

Teaching Philosophy

I assert that the art of theatre is inherently interdisciplinary and is therefore central to a liberal arts education. There is much to learn about every academic subject through the context of theatrical practice and production. I am committed to educational theatre as a basis for any student interested in developing self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and communication tools. As a teacher of theatre, I strive to provide students with a comprehensive experience involving intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual facets, which contribute to their personal, social, and political development.

A commitment to ensemble work and collaboration rests at the foundation of my teaching and directing practice. Each student should be challenged to realize and supersede his/her highest potential. I work to inspire the imagination, encourage inquiry and critical thought, and help students realize their own creative vision. I firmly believe that any student can succeed in my classroom if s/he is willing to put forth the effort it takes to do so. In that vein, I work hard to vary teaching methodologies in an effort to reach all students: lectures, small group activities, research projects, performances, multi-media integration and, most importantly, practical application of concepts whenever possible are some of the styles I utilize in the classroom.

A relaxed classroom and rehearsal atmosphere, where students respect themselves and others, stimulates thought, growth, and creativity. I encourage students to take risks and endeavor to sustain a classroom and rehearsal ambience where they feel comfortable doing so. Above all, I affirm that any learning experience must have relevance for the student as s/he walks out the door.

The greatest gift a teacher can give students is a passion for the work she does. As a generalist, I possess an enormous enthusiasm for all areas of the theatre but find my true inspiration in the teaching of acting and directing. Teaching the performative elements of the art and craft of theatre is what I am most suited to do. I enjoy working with beginning students, to help them discover who they are, to develop their own imagination and to begin an understanding of the potential of their physical instrument. I love the challenges of helping more advanced students to promote their own artistic voice, to apply the given tools, and to learn, through practical experience, the collaborative process. I'm equally adept in teaching a variety of period styles from Greek to post-modernist performance art for the actor and the director. If were given the opportunity to develop a Special Topics course, areas I would explore include "Creativity"; "Staging/Acting the ISMS"; "Actor Training from Unusual Sources"; "Acting and/or Directing Verse Drama"; "The Solo Performer"; "Directing the RITUAL in Performance"; "Eastern Performance Styles"; and "A Feminist Perspective of Directing."

As a director, I enjoy working in diverse periods and styles; I find the works of Euripides, Shakespeare, de Vega, Moliere, Goldoni, and Pixerecourt to be equally

appealing. I especially enjoy exploring anachronistic productions of period plays to invigorate the text for contemporary students and audiences. I would gladly work on almost any 20th century play where social issues such as diversity, oppression, and identities are prominent themes. I have a special affinity with contemporary plays which reveal darker themes as found in the work of Duras, L. Wilson, Vogel, Kushner, Churchill and The Women's Project. I thrive on exploring primitive ritual and identity in the development of new texts. I consistently find that the project I love the most is the one I'm currently engaged in directing.

I also seek to challenge myself and to hone my craft as an actor. As I have consistently done throughout my career, I would pursue performance opportunities both on- and off-campus to stay current in my field, to touch the areas I expect my students to touch and to further my development as a teacher, director and actor.

On Teaching Acting

In my acting classes and in rehearsals I stress skills that benefit the whole student. I know the poise and self-confidence students can develop in an acting class will make them more dynamic beings and carry over into any vocation they pursue. I want beginning actors to focus on traditional realistic skills including relaxation, focus, attention, understanding, and expansion of the voice and the body. Intermediate actors need a more disciplined approach to text analysis and classical performance applications including an understanding of verse, period style and aesthetic. Advanced actors must work in nonrealistic genres and revision their voice and body accordingly with the methodology of such artists as Boal, Grotowski, and Bogart. Every lesson learned must be connected to working with a text; without actualization of technique through performance, the technique losing meaning. I work to provide the performative and analytical tools necessary for each student to explore vocal production, physical gesture and text analysis.

On Teaching Directing

With script analysis as the central force, I listen carefully to the voice of my students and endeavor to help them define and defend their own vision for a text. A focus on the basics of analysis, composition, style, and communication skills best prepares students to develop their own projects. As a teacher, I use questions to help students delve into the rationale behind their choices and to aid them in discovering and playing upon their strengths while recognizing and working their areas for improvement. I encourage students to take chances, to experiment and to recognize the value of solid preparation. Most of all, I strive to provide myriad opportunities for students to become collaborative leaders and artists.