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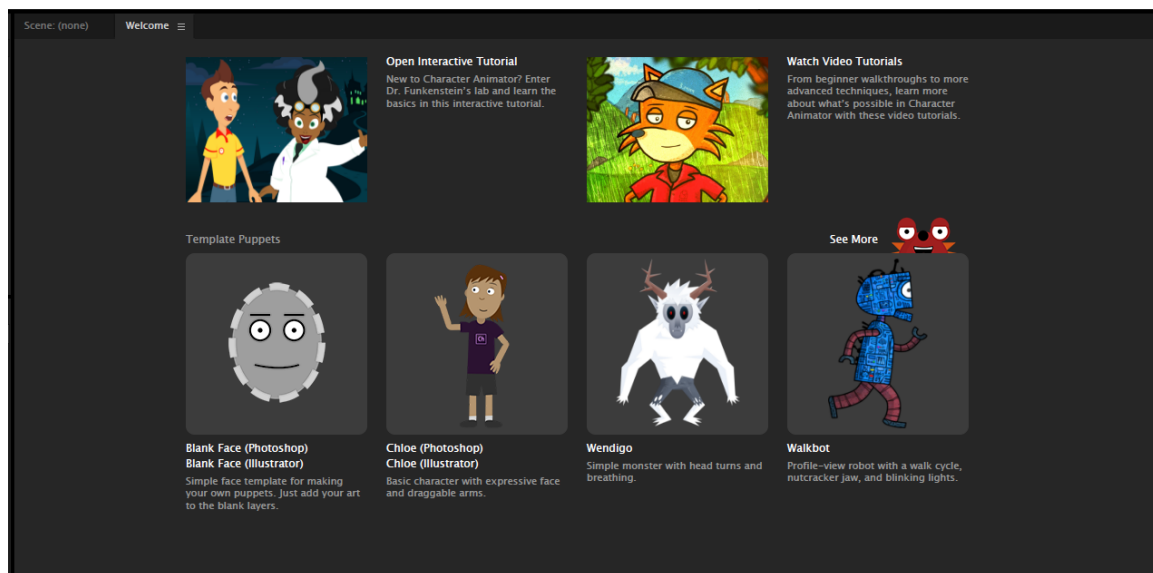## FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Intro to Adobe Character Animator

Intro

Step 1:

From the "Welcome" Panel select a demo puppet. This will also launch the Photoshop. For This tutorial you will need to keep Photoshop and Character Animator open.

Step 2:

Locate the "Camera & Microphone" panel at the top right of the screen. Look directly at your puppet on the screen and click "Set Reset Pose" to calibrate your webcam. Try moving your head, pupils and eyebrows. The blank face you have selected will automatically start responding to your head movements in the "Scene" Window.
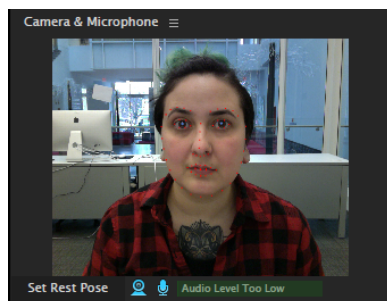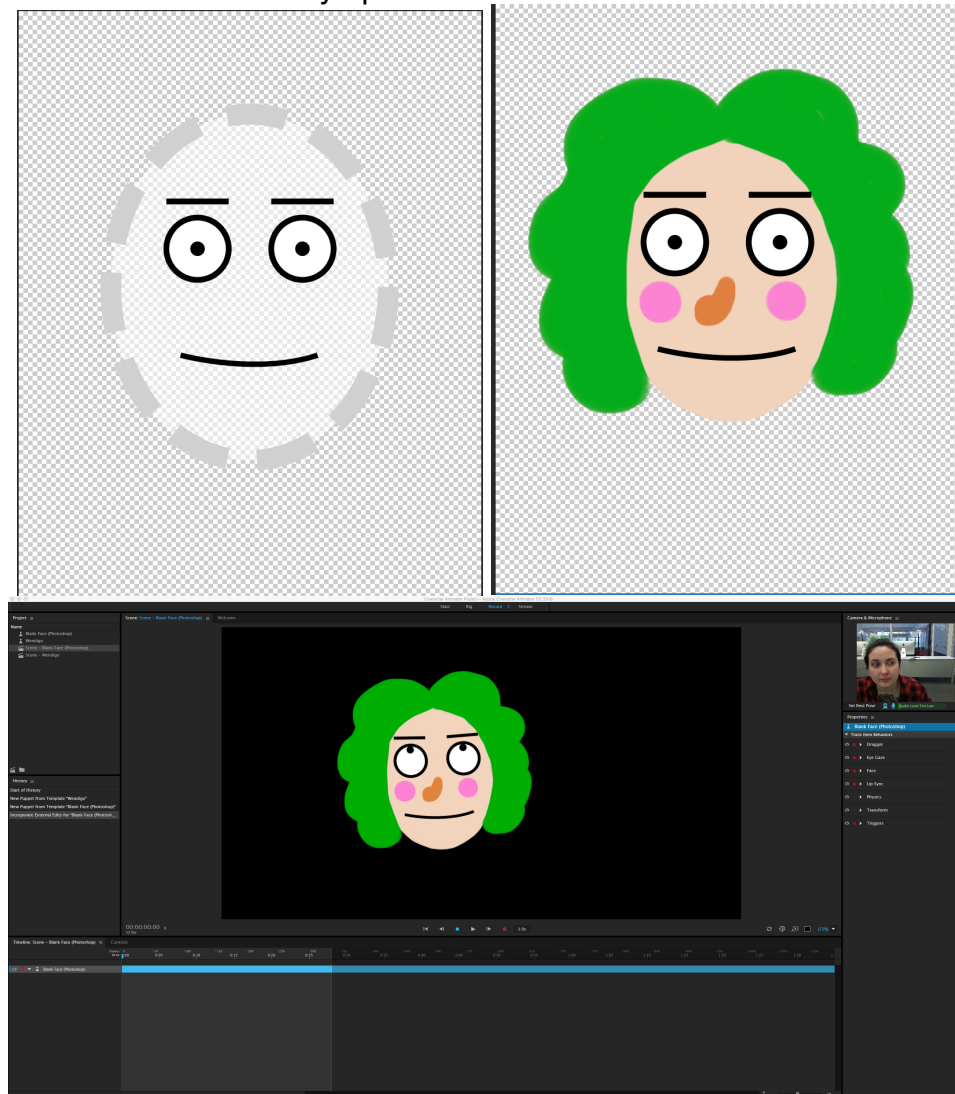

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Step 3:

Return to Photoshop. Character Animator works by loading a Photoshop or Illustrator file as a puppet. Any changes you make to your puppet in Photoshop will be reflected in Character Animator. All you have to do is save the .psd file and it will automatically update.
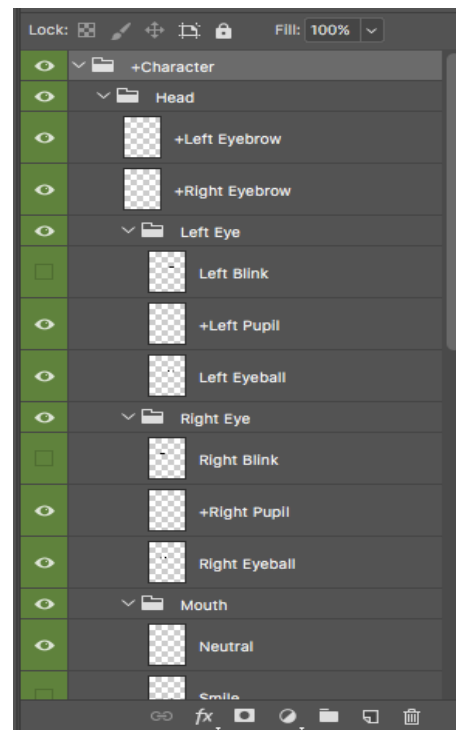
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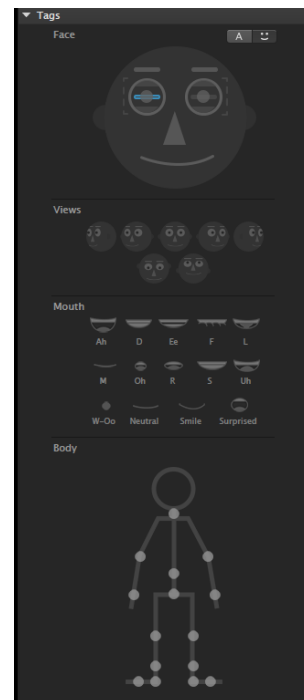## FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Step 4:

The naming protocol within your .psd file is very important. Within your file you will always need a folder named "Character" and a folder named "Head" within that folder. Anything placed within the "Head" folder will animate with your face within the webcam. A plus symbol next to a layer name indicates that element can be animated independently without modifying any other layers. From here you can navigate to and modify the puppet face in any way you want.

Step 5:

After customizing your puppet you can return to Character Animator. Double click the puppet from the "Project" panel located at the top right. This will launch the Rigging window where we can finesse the motion of the face. Character Animator will read the layer names in the .psd file to accurately assign each layer to the appropriate body part. In the event something isn't assigned properly you can reassign it in the "Tags" panel on the right.
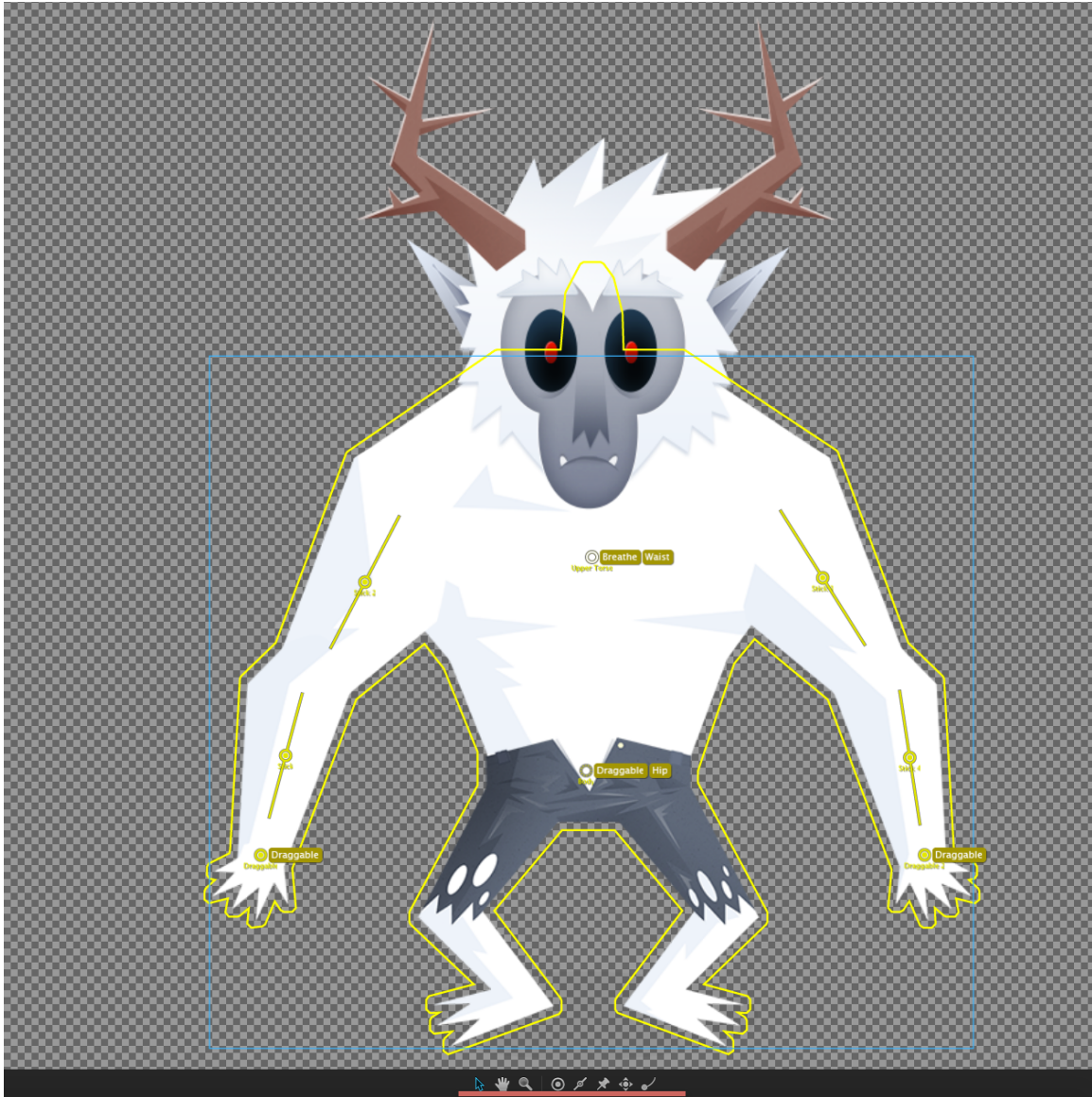
Step 6:

You can assign joints and "sticks" in the puppet-rigging menu. "Sticks" are essentially just bones, areas that will not bend when modified in the Scene menu. The tools panel under the puppet will allow assigning and adjusting these points.
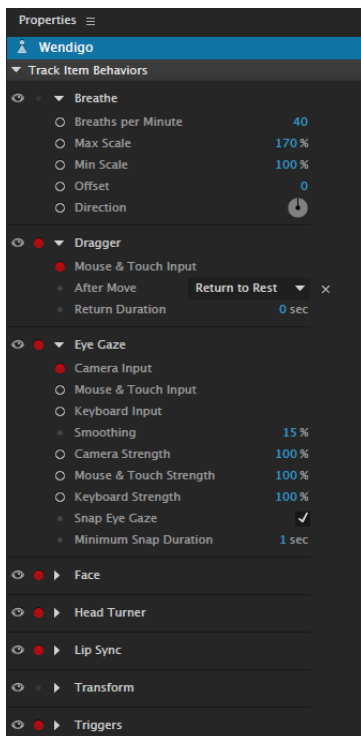
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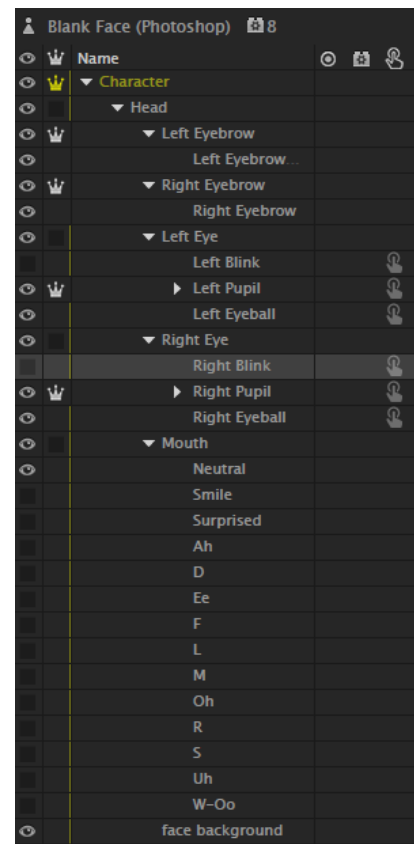## FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Step 7:

You can adjust the "independent" animation layers using the layers panel on the left side of the puppet window. The layers that had been labeled in Photoshop with a plus symbol will automatically import with a crown icon selected. Toggling the crown on will allow the layer to animate independently while turning it off will merge the layer into the face as a whole. You can play with these settings until you are happy with the animation.

Step 8:

Using the project panel return to the "Scene" window. On the right side of the screen you will see a "Properties" window. This window will allow you to adjust the behaviors of your puppet.

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Step 9:

To start recording your animation simply return to the scene window. Using the mouse you will be able to drag the individual elements of your puppet. Character Animator records your "performance" live, all you have to do is hit the record button.

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Step 10:
Character Animator can be somewhat limiting because the animation requires facial recognition, keystrokes and mouse movements all simultaneously to create the puppets performance. It would be nearly impossible to move to limbs at the same time using this method so Character Animator creates a new "take" each time you record. For example, using separate takes you can make one take and animate the left arm, then start a new take and animate the right arm and then layer them on top of each other in the timeline to create one cohesive movement.
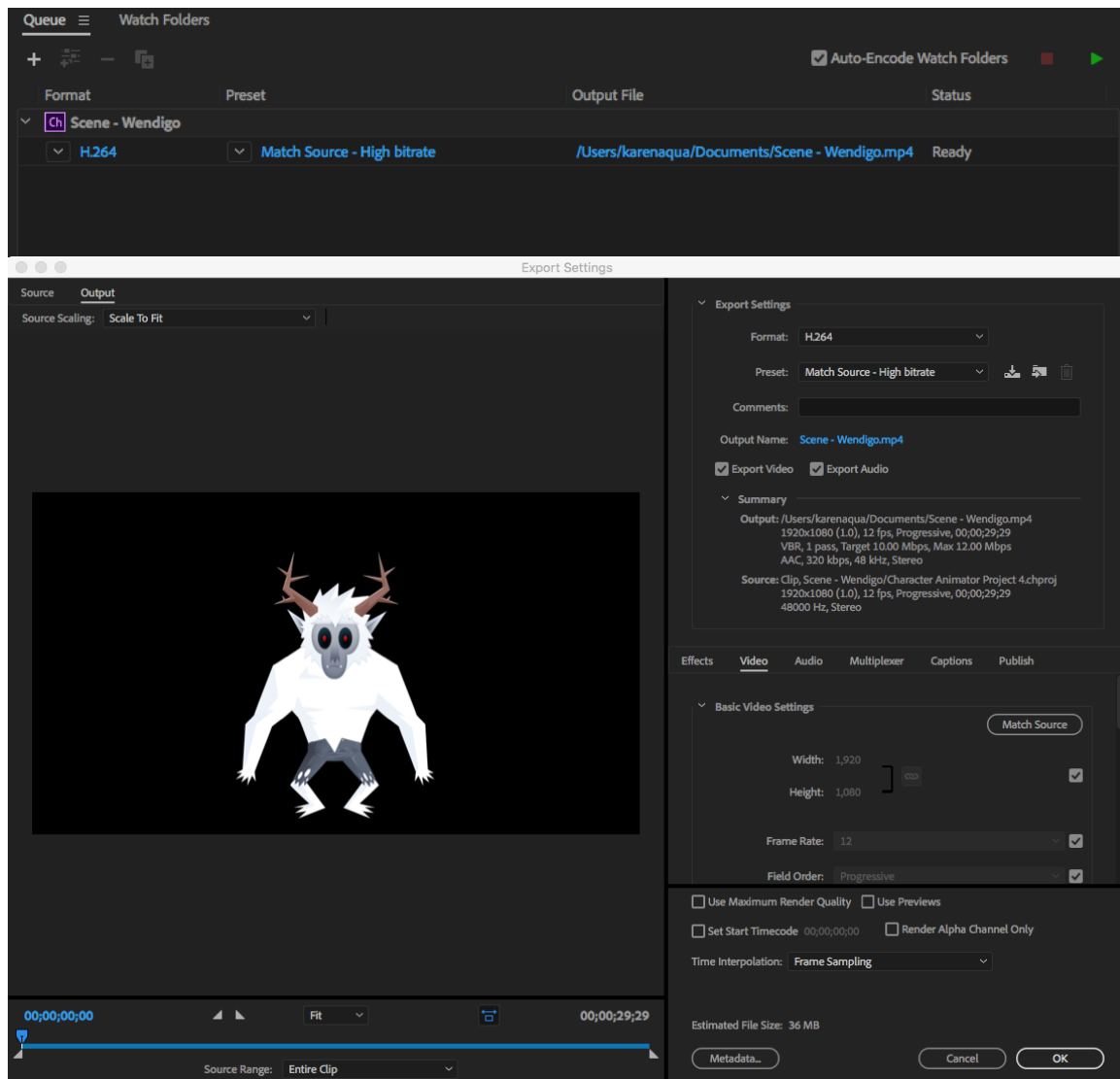
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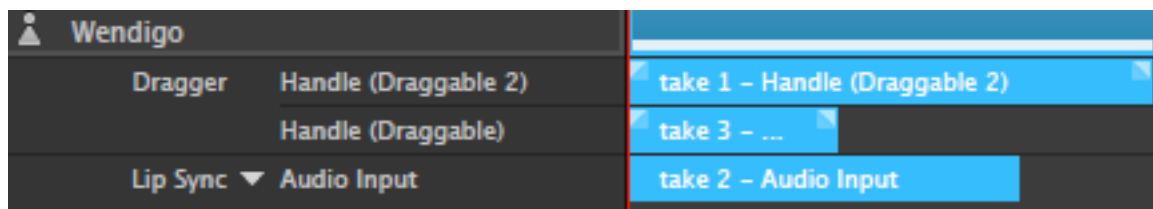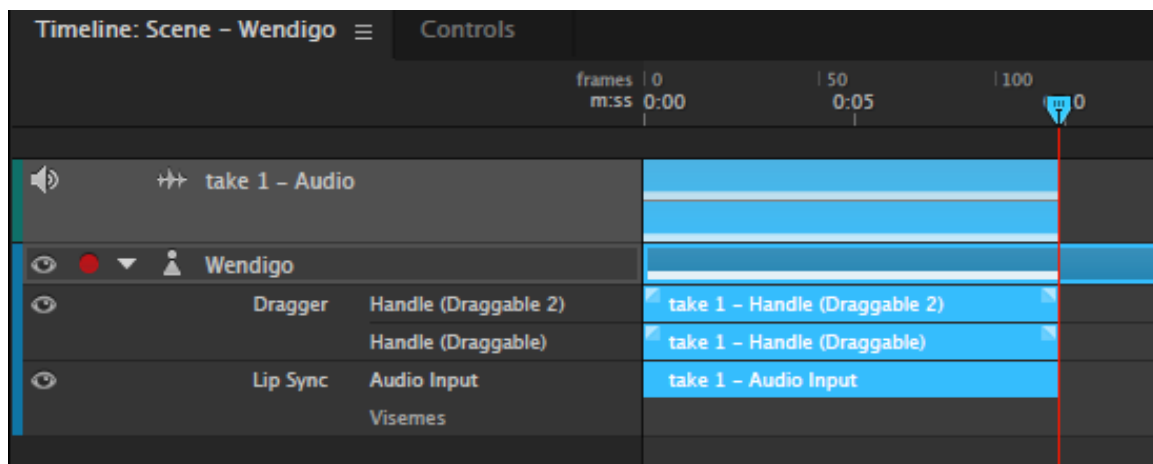
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Step 11:

When you are done with your animation you can export it by navigating to "File> Export> Video via Adobe Media Encoder…" This will launch a new program. Once Media Encoder is open locate the "Queue" window located in the top right. You will see your projects ready. Click the blue text located under the "Format" column. This will launch a new window where you can select your output settings and file location. Hit "OK" to begin the export.

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