may include a more unplanned and unblocked style of videography appropriate for documentary, fragmented, abstracted narratives or non-narratives. Shooting scripts may replace storyboards as guides for filming, or footage may be captured and organised later in the editing process. Such methods may be useful for a small one or two-person crew. In these situations, remember to capture adequate footage to provide greater choices for the editing process and product.

Colin is an adjunct Professor at Boston University and adjunct Senior Lecturer at Charles Sturt University. He is currently conducting *Making meaning on-screen* video-making workshops around the state for primary and secondary teachers and is writing a new textbook on video-making for secondary students. He can be contacted on 0402 093 689.

Making meaning On-Screen two-day video workshops for primary and secondary teachers of visual arts, dance, drama, music and English are being held on Thursday July 10 and Friday July 11 and again on Thursday July 17th and Friday July 18th.

The workshops will cover pre-production, production and post-production processes of video-making. The non-linear editing will address PC and Mac systems and will have a PC focus on the second day of each workshop. Industry specialists from Sony Cameras and Pinnacle Studio 8 non-linear editing will also provide demonstrations, followed by practice of Pinnacle Studio 8 editing at terminals. Contact: cschumacher@csu.edu.au for further details.

Dance film in context

The question is: what is the purpose of a dance film?

When a dance film or video is undertaken the questions need to be asked:

What am I trying to achieve?

How do I achieve this idea or intent, using dance within the film medium?

The fusion of the film medium with the dance artform can be complicated. To maintain the context of a dance film or video, there needs to be a balance between the dance, with its particularity to intent and movement motifs, and the techniques used in filming and editing the dance. Dance films and videos within the context of dance education are about the dance.

A dance film or video can be a narrative or it can be abstract, and in this sense, the filming will either assist or further abstract the context.

Mats Ek's *Wet Woman* is an example of a dance made specifically for film. It has a narrative form, which is enhanced by the film medium. In this film the camera is an active recorder of the dance and is an interpreter of the choreographer's intent. The camera maintains the dancer as the focus of the movement.

Wet Woman is divided into three distinct sections. The filming of the first section is such that the movement shapes, gestures and staging patterns created by the dancer is the focus. There are small variations in framing and filming, e.g. close up, zoom and pan, but the main focus is on establishing the intent through movement.

The middle section manipulates the movement shapes and gestures established in section one, and embellishes the intent, with more emphasis on the use of filming techniques. The use of water as an effect, e.g. vision of rain, manipulation of water which is hosed through the dancer's costume etc., acts as the means of embellishing the intent, with less emphasis placed on dance movement.

In the third section, there is a distinct change in the movement content. The movements are wider, more expansive and freer. The filming of this section is similar to the opening, and the intent of the work is reinforced through the use of

these similar filming devices as well as additional references to water.

This video can be used as an example of the successful fusion of dance and film, which maintains the integrity of the dance.

The composition task that will be filmed

Establish the idea or intent from a stimulus. For the purpose of this exercise the intent will be the travelling body.

Explore movements related to the travelling body with a specific focus on different body parts, e.g. feet, hands or torso.

Improvise and refine movement possibilities by manipulating the elements of dance. The focus may be on manipulating a single element, e.g. space, or may link any of the three elements. The focus may be as narrow as a single aspect of one element, e.g. pathway.

For the purpose of filming movement, choose to focus on one particular body part, e.g. the hands and continue to explore the movement possibilities, and refine some key shapes or movements.

Filming

The process of pre-production in filming is discussed in the article *Making meaning on-screen* written by Colin Schumacher, which is the feature article in this publication.

Take up the process of filming from activity five, which is the point at which the context of the work is examined. Consider how the choice of shot size and the sequencing of each shot impacts on the intent.

Storyboarding the action gives the film its structure, and enhances the link between the intent of the dance and the filming of the shots.

Once the filming is complete, examine whether the filming reflects the context and intent of the dance.

*Is the integrity of the dance maintained?
Have you achieved what you set out to achieve?*

Jan Ayre
Dance Consultant

Music for radio, film, television and multimedia

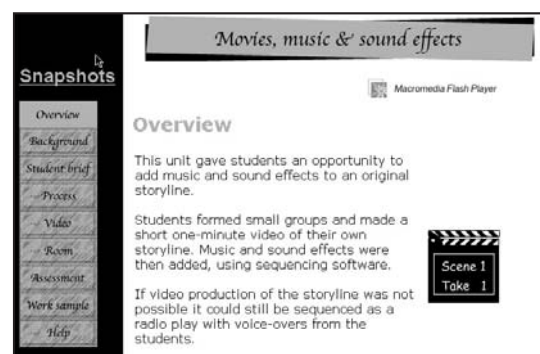
Music for radio, film, television and multimedia is an extremely popular topic with both junior and senior music students. The focus of the following article is on sourcing teaching activities, journal articles, interviews and technical information on the process of composing for radio, film, television and multimedia. All of the material referred to is available online.

The article by Colin Schumacher in this issue of CURRICULUM SUPPORT, *Making meaning on-screen*, addresses strategies for creating video footage. Although the creation of the musical score is a separate process, the article provides useful advice for music students creating original video footage as part of a film music assignment. This information would be very useful when teaching the unit of work in the following snapshot.

Movies, music and sound effects: a snapshot from Normanhurst Boys High School

Written by Steve Wells and Anne Wisdom.
<http://www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/learningtechnologies/snapshots/creativearts/movies/index.htm>

This snapshot traces the process of adding music and sound effects to an original one-minute video. Students were asked to add background music to set the mood and to enhance the storyline with sound effects and *mickey mousing* where appropriate.



As preparation for the activity students experimented with using music to parallel the action in cartoons (mickey mousing), experimented with adding sound effects to