

Teaching Philosophy

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MY MISSION

My mission is to captivate and inspire on the frontier of storytelling.

This mission is not only true of my professional and creative work, but my teaching as well. I believe that human beings communicate in story code, and by learning how to tell stories, through stories, we hone essential interpersonal skills and may even discover more about ourselves and each other. I believe that theatre, as a mode of inquiry, develops individuals who are empathetic and available, accountable and resilient, thoughtful and capable.

MY CONCEPT OF LEARNING & TEACHING

Knowledge is constructed, not received.

Teaching, therefore, is engaging students in both a dialogue and exploration where ideas and concepts are put to the test. The classroom, studio, and stage are arenas where we have an obligation to mindfully confront “big questions.” This may be an investigation of theatrical theory/methodologies. Perhaps questions of belief, value, or policy. However, when encountered with openness and sincerity, discoveries as to how we think and act (as individuals and a society) are nearly inevitable. With these insights, we may be empowered to invite *how* we think or act to change.

There is freedom within structure.

While I could write endlessly on how I believe this to be the cornerstone of acting and directing, I consider this to be true of education as well. A well-designed roadmap is essential on the early leg of an educational expedition. While not the end-all, be-all of education, I believe that a *small* amount of transmitted knowledge is necessary and pays off exponentially down the road. This may not constitute any revelatory enlightenment, but we certainly benefit by communicating effectively with each other (using a shared language and set of objective truths) and developing mastery in specific skill and critical thinking sets.

Learning is an individual and personal act.

While I am proud of this profession, I hesitate to say that I “teach.” As an instructor, I believe that my responsibility is to offer a variety of the most effective acting, directing, dramaturgical and analytical practices as clearly, directly, and viscerally as possible. Not every approach is right for every actor, director, designer, or student; but I believe there is a right approach for everyone. My job is to facilitate the discovery of those approaches, so they may be drawn upon as needed. Like the most effective professors, I aim to be student-oriented. Therefore, my strategy is to meet students where they are technically, physically, vocally, and emotionally, and to build my courses to meet their unique needs. Through this practice, I believe I am fostering transformational and life-long learning.

MY TEACHING METHOD

Combining Concept & Practice.

While I make a conscious effort to lecture *only as much as is useful*, I have proven to be an extremely effective instructor by combining rigorous conceptual information and theory with practical skills and performance applications in a clear, decisive, and engaging manner. Through this method, my students frequently make significant breakthroughs, distinct and meaningful to themselves and their craft.

Practical Aesthetics has been the focus of my graduate actor training. Because this approach organizes thought and action in a way that is immediately practical and useful, it is my preferred technique to employ in Acting class. That said, I do have a lot of experience with Meisner and Stanislavsky-based acting approaches. In voice and movement, I lean on the Linklater Progression, Feldenkrais Method, Viewpoints, Laban Efforts, and Checkov Work.

Concept, Conflict, & Character is the focus of my Script Analysis course. We explore a variety of formalist approaches, including classical and modern structures, to reveal a story's "3 Cs." Concept, Conflict, and Character may then be realized by rendering the Action and Story World. (*Collaboratively rendering Action and Story World is the focus of my Directing course.*)

ASSESSING LEARNING

Every exam is cumulative.

While projects or assignments can provide experience with particular elements or steps of an artistic or analytical process, every exam should be an opportunity to review and practice one's entire knowledge and critical thinking set in a particular discipline.

We write how we think.

Writing and thinking are inexorably linked. They shape and inform each other. In lieu of information recall, I rely heavily on journaling, critique papers, and short answer/essay exams to not only assess learning, but to help students continue the process.

It's not all subjective.

While we are part of an artistic and soft-sciences discipline, I think it is important to recognize objective facts and processes whenever possible. Assignments and projects must have specific, pedagogically-invested requirements. This is necessary to encourage and maintain student accountability and discipline in a field that can easily become too esoteric and unfocused.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Never done learning.

It is my intention to use theatre as a mode of inquiry, and to continue making inquiries into theatre. I am specifically interested in developing theories on performance pedagogy and employing them in a way that is useful for students. I intend to take every opportunity available to participate in academic theatrical productions, conferences, and festivals. Furthermore, I intend to continue a relationship with the "real world" by maintaining what I can of my own professional acting and directing practice.

* **The instructor reserves the right to change these beliefs as the semester progresses.**