

Teaching Philosophy

A theatre faculty member in a liberal arts / general education environment often plays three roles simultaneously: theatre educator, liberal arts educator, and theatre artist. These three roles, coupled with the availability of teaching spaces outside of the traditional classroom--rehearsal hall, shop, and stage--permit a theatre program to leverage the processes inherent in the creation of theatre to guide the growth and development of students through the use of concepts and processes that have numerous practical applications in the "real world."

As a theatre educator, I endeavor to foster a positive learning environment that encourages student participation in all of the spaces, including the classroom, to the fullest extent of their abilities. I encourage student experimentation and risk that will allow growth as theatre artist, student, and as a person. I offer guidance and support while at the same time allowing participants to make (and fix) their own mistakes in the appropriate venue. I try to provide a classroom and production environment that will allow beginning students to discover the theatre, and will push more experienced students to develop their own interests and talents. I find that, across the curriculum, I achieve the best outcomes when I am able to offer a combination of lecture, demonstration and hands-on projects that involve different levels of hearing, seeing, and doing and allow each student to work to his or her strengths.

As a liberal arts educator, I believe that I share in a responsibility to help all students create in themselves well rounded citizens and consumers of the arts. Academic theatre as a whole is ideally suited to this mission because entire bodies of history, criticism, literature, and philosophy are available for use in examining contemporary, real-world issues and questions. Every theatre course allows the opportunity to develop and exercise basic writing and critical thinking skills that are so necessary to our society. These skills are part of preparing student of the arts for the work place and leaders that our society so desperately needs. I see my part in this process as creating an environment which stimulates student recognition of the inter-curricular relationships inherent in all parts of undergraduate education and encourages students to draw comparisons from within their own life experiences while at the same time broadening their perspectives through exposure to dramatic literature and production techniques.

As theatre artist, I have a responsibility to myself to grow artistically. Program or situational requirements may periodically call for certain genres or even specific plays to be placed within a season yet this does not absolve me of the responsibility to provide direction, dramaturgy, design, and criticism that is appropriate and original while at the same time maintaining my own artistic integrity and growth. I endeavor to communicate all of these beliefs to students through the use of encouragement and example. Theatre is, after all, a collaborative art and, to me, that collaboration extends into the classroom. As with a theatre production where the best work often coincides with the strongest collaboration, I believe that the best learning occurs when a solid collaborative relationship exists between teacher and student. Whether that learning environment is built around a specific course -- general education or specialized-- or a specific production; whether it takes place in a traditional teaching space, a studio, a shop, or a stage, I strive to be a combination of mentor, teacher, and leader, and to set an example that students will respect and emulate in the creation of their own art.

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