Making Movies-in-Minutes

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# Abstract

Believing that youth's unsolicited on-line productions offer models for in-class production and reflection, the author describes the YouTube genre of movies-in-minutes, which contract full-length, professional movies to just a few minutes. The films variously involve life action reenactments, or the use of puppets, Lego, toys, or animation, and usually they eliminate all but what is essential to chronicle a few key scenes of the original. Additionally, they overcome the challenge posed by the use of high technology, multi-million-dollar special effects with inventive low technology, low cost solutions. The author describes his use of this model among his pre-service art teachers with three examples. Each exemplifies students engaging in considerable planning and organization: student learning and reliance on a complex range of visual and technical skills; and the creativity inherent in translating one cultural form into another. While highly motivated by recreating cultural forms with strong emotional resonance, students acquired knowledge that is basic to reflect critically upon, as well as fully appreciate, the dominant cultural forms of our time; namely, realistic style, time-based narrative imagery.

# Key words: Youth, YouTube, Videos, Movies

# **Making Movies-in-Minutes**

No, it is not possible to make movies in minutes. Movies-in-minutes refers to the YouTube genre in which many youth, some as young as 7 and 8 years, collaborate to reduce down a full-length commercial movie to no more than a few minutes (Duncum, 2013). Like other art educators, I believe such on-line unsolicited productions by youth offer models for in-class production (e.g., Manifold, 2013; Freedman, et. al., 2013). In particular, making movies-in-minutes involves a range of skills and knowledge relevant to operating with a critical perspective in today's narrative-based popular visual culture. It requires problem solving, relies upon co-operative learning, and is highly motivating. Making such movies is an example of the visual culture orientation in art education, with its extension beyond both traditional and contemporary fine art to embrace popular culture (e.g., Duncum, 2006; Freedman, 2003). The visual culture orientation acknowledges the fact that our students' minds are increasingly formed and informed by digital popular imagery and to be relevant art education must be responsive.

Over the past few years I have introduced an assignment based on the movie-in-minutes genre to my foundations pre-service art teacher students. This paper describes three movies created in a recent class, each of which can be viewed on YouTube.<sup>1</sup>

The hugely successful blockbusters that are typically reworked by youth on YouTube are more than escapist spectaculars. The original films invariably engage through the use of such archetypal themes as the hero's journey, fear conquered, goals realized, maturity attained, love achieved, love lost, and so on (Campbell, 2008). They play the traditional role of storytelling, that of inculcating social expectations. As one of the dominant

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Harriet Potter and the Sorcerers's Stone (Final Edition). Available from: <u>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCPDmcqLQi8</u> Sisterhood of the Traveling Yoga Pants by Sneha Gaikward. Available from: <u>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHBSioBtF9o</u> The Hunger Games: Movie in Minutes by Regina Hinders Available from:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njFfzOKvK1g

forms of cultural production today, movies simultaneously reinforce the behavioral norms of society and offer deep psychological satisfactions. For youth, they play crucial developmental functions. No wonder then that when time-based technology is as widely available as it is today, youth relish reimagining these films in ways that reflect their personal as well as generational dispositions and predispositions. Making Movies-in-Minutes

## Movie-in-Minutes on YouTube

Movies-in-minutes on YouTube are typically achieved by eliminating all but what is needed to chronicle key scenes with only essential characters, and by overcoming the use of high technology multi-million-dollar special effects with low technology, low cost solutions. Sometimes the films involve the capture of imagery or audio from the original film, but more commonly they involve reworking scenes with live actors, and/or animations, puppets, dolls, Lego figures, and soft toys.

Blockbusters like *Jaws* and *Titanic* even now remain favorites. In the 1997, \$200,000,000 epic *Titanic* (Landau, 1997), the climatic sinking sequence involved the use of a full-scale model, several very large-scale models, and extensive computer generated images (CGI). Youth productions posted to YouTube rework this iconic scene in many different ways. They include a paper boat in a sink with the plug taken out so that the paper boat swirls around chaotically, a large Lego boat in a wading pool with an anxious voice over predicting disaster, and a plastic ship on a blue bedcover that is lifted up and down to create the illusion of giant waves.

Some examples are immensely popular. *Movie-in-Minutes Harry Potter* by Nigajoga was uploaded in February 2009, and at the time of writing early in 2014 it had received over 14 million views. The movie is typical of the genre in devising ingenious translations from big budget to virtually no budget film making as well as incorporating a range of diverse influences to create something new. Nigajoga is a Japanese teen who, with the aid of friends, parodies *Harry Potter* by using upper class British accents, puns on *Harry* and *Hurry*, and creating incomprehensible spells while breakdancing.

Like other movie-in-minutes movies, Nigajoga's movie sacrifices a coherent storyline in order to recreate a series of iconic, emotionally charged scenes that make sense only by reference to the original. Again, like the genre as a whole, it also illustrates a collaborative model of creativity (Jenkins, 2006), in which youth, working together to share and swap ideas, modify, extend, and average between existing cultural models (Wilson & Wilson, 1976).

### **Movies-in-Minutes the Classroom**

Inspired by these films, I begin by asking my undergraduate foundation art education students to chose a movie. Then they must identify its primary narrative; decide on which scenes and characters are necessary to tell it; chose a medium such as live actors, toys, and so on; develop a storyboard; and consider how to achieve climatic special effects with whatever they can muster. Through trial and error I have learned it is necessary to insist that students chose movies that primarily involve more than everyday experiences. The bigger the blockbuster, the more inventive they need to be.

### In Preparation

As preparation for making these movies I introduce some of the basic, formal elements of still photography, including framing, angles-of-view, lighting, lenses, and depth-of-field. The students view a PowerPoint presentation on each of these elements, and in small groups they take photographs and make their own PowerPoint presentations that illustrate variations of each element.<sup>2</sup>

They photograph a subject with distant framing, loose and tight full frames, three-quarter frames, half frames, head and shoulder frames, close-ups, and extreme close-ups. They shoot with high, neutral, and low angles; with full frontal lighting, and back, side and three-quarter lighting; with telephoto, standard and wide-angle lenses; and with deep and selective depth-of-field. In each case students are expected to explain what these

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Duncum (2012) for a more complete description of this procedure.

choices allow and exclude, and how these choices position the viewer in relation to the subject viewed. For example, students must explain how a loose full frame provides context but is less dramatic than tight full frame, how a high angle offers the viewer a powerful position, how frontal lighting flattens a subject, how selective focus directs attention, and so on. Making Movies-in-Minutes

I then introduce basic time-based elements including camera movements such as panning, tracking, tilting, and zooming, and the numerous ways to transition that are now available on digital editing programs. Students also consider objective and subjective point-of-view; that is, where the placement of the camera positions the viewer as on onlooker and when it acts as the eyes of one of the characters. And, finally, students consider how the meanings of images are anchored by means of music, words, and sound effects. We then study short snippets from Hollywood movies to identify all the elements mentioned above and also to understand how they work together. We watch many times, focusing each time on different elements and different combinations of elements. Initially, I turn off the sound so that students can better concentrate on the purely visual elements, and when I turn the sound back on the importance of anchorage is made abundantly clear.

We then watch a number of movie-in-minute examples posted on YouTube, which we critique in terms of interest, originality, and coherence. Students also use the YouTube criteria - what they liked and disliked - as well as considering the validity of comments on the films already posted on YouTube. (I have found it exceptionally useful for students to critique these amateur efforts since students learn from negative models in a way they cannot by watching only well-crafted professional productions).

# The Choice of Movies

The class I describe below broke into three groups of three and four students to produce three separate movies of their own choice. One group chose *The Hunger Games* (Jacobson & Kilik, 2012). Another group chose *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Heyman, 2001), which, following

many parodies already on YouTube, they retitled *Harriet Potter and the Sorceress's Stone.* The third group chose *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* (Chase, 2005), which they too retitled, again using models on YouTube, Sisterhood of the Traveling Yoga Pants.

The original *Sorcerer's Stone* film is the first in the Harry Potter series. It introduces many of the main characters and situations. The trio of young heroes discover their friendship and prove themselves by doing battle with a series of dark forces. The *Sisterhood* film involves four teen girls who discover that despite their different body types a pair of jeans miraculously fits each of them. The jeans then act to connect them as they spend their first summer vacation apart discovering themselves as individuals. *The Hunger Games* film involves a future utopian society that has replaced war with a game in which youngsters are set loose in a forest to fight to the death, all the time being watched on television by an excited mass audience. Essentially, the film combines real war with a reality TV show.

While the films are very different from one another and some themes are more pronounced in some films than others, thematically they are remarkable similar. Themes include friendship, self-discovery, mistakes made and mistakes corrected, bonds of loyalty, physical and moral trails, adventures into the unknown, family dysfunction, courage, heartache, and the recognition of the specialness of individual protagonists. *Harry Potter* and *Hunger Games* also involve heroism, demonstrations of high-level skills, and the triumph of good over evil, while *Sisterhood* and *Hunger Games* also include budding romance.

The *Harry Potter* film was released when my early 20s something students were small children, and *Sisterhood* and *Hunger Games* are quintessentially late teen/young adult films. Each film was based on best selling books and in turn each proved not just a "hit" but a box office "phenomenon." In the life of my students the films had been seminal, and when I reviewed the films it was easy to understand their appeal. Each was exceptionally well crafted, with deep emotional resonance, especially, for my students' age group.

# Storyboarding

Making Movies-in-Minutes

Since the majority of students had not made a film before, they could not foresee every challenge, but from previous experience I knew it was important for them to make a detailed storyboard to ensure that they did not waste time when filming. Where their drawing abilities failed them, they supplemented their drawing by writing down their intended framing and angles-of-view. For each scene they also indicated their intended camera movements, words spoken, words narrated, and their intended music and sound effects, as well as an estimated length of each shot. To approximate the latter, I had them close their eyes and picture the scene in their mind's eye.

Left to their own devices each group devised different working methods. One group discussed at great length which scenes to include, storyboarding as they went; a second group selected what they wanted to use by watching the original movie; and the third group began watching previous movies-in-minute YouTube versions to consider what they could use, what they thought they could improve, and where they wanted to invent their own solutions. Their discussions were peppered with comments that often began, "What if we tried..." and "Do you think it would work if ..."

Before venturing out to film I checked their storyboards, making suggestions and asking questions to clarify what they were thinking, a necessary step to ensure that they had at least considered the issues they would face. I was intrigued to find who had been assigned which roles; the costumes, makeup, and disguises they intended to use; and the locations they had considered. Among each group a conspiratorial spirit asserted itself in which they were keen to keep some things a surprise. By this time they were anxious to start, and off they went.

# The Filming and Editing Process

Some filming was undertaken with loaned professional equipment; other filming used cell phones. Back in class students edited using either *iMovie* or

*Final Cut Pro* on their laptops. Although each group had carefully storyboarded each scene with particular framing and angles-of-view, and two groups shot their films accordingly, *The Hunger Games* team decided to shot with different frames and from different angles with the intention of later choosing the best, though when editing they decided to create excitement by using snippets from most of their different frames and angles. My only role at this point was to make occasional suggestions; the students were eager to work, often laughing, co-operating, completely in the moment.

### The Language Learned

At the conclusion of the movie making process each team wrote about their experiences, reflecting upon the decisions they had made, problems encountered, solutions found, happy accidents, and what they thought they had learned. Among the comments student wrote that indicate they had acquired a working knowledge of basic grammar, the following are typical:

"We used a neutral angle-of-view to suggest that the viewer is seated in the train with the characters, drawing them into the conversation, but a low angle to exaggerate Hagrid's size."

"We began with a loose full frame of Bridget, then we zoomed into her face, then tilted the camera down to show her pregnant belly, and then down further to show water on the mat from her water's breaking."

"When the four girls sit in a circle that symbolizes their never-ending friendship, we chose a 360 degree pan to emphasize their connection to one another."

"We utilized panning, tracking, and zooming to follow characters and add emphasis, and we found that using handheld shots worked best to create the illusion of constant movement."

"For most of our film we used a static camera, but for action scenes we used quick panning."

"When Tibby's friend faints the camera cuts to her friend's point-of-view Mak so the viewer sees Tibby's worried face. When Kostas tells Lena he loves her the camera switches to her point-of-view."

Making Movies-in-Minutes

Each team stressed how they discovered the importance of anchoring.

"Without music our film seemed flat and the transitions between scenes were not very fluid. However, the moment the first song was layered over, the film became dynamic and dramatic."

"Running up and down the corridor made no sense until we added the dog barking."

"The creepiness of Voldamort's voice is essential to the scene."

Learning the basic language of the formal grammar of movies is important because it helps focus attention on how movies are constructed and the effect they have on the viewer. In this respect, it is as important as the formal language of line, color, shape and so on. Knowing this language equips students to better appreciate professional film making as well as better positioning them to resist manipulation. The skills and knowledge of traditional media are specific to the media, and so it is with film.

# **Collaborative Creativity**

The student's movies-in-minutes, however, were more than an exercise in acquiring formal language. They also involved two kinds of creativity: the invention of ingenious solutions and the creativity inherent in translating from one form to another.

First, students had to devise a range of solutions to overcome the modest means with which they were operating. In the original *Harry Potter* film, the Quidditch game is played by flying furiously around in the air by no other means than broomsticks. In the student's adaptation Harriet and one antagonist simply run towards each other with broomsticks between their legs. The scene in the original film where the three children are entangled by

the tree roots is managed in the student's film by the three protagonists clutching low lying branches, flailing about and crying out; and where in the original they fall through the roots, here they simply jump one by one out of a tree onto the ground. Where the original film employs a giant three-headed CGI dog, the student movie substitutes the sound effect of a dog barking and the heroes own terrified reactions. To recreate the scene in which characters attempt to catch keys the students stood in front of a movie screen on which they projected keys flying, which they combined with a few real keys dangling from string.

The *Sisterhood* team was faced with the problem of devising four distinctly different locations, including in Greece and underwater. I suggested that they could stand in front of images projected with an old overhead projector, but since a green screen was available they were keen to use it. In this way they created an illusion of travel in very different locations.

The Hunger Games team avoided the need to substitute big budget special effects with low budget ones by focusing almost entirely on scenes in the forest that did not require special effects. One problem they did need to solve was how to stay faithful to their storyboard, which called for hitting a squirrel with an arrow. Although they managed to film a squirrel appearing from behind a tree, killing it was of course impossible so they created the illusion of a kill with editing and the sound of a speeding arrow.

Secondly, students faced the challenge of re-imagining full-length movies taking place in just a few minutes. Each of the original films had already undergone a process of selection and recreation to condense book length stories to a few hours. They had been already translated from one medium to another, the result of weighing up and deciding from many alternative possibilities. For example, in the *Sisterhood* book two of the main characters have siblings who are omitted in the film, the adventure of one of the girls is markedly different from the book, and instead of taking place over four summers the film takes place over just one (see Brashares, 2003). Making movies-in-minutes involves making further difficult decisions about what to include and what to exclude. It involves making drastic contractions and still retain some resemblance to the original.

Making Movies-in-Minutes

Although each of the original films construct a traditionally coherent narrative, like their YouTube model, none of the student films do. Each of the student films follow the chronology of their original, but consist mostly of a series of separate scenes that are dependent for understanding upon a knowledge of their original. Considering the many the possibilities available to the students, I found what they selected highly instructive; they not only indicate just why these films were chosen in the first place, but also why students showed such enthusiasm in making their own movie versions. In carefully reviewing the movies, it became evident that in each movie the scenes students chose were either essential to help set up the action to follow or were emotionally charged. The delight student took in making their movies appears primarily due to the opportunities it offered to recreate key moments of deep emotional resonance.

### The Motivation of Emotion

Like the original *Harry Potter* film, the student version begins by establishing location, but unlike the original it then almost immediately jumps to the key declaration of Harriet as a wizard. This eliminates most of the build up to the declaration, including all of Harriet's family. Other early scenes are similarly eliminated and instead we move directly to the three protagonists meeting and introducing themselves on the train. In this very succinct way we are introduced to the key characters and their relationships. The original film involves many adventures and many characters, but here we see only a few iconic scenes of trail and triumph. The movie ends with Harriet, having vanquished the chief villain, unconscious, clutching the sorceress's stone in her hand. All the subsequent sequences of the original are jettisoned. Yet with the greatest danger defeated and with the use of highly emotional music, the film ends with its conclusion satisfyingly open. In short, much of the set up scenes and all of the concluding scenes are eliminated, leaving just enough set up to introduce us to the characters followed by a series of

emotionally charged scenes where the courage of the main characters is tested and their friendship is cemented.

The Sisterhood movie-in-minutes version begins with the mothers of the four girls in a gym exercising much like the original, but unlike the original, one of the mother's waters break, which introduces a carnivalesque touch that is typical of youth parodies. We are then shown a short textual passage to bring us into the present where the girls are now in their late teens. Like the original, they are shown cheerfully walking arm in arm along a sidewalk and into a clothing store where they each try on the pants. In the original the scene in the store takes some time but here it is contracted with the girls emerging one after the other from a booth, each surprised that the jeans fit. Up to this point all the scenes are concerned with setting up the situation; the girls have been best fiends forever and are now mysteriously linked by means of the jeans. The original film then explores the four girls individual adventures by shifting back and forth between them many times, but here only one or two scenes are shown per girl, and where their adventures are developed over time here they are rendered almost immediately. For example, in the original a whole series of scenes are devoted to one of the girl's response to her father remarrying. She is initially confused and only expresses anger much later. Here, she expresses confusion and anger as an initial reaction, which appears as psychologically valid as the original treatment. Similar to the original, the movie ends with the girls reunited and swearing life-long friendship. Thus, while radically contracted, the structure of the student movie follows the original, with the four girls together, separated, and then reunited. By focusing on their emotional challenges as well as abiding friendship, the emotional tone of the original is also retained.

The student version of *Hunger Games* begins with a panning shot that locates the heroine in the forest hunting wildlife and thereby establishing her expertise in the trail that follows. We then see her comforting her younger sister, and to save her sister she volunteers for the game. Her subsequent actions are thereby shown to be self-sacrificing. We then see her and her romantic interest preparing for their ordeal. Having this established the main characters and their situation, what follows are a series of scenes of action, sacrifice and tragedy, and finally a challenge to the autocratic rule in which the two protagonists risk everything. Most of the bizarre characters who watch the hunt on television are never shown, but the student version manages to recreate the central drama by focusing on the hunt itself.

Making Movies-in-Minutes

In each of the student cut-down versions scenes either set-up the primary situation or recreate key moments of emotional connection in which danger is faced and overcome, people die, friendship is established and tested, and romance initiated. Scenes demonstrate self-sacrifice, courage, and loving relationships.

# Conclusion

The movie-in-minutes YouTube genre has proven a means to combine both perennial and emerging realities and bring them into the classroom. As mentioned in the introduction, the visual culture orientation of art education is concerned with popular culture as much as it is with either traditional or new fine art, and today it is time-based narrative media on digital platforms that are our dominant cultural form. And it is no wonder that youth are recycling these forms with the technology that is now so readily available. Youth have proven able to take to digital technologies like fish to water, and today all they need is a cell phone and a laptop to collapse their consumption of popular media into their own production. Equally, youth culture has always been involved in exploring the meaning of courage, friendship, loyalty, and the mastery of skills, and many films are made with this demographic squarely in mind. Now, with the aid of new technologies, some youth are eager to rework these themes according to their own sensibilities, to offer loving homilies, and filtered through their often transgressive and resistant culture, to make parodies that are not only often hilarious but inventive.

However, not all unsolicited youth productions on YouTube are especially noteworthy. Many are talentless and inane, and they lack even the most rudimentary skills of filming, editing, and the layering of an auditory track. Similarly, art teachers, and my pre-service teachers, largely lack the

skills and knowledge to assist them. This is why it has become important for me to teach these skills and this knowledge, and the movie-in-minutes genre is particularly useful for this because it offers particular challenges. While there are many YouTube genre, subgenre and hybrid genre created by youth, most are rather simple in structure; some are little more than talking heads straight to camera. Making movie-in-minutes involves, for example, structuring and sequencing, considering where to place the camera to best show action, when to show and when to tell, when to use pictures and when words, how to establish mood with music and sound effects, and how long a scene should take to maintain interest. In making these movies students gain a glimpse into the complexity of professional movie making.They acquire a basic language with which to analyze movies and how to articulate expectations when they come to teach.

In the case of my own students, they employed a technology with which they were familiar as users but gained confidence as producers, and thereby become a repository of insider knowledge. Now they can better look at movies and consider why certain decisions were made and by extension be more aware of how those decisions were meant to effect them. And while students were motivated by the problem solving challenges inherent in the activity, it was I believe the emotional resonance of the activity that truly excited them. As the *Hunger Games* team wrote,

On completing our film we had a new perspective on the professionalism needed to make films. This project took many hours of work and effort yet our film is less than five minutes long. Since Hollywood films are much longer, they must take months or even years to make. The skills involved in using camera angles, lighting, audio, special effects and acting in professional films became much more apparent after this project. And as students, how often do we get to work on something we really love? Overall, it was challenging and a revelation. Considering all we learned, it was highly educational, and it will be fun to do with future students.

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Making Movies-in-Minutes

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# Acknowledgements

Madison Borop, Christine Connelly, Taylor Forbes, Shannon Fu, Sneha Gaikwad, Regina Hinders, Brook Kim, Alexandra Konczak, Naomi Morimoto, Sara Pina, Tyler Riordan.

# 製作電影極短篇

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### 摘要

青少年主動創作的線上作品可作為課堂製作作品與討論的範本,筆者將介紹 YouTube 的電影極短篇,即為將標準長度的專業電影縮減成僅幾分鐘的短片。這些電影極短篇的拍攝內容十分豐富,包括眞人翻拍或使用玩偶、樂高積木、玩具或動畫製作,而且經常只保留最重要的部分,留下最關鍵的幾個場景。此外,他們以創意十足的低科技、低成本解決方案,取代了高科技製作或數百萬美元的特效。筆者將以三個極短篇作品來說明實習藝術教師使用這種拍片模式的過程。在這些案例中,學生們投入相當多的心力來規劃與籌備,學習與使用各種視覺與技術手法,同時展現轉譯不同文化形式時所需的創造力。學生不僅因為強烈情感共鳴而樂於再造文化形式,同時也學習到批判思考及欣賞當代主流文化形式所需的基本知識;這些主流文化形式基本上是以時間為基礎的寫實敘事影像。

關鍵詞:青少年、YouTube、影片、電影

# 製作電影極短篇

想要在幾分鐘之內製作一部電影 (make movies in minutes),當然不可 能。電影極短篇 (Movies-in-minutes) 是指一種 YouTube 影片形式,由許多 甚至才七、八歲的青少年合作,將原本標準長度的商業電影,剪輯成幾分鐘的 短片 (Duncum, 2013)。筆者和其他藝術教育工作者一樣,都認為這種青少年 於線上主動製作的作品,可以作為課堂作品的範本(例如,Manifold, 2013; Freedman, et. al., 2013)。製作電影極短篇需要運用多種技巧與操作知識, 並對今日以敘事為主的流行視覺文化提出一種批判角度。製作過程當中還需要 問題解決能力、合作學習以及高度動機。製作電影極短篇是藝術教育走向視覺 文化的例子之一,並將觸角延伸至傳統與當代美術之外,擁抱流行文化(例如, Duncum, 2006; Freedman, 2003)。視覺文化導向代表的意思是,現在學生 的心靈越來越受到數位流行影像的建構與影響,而藝術教育必須回應這種現象 才能獲得學生重視。

過去幾年來,筆者要求前來筆者學校實習的藝術教師完成一項電影極短篇 作業。本文將描述最近這個班級學生製作的三部影片,這些影片目前都可在 YouTube 上觀看。<sup>1</sup>

這些放在 YouTube 上,由青少年重製的熱門電影,已不僅是用來逃離現 實的賞心悅目之作而已。原版電影大多採用原型主題 (archetypal themes), 例如英雄的試煉之旅、克服恐懼、實現目標、成長體驗、得到愛情、失戀等等 (Campbell, 2008)。這些電影承擔起傳統說故事的功能,循循善誘觀衆符合社 會期待。電影作為現代文化作品的主要形式之一,同時也強化了社會的行為規 範,並提供深刻的心理滿足感。對青少年而言,電影具有重要的薰陶功能。難 怪以時間為基礎的科技在今日社會如此普及,而青少年重新剪輯的這些電影, 也反映出他們個人與世代的特質與傾向。

- 《瑜伽褲的夏天》(Sisterhood of the Traveling Yoga Pants),創作者 Sneha Gaikward。 網址:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHBSioBtF9o
- 《飢餓遊戲:極短篇》(The Hunger Games: Movie in Minutes),創作者 Regina Hinders,網址: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njFfzOKvK1g

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>《哈利波特與魔法石》(*Harriet Potter and the Sorcerers's Stone*)(最終版)。 網址: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCPDmcgLQi8

## YouTube 的電影極短篇

製作電影極短篇

YouTube 上的電影極短篇基本上會省略幾乎所有細節,只保留主要角色 來串聯關鍵的幾場戲,並以低科技、低成本解決方案,取代動輒數百萬美元的 特效與高科技的拍攝手法。這些極短篇有時會擷取原始電影當中的畫面或音 訊,但大部份的時候會運用眞人演員,和/或動畫、玩偶、娃娃、樂高積木和 絨毛玩具等重新翻拍。

熱門賣座片如《金剛》與《鐵達尼號》至今依然是許多人的最愛。1997 年 耗資兩億美金拍攝的史詩電影《鐵達尼號》(Landau, 1997),當中石破天驚的 沈船畫面動用了眞實大小的模型、數個巨大的模型以及衆多電腦合成影像來拍 攝。YouTube 上也有青少年利用各種不同方法來翻拍這場經典畫面,包括在 水槽裡放一艘紙船,然後把水槽塞子拔掉,讓紙船在急流中亂轉,或是把一艘 大型樂高積木船放在水池裡,一旁用緊張焦慮的配音預告災難的來臨,還有人 將塑膠船放在藍色床單上,上下晃動床單,製造出巨浪一般的效果。

有些翻拍影片還十分受到歡迎。Nigajoga 製作的《哈利波特》電影極短 篇於 2009 年 2 月上傳,截至 2014 年初本文撰寫時間為止,已經有超過 1400 萬人次觀賞。這部影片成功地將大成本製作,翻拍成幾乎不用預算的影 片,同時融入更豐富的元素,讓整部影片充滿新意。Nigajoga 這位日本青少 年與幾個朋友合作,在戲仿《哈利波特》時,用上流社會的英國腔來玩弄 *Harry* 與 *Hurry* 這兩個字,而其中的霹靂舞 (breakdancing) 片段更是發揮令人難以 置信的奇特魅力。和其他電影極短篇一樣,Nigajoga 的創作犧牲了前後連貫 的故事線,以重新創造出一系列經典又充滿情感張力的場景,而這些場景都必 須參照原作才會有其意義。而且,這部影片也和其他極短篇一樣,展現了一種 合作創意模式 (Jenkins, 2006),讓青少年能共同分享與交換想法,再進一步 修改、延伸,於既有的文化模式之間相互激盪 (Wilson & Wilson, 1976)。

# 教室製作電影極短篇

受到這些影片的啓發,筆者開始要求大學裡的藝術教育系學生選擇一部電影;接著請他們找出其中的主要敘事架構;決定必須呈現的場景與角色;選擇 一種媒材,例如眞人演員、玩具等;製作分鏡表;然後思考如何利用他們可以 想得到的辦法,來呈現戲劇性的特效。歷經嘗試與挫折之後,筆者發現必須要

求學生挑選超越日常生活經驗以外的電影。電影的規模越大,越能激發出他們 更多的創意。

### 準備工作

為了協助學生製作電影,筆者介紹了一些靜止攝影的基本要素,包括構圖、視角、燈光、鏡頭和景深等。學生看完各項要素的 PowerPoint 簡報後, 分成幾個小組,然後各組製作 PowerPoint 簡報說明每項拍攝要素可以有哪些 變化。<sup>2</sup>

例如以遠距構圖、緊湊或鬆散的全畫幅、四分之三構圖、二分之一構圖、 頭肩構圖、特寫與大特寫等手法來拍攝主題。學生利用俯角、平視與仰角來拍 攝;正面全部打光、後面、側面與四分之三打光;長焦、標準與廣角鏡頭;以 及深度與選擇性景深。學生要能說明各種拍攝手法適合和不適合哪些情況,以 及選擇的手法會如何定位觀衆與拍攝對象之間的關係。例如,學生必須解釋鬆 散的全畫幅構圖會如何呈現整個背景,但與緊湊的構圖相比,較缺乏戲劇張 力;俯角拍攝可以帶給觀衆一種居高臨下的視覺感;而正面打光如何使拍攝主 體顯得扁平;選擇性對焦會如何引導觀衆的注意力等等。

接著筆者會介紹與時間有關的基本要素,包括攝影機移動方式,如搖鏡、 推軌、傾斜與縮放等,還有現在數位編輯軟體都有提供的衆多剪接技巧。學生 也要思考客觀與主觀視角,也就是攝影機的位置將觀衆放在哪個旁觀的位置 上,還有鏡頭何時代表劇中人物的視角。最後,學生要思考配樂、台詞和音效 如何突顯影像的意義。然後,我們會擷取好萊塢電影裡的簡短片段來研究,找 出上述提到的要素,並了解實際運用的狀況。我們會反覆觀看好幾次,每一次 研究不同的元素和多種元素的結合方式。一開始,筆者會關掉音效,讓學生把 注意力放在視覺元素上,然後再打開音效,讓學生清楚意識到音效爲情節定調 的效果。

接著我們會觀賞 YouTube 上的許多電影極短篇範例,並根據興趣、原創 性和連貫性進行評論。學生也會使用 YouTube 的標準(喜歡或不喜歡的評 價),並思考那些發表在 YouTube 上的影片評語是否合理。(筆者發現,讓 學生評論這些業餘創作對他們很有幫助,因爲學生可以從負面範例中學到許多 製作精良的專業作品無法教他們的事)。

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 有關此流程更詳細的描述,請參見 Duncum (2012)。

### 選擇電影

製作電影極短篇

下面討論的這個班級會分成三組,每組由三到四個學生共同製作自己選擇 的影片。有一組選擇《飢餓遊戲》(Jacobson & Kilik, 2012)。另一組選《哈利 波特:神秘的魔法石》(Heyman, 2001),他們和 YouTube 上許多擬仿影片一 樣,也將影片命名為《哈利波特:神秘的魔法石》。第三組選擇《牛仔褲的夏 天》(Chase, 2005),並且使用與 YouTube 範例一樣的名稱,《瑜伽褲的夏 天》(Sisterhood of the Traveling Yoga Pants)。

原版的神秘的魔法石電影是哈利波特系列電影的第一集,在這部片中介紹 了多位主要角色和情境;三位年輕的主人翁建立起友誼,並在克服一連串黑暗 勢力的挑戰後,證明了自己的能力。《牛仔褲的夏天》這部片當中有四位少女, 她們發現身材各異的四個人竟然都可以穿下同一件牛仔褲;當四個女生第一次 分開過暑假,適應獨立的個人生活時,這件牛仔褲成爲她們之間重要的聯繫。 《飢餓遊戲》則描述一個未來的烏托邦社會,以遊戲取代了戰爭,讓年輕人進 入森林之中,爲了個人生存互相殘殺,並實況轉播整個過程給一群激動的群衆 觀看;基本上,這部電影結合了眞實戰爭與電視實境秀。

雖然這些電影好像南轅北徹、各不相干,且有些電影的主題較為明確,但 其實都與類似主題有關。這些電影的主題都牽涉到友誼、發現自我、犯錯與改 正、忠誠約定、體能與道德的試煉、探險未知的世界、家庭失能、勇氣、感情 創傷和認知到個別主角的獨特性等議題。《哈利波特》與《飢餓遊戲》都涉及 英雄主義、展現才華、邪不勝正等概念,而《牛仔褲的夏天》與《飢餓遊戲》 當中都提到剛剛萌芽的戀情。

《哈利波特》上映時,這些二十出頭的學生還是小孩子,而《牛仔褲的夏 天》和《飢餓遊戲》則主要是給青少年後期/年輕成人觀賞的電影。每部電影 都是根據暢銷書改編,而且都不只是「賣座片」,而是極有份量的票房「現象」。 這些電影對學生來說意義重大,而筆者看完這些電影後,也完全可以體會其如 此吸引人的原因。每部電影的製作都十分專業與細緻,能讓觀衆產生深刻的情 感共鳴,特別是對筆者學生的年齡層而言。

### 製作分鏡表

由於大部份學生先前從未拍過電影,他們無法預料到拍片中可能遇到的困 難,但筆者從過去的經驗中學到,他們必須先製作一個詳細的分鏡表,才不會

在拍攝過程中浪費許多寶貴時間。如果繪圖能力有限,可以用書寫方式來彌 補,寫下他們打算運用的構圖與視角。每一個場景都要說明攝影機移動方式、 台詞、旁白、配樂與音效,並預估每一個鏡頭的時間長短。為了要預估時間, 筆者教學生閉上眼睛,在心裡想像畫面。

然後每一組根據自己擁有的裝置來設計不同的拍片方式。有一組花了很長時間,利用分鏡表來討論要選用哪些場景;另一組則是根據原版電影來挑選想要的場景;第三組一開始先觀看 YouTube 上的其他翻拍版本,然後再討論可以取材的部分、可以改進的部分,以及可以放入新方式的部分。他們在討論與評論時,總是會先說「假如我們嘗試…」,以及「如果這樣做…,大家覺得可行嗎」等句子做為開頭。

在開始拍片之前,筆者先確認過各組的分鏡表,然後提出建議與問題,幫助他們釐清想法:此步驟很重要,可以幫助他們確認是否已經考量到一些可能 遇到的問題。筆者希望知道哪些角色會由誰扮演;學生打算使用哪些服裝、化 妝和假道具:以及拍攝地點。但每組學生都會故作神秘,深怕洩漏天機,此時 每個學生都已迫不及待想要大顯身手了。

### 拍攝與剪輯過程

學生的部分拍攝工作是利用租來的專業設備;有些則使用手機完成。回到 課堂後,學生利用筆電的 *iMovie* 或 *Final Cut Pro* 軟體程式來剪輯影片。雖 然各組都仔細地寫下每一個場景的分鏡表,註明特定構圖與角度,有兩組也確 實依據分鏡表來拍攝;但*飢餓遊戲*這組決定嘗試用其他幾種不同的構圖和角度 拍攝,然後再擇優挑選,而在剪輯過程中,他們也決定要採用大部份來自其他 構圖與角度的拍攝片段,以製造更多不同的驚喜。此時筆者的任務就是偶爾提 出些建議,而學生則十分投入,邊笑邊工作,完全樂在其中。

### 學習電影語言

在電影製作即將結束前,各組都寫下自己的心得,反省自己做的決定、遇到的問題、找到的解決方案、有趣的意外插曲、以及從中得到的收穫。在學生的評語當中,可以看出他們已經學會使用基本的電影語言,以下是一些例子:

「我們使用平視角度來暗示觀眾正與片中角色一同坐在火車上,吸引 製作電影極短篇 觀眾投入對話當中,但又以仰角來誇大海格壯碩的身材,。

「我們一開始使用鬆散的全畫幅構圖來拍 Bridget,然後將鏡頭拉近至 她的臉部,再往下傾斜攝影機,拍攝她懷有身孕的肚子,接著再往下 拍地毯上流出的羊水」。

「在拍四個女孩圍成圓圈坐在一起,象徵她們堅定的友誼時,我們選 擇用 360 度搖鏡來強調她們彼此之間的緊密聯繫」。

「我們利用搖鏡、推軌和縮放鏡頭等方法,跟著角色移動,並加強強 調效果,而且我們發現使用手持拍法最能創造出持續移動的效果」。

「我們大部份的影片都以靜態的攝影機來拍攝,但在動作場景則使用 快速搖鏡」。

「當 Tibby 的朋友昏倒時,攝影機切換到她朋友的視角,讓觀眾看到 Tibby 擔憂的神情。當 Kostas 向 Lena 訴說愛慕之情時,攝影機又切 换到 Lena 的角度」。

每個團隊都強調他們發現了定調 (anchoring) 的重要性。

「如果沒有配樂,我們的電影看起來就很平淡,而且鏡頭之間的轉換 也不流暢。但是,第一首配樂一出現,整部片子就生動了起來,充滿 戲劇性」。

「在走廊上下奔跑的書面一點意思都沒有,等到加入了狗叫聲才有了 意義」。

「佛地魔讓人毛骨悚然的聲音也是十分重要的元素」。

學習電影形式的基本語言十分重要,因爲這能幫助我們決定電影建構的方 式,以及對觀衆產生的效果,就和藝術裡的線條、色彩、形狀等形式語言一樣 重要。了解電影語言能讓學生更懂得欣賞專業的電影製作,也更懂得如何抗拒 操弄手法。傳統媒體的技巧與知識有專屬的一套系統,電影也不例外。

## 合作式創意

然而,學生製作電影極短篇的目的不僅是學習形式語言而已。這些作品環 顯現了兩種創造力:發明獨特的解決方案,以及在不同形式之間轉換時需要的 創意。

首先,學生必須想出各種解決方案來克服經費上的問題。在原來的《哈利 波特》電影中,魁地奇大賽是讓人物騎著掃帚在天空中高速飛馳,但在學生版 的《哈利波特》當中,主角只能把掃帚夾在兩腿中間,往彼此飛奔過去。原版 電影裡有三個小孩被樹根纏住的場景,在學生版電影當中,改成三位主角抓住 低垂的樹枝,一邊使勁搖晃,一邊大聲喊叫;而原本要掉進樹根裡的戲碼,變 成他們一個接一個從樹上跳到地面上。原本電影當中使用電腦合成的巨型三頭 犬,在學生版本裡,則利用狗叫和主角驚嚇萬分的表情來取代。為了重拍片中 角色試圖拿到鑰匙的場景,學生們站在電影螢幕前方,將鑰匙飛過去的影像投 影在螢幕上,再配上幾支真的鑰匙啷鐺作響的音效。

《牛仔褲的夏天》這組遇到的問題是要設計四個完全不同的背景,包括希臘和水底。筆者建議他們可以站在傳統懸吊式投影機投影出來的畫面前方拍攝,但因爲剛好有一個綠色的螢幕,所以學生選擇了後者。他們利用這個方法, 創造出在不同地點旅行的效果。

《飢餓遊戲》這組為了省下大型特效所需的經費,將重點完全集中在森林 場景裡,這樣就不用太多特效,但他們有一個問題不得不面對,就是如何根據 分鏡表的計畫,用箭射死一隻松鼠。雖然他們成功拍到松鼠在樹後面出現的畫 面,但不可能真的把松鼠射死,因此他們利用剪輯和箭快速飛過的音效來呈現 打獵的效果。

學生面對的另一個重要問題是要將標準長度的電影縮減成只有幾分鐘長 度的短片。每一部原始電影都已經歷層層挑選與重製過程,才把厚厚的原著小 說濃縮成幾小時的電影,也就是說這些電影都是經過種種權衡與考量後,才成 功把一種媒體(小說)轉譯成另一種(電影)。例如,《牛仔褲的夏天》原著 小說當中的兩位主角原本有兄弟姊妹,但在電影版裡都被省略,且其中一個女 孩的冒險與書中描述有明顯差異,而書中原本歷經四個暑假的故事,在電影裡 只提到了一個暑假(參見 Brashares, 2003)。製作電影極短篇時,取捨的問 題更加困難,需要更大篇幅的濃縮工程,同時還要保留原著精神。

雖然每部原版電影都具備前後連貫的傳統敘事特色,但學生們的電影和其他 YouTube 版本一樣,都採取截然不同的敘事方法。每一部學生影片都遵照 原片的時間順序,但每部片幾乎都是根據學生對於原片的理解,將一連串個別的場景組合在一起。筆者發現,學生挑選的敘事方式十分發人深省,他們不僅 說明了為何要選擇這些電影來翻拍,同時也解釋了學生為何會在製作電影時展 現如此高的興致。在仔細檢視這些極短篇後,我們可以明顯看到,學生挑選的

場景不是為了設定後續的行動,就是在呈現情感張力。學生在製作時如此喜悅 的原因,似乎是因為他們有機會重新創作那些帶給他們深刻共鳴的關鍵時刻。 製作電影極短篇

### 情感動機

就像原版《哈利波特》電影一樣,學生版一開始先建立背景地點,但和原版不同的是,學生版立即跳到宣佈哈利成為巫師的關鍵場景。如此一來,省略了宣佈成為巫師前的大部份情節,包括哈利家人的部份。其他早期的場景也同樣刪除,直接進入三個主人翁相遇並自我介紹的部份,所以我們很快就認識了主要人物和他們之間的關係。原版電影當中還有許多冒險情節與其他角色,但我們在這裡只看到幾個經典的試煉與勝利的場景。電影結束時,哈利消滅了主要壞蛋,在還沒意識到前,手上已握住了魔法石。原版電影當中的所有後續情節都被刪掉了。但是電影結束時,最大的危機已經化解,再配上動人的音樂,留下令人滿意的開放式結局。簡而言之,大部份的設定場景和所有結尾場景都被刪除,只留下足夠的設置來讓我們認識幾個主角,以及接下來一連串充滿情緒張力的戲,展現主角們如何接受勇氣的試煉並鞏固彼此的友誼。

《瑜伽褲的夏天》極短篇一開始是四個女孩的母親在健身房裡運動,和原 版電影相同,但不同的是,其中一個母親的羊水破了,呈現一種青少年戲仿特 有的嘉年華狂歡氣氛。接著由一段簡短的文字敘述帶領我們認識這些已是二八 佳人的少女。和原版一樣,這些少女手牽著手開心地走在人行道上,然後走進 一間服裝店,開始試穿牛仔褲。在原版電影中,服裝店裡的戲花了一些時間, 但學生版則簡化成女孩們一個個從試衣間裡走出來,發現這條牛仔褲很適合她 們每一個人。到目前為止,所有場景都是為了設定情境,也就是女孩們原本就 是死黨,而現在這條牛仔褲為她們的情誼增添了一種神秘色彩。原版電影接著 開始闡述四個女孩各自的冒險故事,並在各個主角之間多次切換,但學生版只 使用一、兩個場景來描述每一個女孩的故事,而她們的冒險如何發展則是快速 帶過。例如,原版當中有一連串場景用來描繪其中一個女孩對父親再婚的反 應,她一開始感到很困惑,等到很長一段時間之後才發洩出憤怒的情緒。在學 生版當中,她一開始就顯得既困惑又憤怒,這樣的處理似乎與原版一樣都具有 心理學上的說服力。和原版相似之處在於,學生版結尾時,女孩們再次團聚並 許下終生不變的友誼誓言。因此,雖然經過大幅濃縮刪減,但學生版電影的結 構仍遵循原版,四個女孩在一起、分開,最後重聚。學生版將重點放在她們情 感的問題與堅定的友誼上,保留了原版的情感基調。

《飢餓遊戲》的學生版採用搖鏡拍攝女主角在森林中狩獵的畫面,為她日後的高超技術預留伏筆。接著我們看到女主角在安慰妹妹,以及為了救妹妹自願參加這場遊戲。她接下來的行動都是為了表現她的自我犧牲精神。然後女主角與心儀的對象準備面對即將到來的嚴峻考驗。設定好主角和情境後,接下來是一連串的打鬥、犧牲與悲劇場景,最後是兩位主角對獨裁統治奮不顧身的挑戰。雖然學生版省略了那些從電視上觀看狩獵節目現場直播的人物,但仍透過狩獵場景重現了主戲本身。

在每一個學生極短篇中,場景皆用以設定主要情境或再現關鍵感情戲,包括遭逢與克服危險、死亡、建立與考驗友誼、還有愛情的出現。場景主要都是 為了呈現自我犧牲、勇氣與忠誠關係。

### 結論

事實證明,YouTube 電影極短篇的電影形式可結合常年與時下的現實情況,並將相關現實帶入課堂當中。如導論中所言,藝術教育的視覺文化導向對於流行文化與傳統或新藝術同樣重視,而如今數位平台上以時間為主的敘事媒體已成為主流的文化形式,也難怪青少年可以利用隨手可得的新科技,再次利用這些形式。青少年已經能十分專業地處理數位科技,今天他們只需要手機和 筆電,就能將流行媒體消費轉變成自己的創作作品。同樣地,青少年文化一直 在探討勇氣、友誼、忠誠與精通技能的意義,許多電影也都是鎖定青少年族群 為主要觀衆群。在新科技的輔助下,有些青少年熱切地想以自己的感受來重新 詮釋這些主題,宣揚自己的理念,並透過他們激進而叛逆的文化特質,創作出 不僅誇張爆笑且創意十足的戲仿之作。

但是,並非所有青少年主動製作的 YouTube 影片都值得一看。許多影片 實在乏善可陳、空洞無聊,連最基本的拍攝、剪輯與堆疊音軌技巧都不會。同 樣地,大部份的藝術教師和筆者的實習教師也缺乏技巧與知識可以協助青少 年。這也是爲何筆者要教授這些技巧和知識,而電影極短篇是很好的練習,因 爲對學生來說也是很特別的挑戰。雖然青少年創作了許多 YouTube 影片類 型、次類型和混合類型,但大部分在結構上都相當簡單,有些影片只不過是對 著攝影機講話而已。電影極短篇的製作過程包括建立架構與流程、思考如何將 攝影機擺放在最適合拍攝動作的位置、何時呈現、何時訴說、何時使用畫面與 文字、如何以音樂和音效營造氣氛,以及一個場景應該以多長時間來維持觀衆 注意力。在製作這些電影時,學生們得以一窺專業電影製作的堂奧,也學會日 後為人師表時,可分析電影以及表達期望的方式。

製作電影極短篇

以筆者學生爲例,他們雖然是使用自己熟悉的科技,但在過程中獲得了身 爲製作人的自信,並由此建立起所謂的內行人知識。現在他們可以更深入了解 電影,並思考導演何以做了這樣的安排,進而意識到這些安排意圖如何影響觀 衆。雖然學生從解決問題之中獲得了學習的動力,但筆者認爲其實是情感共鳴 的部份激勵了他們。就如*飢餓遊戲*小組所言,

在完成影片時,我們對於電影製作的專業有了全新看法。這次活動花 了我們許多精力與時間,但我們的電影長度才短短幾分鐘。好萊塢電 影的長度更長,因此一定花了好幾個月,甚至好幾年才能完成。經過 了這次的製作活動,我們更加了解專業電影當中必備的攝影機角度、 燈光、音效、特效與演技等元素。身為學生,我們難得有機會為自己 真正喜歡的事情努力。整體而言,這是充滿挑戰的計畫,也是重大的 啟發。我們學習到的一切都富含教育意義,若能運用在未來教學上, 一定能帶來無限樂趣。

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