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## **A Teaching Philosophy**

We theatre artists are stewards of progress, philosophy, and humanity. Our art burrows into the mind and soul of each participant and, like a true love, encourages them to be better people. We can inspire, empower, and enlighten.

As educators our goals are the same: to give knowledge, encourage, and demand action of our students. Therefore, as theatre educators, we execute the mission of both the academic and theatrical worlds, urging humanity to do its best, always craving more and exploring further.

Working in a medium that attracts such a diverse community of artists, it is critical to be able to communicate effectively with our various audiences: the creative team, crew, cast, donors, and so on. Similarly, a teacher must be able to communicate for the multiple perspectives of a diversely populated classroom. That is, discourse must be suited to both the past experiences and future goals of every student as best as possible. As such, I find it most advantageous to log the goals of each student early on, so that I can relate the material to their specific perspective and end goals.

At all times an instructor must strive to communicate ideas visually, aurally, and kinesthetically. I believe the educational process with which to optimize retention is to explain, demonstrate, and have the students demonstrate for themselves and each other.

Balance is also vital to instruction material itself. Facts, concepts, and skills must be held in equal esteem in order to optimize recollection. Abstract concepts mean nothing without basic vocabulary; the application of skills goes awry without an understanding of the underlying complex concepts; basic factual knowledge is quickly forgotten when the related applications are not employed. All three forms of knowledge must be employed: explain, analyze, practice. An equal quantity of material may not be present or necessary for any given learning goal, but each facet is important, and all



are required to be successful.

Also in the vein of balance is the weighing of cutting-edge techniques with classic approaches. I find it best for each student to be made aware of all relevant methods and given the option to use and further those which suit them best, while ensuring that the most essential practices are not cast aside. Classic methods like hand-drafting and chalk rendering remain effective in today's professional environment, but an understanding of computer aided drafting and digital rendering is also necessary to complete a designer's toolkit.

For a typical lecture-style class, I start with reminders of where we are in the syllabus schedule and upcoming due dates, then give a brief lecture on the day's topic. During the lecture I define keywords, explain concepts, and give examples, supported by PowerPoints, handouts, videos, and class activities. All of these materials I post online with additional resources for students to explore at their leisure. I also use the course website for projects, papers, and homework, to conserve paper and maximize accessibility for all students. After the lecture, I demonstrate the associated skills and have the students practice them as well. The execution of tasks assures the students of their capabilities and allows them to demonstrate for each other. I believe confidence in a concept is the hallmark of effective learning. This is also why I encourage my students to ask each other questions, work together, and use their collective knowledge as a resource.

Much like the balance our students maintain between theatre production and coursework, we stand astride the gap between academic and professional theatre. We must offer our students opportunities to mentor as well as employment on professional productions so that they may choose their paths armed with real world experience and connections.

Thank you.

