

Film Studies 100 004

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Shot by Shot Analysis

Intro – In this specific scene, there are few elements that are consistent throughout the shots.

Most of the shots are medium, medium long and long shots and the camera height is mostly eye level with frontal camera position. The non-diegetic music is same throughout the scene along with editing elements. Hard cut is used for almost all of the shots. High-key lighting is used in the daylight scene to illuminate the set and create a more naturalistic look.

Shot 1 (medium close up) - Basket of flowers. High camera angle. Low contrast. Dissolves.

(4 seconds)

Shot 2 (medium close up) – Woman’s face shown looking into the distance. High camera angle.

Dissolves. (4 seconds)

Shot 3 (long shot) – The full figure of the woman is seen sitting on a concrete ledge with a basket of flowers at her feet. Low camera angle. Dissolve

(3 seconds)

Shot 4 (extreme long shot) - The woman is sitting down at the street corner. Establishes the setting.

(10 seconds)

Shot 5 (medium long shot) - The Tramp keeps on moving around trying to avoid the traffic cop who is on a motorcycle in the center of the frame. To avoid the cop the Tramp opens the door of one limousine and goes in. Slightly symmetrical frame (balanced composition)

(7 seconds)

Shot 6 (long shot) – Continuation of the previous scene where the Tramp is seen stepping out of the car onto the sidewalk which is parked in front of the woman sitting there. The woman hearing that someone stepped out offers up a flower and the man, who was walking away, turns back and looks. (7 seconds)

Shot 7 (medium shot) - The woman is smiling and speaking something holding out the flower. Slightly high camera angle.

(2 seconds)

Shot 8 (medium shot) – Shows the Tramp’s reaction to the flower girl. (3 seconds)

Shot 9 – As shot 7 (3 seconds)

Shot 10 – As shot 8 (5 seconds)

Shot 11 (medium shot) – Interaction between the Tramp and the woman. Woman offers the flower but her hand bumps into the arm of the man and the flower falls to the floor. The man, fixing his hat goes to pick it up. Woman goes to pick it up too.

(14 seconds)

Shot 12 (medium shot) – Woman is down on the ground searching for the flower with her hands.

High camera angle. (4 seconds)

Intertitle – “Did you pick it up, Sir?”

Shot 13 (medium long shot) – Tramp realizes she is blind. Helps her stand up and the woman puts the boutonniere in his pocket. Tramp hands her the money and she goes back to sit while he is staring at her. (34 seconds)

Shot 14 (long shot) - Tramp is looking fondly upon the woman. A man walks into the frame from behind and is seen getting into the parked limousine. The woman hears the door slam and thinks that the Tramp who has paid has left without taking the change and holds out her hand.

Pan camera movement, mobile framing, low camera angle. (7 seconds)

Intertitle – “Wait for your change, Sir.”

Shot 15 (long shot) - Tramp looks over to the rich man who is leaving. The car drives away while the Tramp is looking at it. He turns his head to look at the flower woman. The woman and man both are now looking in the direction of the car leaving. Tramp proceeds to slowly walk away.

Pan camera movement, mobile framing.

(21 seconds)

Shot 16 (medium long shot) - Tramp peeks from behind the wall and then sits in the corner on the same ledge looking at the flower girl. The woman is seen sitting down alone. She rises up to fill her container with water from the water fountain. Balanced frame composition in the beginning. (16 seconds)

Shot 17 (medium long shot) - The flower woman fills the water from the tap while the Tramp silently watches her. The woman is cleaning out the container and unintentionally throws water onto the Tramp who is sitting there. The Tramp is surprised and slowly leaves with the woman standing there filling her pot with water. Fades out.

(21 seconds)

Synthesis

City Lights (1931) is a romantic comedy film that was directed by the legend Charlie Chaplin and released in 1931. The silent film follows the narrative of a Tramp, homeless and poor, falling for a blind girl (Virginia Cherill) who mistakes him for a rich man and making immense efforts for her to have a surgery in order to get her eyesight back. The clip from 07.08 to 10.08 showcases their first encounter and is highlighted in its simplicity. The stylistic elements used in the particular clip make the scene a poignant one and pave way for the progression of its narrative form.

The cinematography done in this crucial scene is important in displaying the scene's importance to the narrative as a whole but also to induce accurate responses from the audience as well. It incorporates a variety of shots ranging from longs, medium shots to close ups. The face of the woman is shown in a close-up shot (Shot 2) which conveys more intensity as the audience sees the flower woman to be looking in the distance with a faraway look giving the first hint that something is amiss here. Most other shots consist of long shots, medium shots or medium long shots which is significant since it aids in conveying the implicit meaning of the film – highlighting the social contrast with their garments and adding parts of the setting to the frame. In most of the shots the camera height is at eye level and with frontal level position which creates a sense of stability throughout the scene except where the full figure of the blind girl (low angle) is introduced inducing sympathetic responses from the audience. The shots vary between different depths of field. Shots are in deep focus where the background plays a part in the frame, specifically in long and medium long shots, allowing the spectators to read between the shots and be less manipulated by the narrative unfolding. However, in some shots where the Tramp and the

blind woman are interacting with each other, they are in shallow focus which isolates them from the background. The eye of spectator is drawn towards the objects in the greatest focus and thus, there gestural acting plays an important role in progression of the narrative. ¹Within *City Lights* the narrative flow is created through camera movement and focusing on shots that evoke emotions and understanding of the narrative. Pan camera movement is used in two shots where the camera swivels to right or left on a fixed horizontal axis. It creates a realistic picture since it is like turning one's head left and right at a fixed position. It builds up anticipation and the shots are like seeing through the eyes of a passerby standing there. A comment on the aspect ratio of the film frame as silent movies had the standard Academy Ratio of 1:33:1 which presents more limitations to the director of what to fill the screen with for it to be the center focus.

In this film, Chaplin used the Classic Hollywood three-point lighting system. Since this particular scene is one of the daytime sequences so high-key lighting is used to portray a realistic picture. It gives a natural look and also ²“this lighting technique implies a sense of optimism within the scene.” Chaplin used simplistic editing techniques within this scene and incorporates gray scale throughout the film. Except the first three shots that dissolve in the end to present another shot, hard cut is used to switch between shots. The last shot of the woman standing by the fountain gradually fades out showcasing the end of their encounter between the Tramp and the blind girl and the start of another sequence. *City Lights* was Chaplin's first attempt at composing a film score by himself on one of his own productions. An orchestral score was recorded and played throughout the silent film making it a primary source of music – non-

¹ Keezlon, *The Art of Film Form* (Word press Blog: April 11, 2016)

² Keezlon, *The Art of Film Form*

diegetic sound in the film. The specific music used in this scene adds to the intended effect of evoking emotional response from the audience.

Mise-en-scene elements are everything that appears in front of the camera including costume and makeup, setting, and performance etc. In this scene, each costume of the characters bear a semantic connotation. The blind girl is dressed in plain simple clothing that is contrasted to that of a rich woman who walks by dressed in sophisticated clothing. The dressing of the Tramp is in itself conveys him to be a poor, homeless man with plain clothes that is once again contrasts with the rich man who enters the parked limousine and drives away. The dressing of the Tramp is still misleading in sorts that the blind, flower girl feels the cuff of his suit and thinks of him as a millionaire instead of a drifter. The film efficiently conveys its narrative content through gestural acting and facial expressions. Chaplin was a master of silent films and employed the method of performance capture where the focus is put on the face. Due to non-existent dialogues in the movie the audience had to rely on each character's acting to have some idea of what is going on. It is said that the interaction between the Tramp and the blind girl took 342 shots for it reach the accurate outcome that Chaplin was hoping for. Except some few intertitles that were added to make it clear of what is happening the main focus here is of the expressions conveying the emotions felt and the gestures conveying the action for the progression of the film. With medium shots and medium close ups in this scene, specifically of the Tramp and the blind girl, the audience sees emotions of confusion, bewilderment and fondness on their faces. The flower girl is smiling and speaking while holding out the boutonniere portraying the action of selling it.

³“She is gentle and graceful. She makes up for her lack of vision with her facial expressions and hand movements portraying her character and role.” For example, her gesture of kneeling on the ground searching for the flower with her hands is an accurate representation of a blind person. The Tramp’s acting is significant as it directs the flow of events in which the scene progresses from him being surprised, to almost flirting with the flower woman to realization of her being blind and finally ending with a look of fondness in his gaze. The setting and the props used also play a huge part in the development of the film formal principles and its progression. Many of the scenes including this one – Tramp’s and blind girl’s first encounter – were ⁴“shot on the back lot and soundstages of the Chaplin Studios located on La Brea Avenue in Hollywood.” The setting is also simplistic depicting a street corner creating a realistic picture and making it seem like a chance encounter between both the prominent characters. ⁵“Acting solely relies on the movement of the characters, props they use and the environment.” The main props used here include the parked limousine and the flowers the blind girl is selling. The parked car turns into a significant prop since it is the slam of the car door that makes the blind girl to misunderstand the Tramp as a millionaire. Other elements include a mix of balanced (like the water fountain one and the Tramp escaping the traffic cop) and unbalanced composition of shots making the audience focus on some aspects in one shot and others in another shot.

The scene incorporates variety of stylistic elements ranging from cinematography, editing, mise-en-scene and musical film score used makes the film better perceived by the audience. It is successful in portraying the feeling and the mood to the audience.

³ *City Lights*, by Charlie Chaplin. *Prezi*. N.p., 24 Feb. 2014. Web. 11 Apr. 2016.

⁴ Robin Cress, *City Lights – Film Locations* (Dear old Hollywood Blog spot: July 13, 2009)

⁵ *City Lights*, by Charlie Chaplin. *Prezi*.

Mediography:

City Lights. Directed by Charlie Chaplin. 1931. CA, USA: Kanopy, 2008. Streaming Online.

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