TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
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Being creative and developing a final product are the learning opportunities that I, as a student, remember the most. Understanding the process of creating work has shaped how I engage my students. I believe we develop a deeper sense of learning and a richer experience when we develop a final product. Whether our topic is dramatic techniques, theatre history, technical elements of theatre, story structure, or creative writing, I engage students in project-based learning with a research-driven approach in all of my instructional opportunities.

Letting technical theatre and drama students engage with content in this manner provides them with an opportunity to problem-solve and collaborate. I empower students to explore and develop thematic content that aligns with their interests while increasing their depth of knowledge about theatre, design, and production development. I impress upon my students that theatre, as an art, is subjective; therefore, it's not about what we make but how we make it. The varied classroom elements from individualized work, group collaborations, time management, and show development ensure that I provide students with the necessary tools to engage with theatre beyond the classroom.

For technical theatre students, these experiences take the form of research-informed design projects. In my stagecraft classes, students explore the range of aspects connected to technical theatre to build broad knowledge and vocabulary. In a costume design unit, I have asked students to redesign costuming for *The Wizard of Oz* in an era of their choosing post-World War II. They are then able to examine their time period, events of significance, the cultural landscape, as well as clothing, to develop their ideas. Students make choices and provide sound reasoning based on their research.

For drama students, their experiences are physically engaged, but I feel that it is essential that students are also able to write about theatre critically through both research and observation. When developing original student works, I have them examine existing structured formats, like scripts and librettos, to develop their understanding of these forms. Seeing that students understand the form and the elements needed to create a document like this is my priority to ensure that they have an understanding of how to engage with these types of theatrical documents.

In more academic classes, this approach takes other forms. I prefer to have students engage with content in a participatory manner leading to reflective discussion based on observation. To explore the idea of multiple points of view, I ask students to examine the concept of the Rashomon effect and to construct and perform a structured improvised scene based on a fairytale. During the scene, each member of the group plays a different character from the story and provides the audience with their point of view about something that happened in the story. By approaching this concept in a performative manner, the hope is that they remember the experience and are able to apply their critical thinking outside of our classroom.

It is important to me that students find a practical application to the skills and lessons I provide. The projects that students work on provide them with the opportunity to problem-solve, think critically, and collaborate, which are essential skills in theatre but also in the world at large. This approach appeals to multiple learning styles and reminds students that research-supported decisions provide us with the ability to stand by our artistic choices in a subjective space.