

Teaching Philosophy

“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” - Confucius

This quotation best describes my experience as a graduate student in technical theatre and as professional in the field. Hearing a lecture is not enough; seeing a demonstration helps, but physically doing is the optimal method to learn a new skill. Thus, as a teacher, I encourage students not only to learn facts, practices, and processes in and out of the classroom, but also to use that knowledge to think for themselves and choose appropriate courses of action in their work. My objective as a teacher and mentor is to inspire students to function in the theatre industry in the best manner possible, and experience is the foremost way to teach students to teach *themselves* technical theatre. Problem solving, for example, can be an inherent trait in certain individuals, although I believe this feature cannot necessarily be taught directly. Like many other skills in theatre, such as acting or directing, students must exercise tasks in order to learn skills. As a teacher, I explain concepts and techniques that guide students through a process, yet students must understand those concepts and techniques through practicum. My goal is to prepare students for the challenges that lie ahead of them in a theatre career, and practicum is a core method in meeting this goal.

When teaching technical theatre related material, I begin with basic information. Delving into certain areas of craft can be tricky since many areas overlap. Electricity for instance is involved in practically all areas of theatre, so starting with core concepts can be helpful in starting to teach certain topics. In cases of teaching in a one-on-one scenario, I walk through topics from beginning to end, possibly doing things myself as an example, and then encouraging students to do things themselves. In cases of teaching enmasse with students in a classroom setting, I undertake the same approach, although I will use projects or assignments out of class as a means to encourage practice. In this setting, it is beneficial to assign group projects or assignments in order to instill team effort. I begin by structuring assignments that involve knowledge through lecturing, but students then apply that knowledge to the assignment, and they will fully comprehend how or why things work by actually working it out themselves. After assignments are finished, or during a one-on-one scenario, I believe critique is essential to explore how choices were made. With constructive criticism students can more fully understand what the best approaches are and learn from their mistakes.

While criticism is important, I also wish to instill a sense of accomplishment in students. In my teaching process, I try to show examples of work done by professionals as a means to inspire students to *want* to do assignments in order to go on to practical roles in theatre. I follow up by giving constructive criticism, but, most importantly, I am supportive in their progress. This additional teaching practice is essential in motivating students to do great work and further pursue their individual careers. Technical theatre is hard work, but it is a satisfying trade, especially with positive reinforcement.

I continue to work in technical theatre because I enjoy working on challenging projects that involve thought process, organization, and my skillful hands. I wish to pass this ambition on to others. I enjoy teaching practices to people new to theatre or a shop as well as serving as an example and mentor. I believe I have a good teaching ethic because I have a sympathetic

approach and am patient with all skill levels. I have always aspired to be a teacher in this field. When students ask questions or demonstrate that they do not understand something, this drives me to help them understand. The appreciation and personal reward I receive is that students do understand in the end, and that they apply the knowledge I give them.

Teaching is an occupation that gives me a great sense of satisfaction. I am a consummate problem solver when it comes to technical theatre challenges. Working with students faced with these challenges gives me a chance to share my knowledge and experience. A novice's approach to problem solving can seem hopeless at times, but the chances that a problem has been crossed before are good. Therefore, sharing past experiences or resources with students gives them the power to apply methods and ways of doing things they never would have thought of themselves. Our world, as it is in technical theatre, is rooted by evolving techniques and practices. One generation builds on the previous one, ever creating new technologies and approaches. Observing students learning, creating, and merging new knowledge into their own methodologies is very satisfying as a teacher. ∞

This Teaching Philosophy of mine is a perpetual work in progress.