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Teaching Philosophy for the Conscious & Collaborative Artist

“Theatre functions as a model for the whole cultural mechanism, and how we must deal with our communal experiences.” -Tadashi Suzuki

Inclusivity is of the highest importance to me along with learning and facilitating acting approaches outside the homogeneous normality. Creating an inclusive space for my students is key to discovering and bringing their own perspectives of what matters most to them into our shared human experience. I take what I have learned from my experiences and share this with my students so that I am teaching from a diversified set of practitioners in the craft of acting. I believe this sets an example and encourages my own students to always be open to other approaches. While this will give my students a broader view of performance methodologies, my real hope is some, if not all, of my students will also find a connection to an approach where they have some cultural identification with. When my students graduate I want them to truly know themselves because knowing oneself is key to making change in what stories are being told on stage. My wish for any student of mine is to encourage themselves to be braver than they think they can be, and to deepen their understanding of themselves, their own human experience, and what they have to offer.

I encourage my students to ask questions because this can open up a larger discussion of ideas within our trusted classroom community. My students know they have the freedom to voice their own ideas and thoughts in a brave space which is what a community of theatre makers are constantly doing in the profession. My goal is to offer my students the skills, appreciation, and discipline for what lies ahead in the professional world so that each student has their own sense of dignity and belonging while pursuing the artist profession. It is my goal for each student to cultivate a well-crafted, fearless, kind, and vigilant human being from within that must be ready to thrive as an artist in the industry. We should not consider our fellow artists as competition but support one another and learn from each other. My own hope is that when my students leave the classroom, they bring with them the braveness we created together into the rest of their artistic lives, with a foundation of collaboration, kindness, and an open heart.

My approach to teaching comes from continued discovery and a willingness to play. This goes back to my work as an acting practitioner that there is never just one way to do things in the arts. We artists are creative human beings with voices from all around the globe and we must constantly be open to these other ideas and approaches as you never know what may move you as an artist. I believe we must be inspired by all walks of life! I facilitate exercises from a variety of methodologies that range from Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, Uta Hagen, Black Acting

Methods, Shogo Ohta, Seven Pillars Acting, Viola Spolin, and Konstantin Stanislavski. I live by Uta Hagen's point of view that when we see theatre, there must be a human event on stage, and this perspective is what I use to engage my students – to find the human element in every one of them and the roles they play. Though knowing methodology approaches ranging from Hagen to Stanislavski's has become the relative norm throughout the years does not mean it works for every artist, so I continue to engage in other performance methodologies especially from the global majority of artists. I motivate every single student to bring their own culture to the table by encouraging their voices in this work. I look at expanding my practice in Viewpoints, Michael Chekhov, Suzuki, and Black Acting Methods. I continue the work of growing my voice, keeping up my training, and continue using my knowledge as I teach so that I can encourage my students to have a wide range of training approaches in their toolbox.

Collaboration is key in my classroom. Everyone in my class will continue to find the power of their own voice, and each voice will be built up and encouraged to share their perspective in monologues, scene work, classroom exercises, journal writing, essays, research, and classroom discussions. With my research in performance methodologies outside the homogeneous norm, I encourage my students to take risks, which will hopefully be reflected in their work; risks which include the ownership of their own learning by going outside the white-centered canon paradigm of work. Students will engage with each other and continue honing and building a creative community in response to each other's work. Students will have the opportunity to take on these challenges by exploring and discussing work they feel may represent themselves truthfully, but also exploring the works of others beyond what they may be “cast” as. It is only by doing the work of writers outside the “canon” where we can truly learn about the human experience. Our classroom is not just a place of diverse learning, but a space for inclusive learning.

My syllabi and assignments in my classroom are detailed and thought-out; and although conventional grading assessments of students can be a hindrance in the arts, I know it must be given as the professional world will rarely ever let you pass without effort. Although this is true, the performance arts should be about the work itself and the growth of the student, not the student's focus on a specific grade, so I continue to play with an ungraded model. My course development always comes from a perspective where there is discussion and questions to be asked after we work. The expectation is for students to learn from not only me, but from each other and to cultivate an atmosphere of self-discovery in what more they can do. I require my students to always recall the positives in their work first before we begin making any adjustments. My goal for the success of my students is to be able to use the exercises and lessons we do in class and apply these lessons to the rest of their lives. I am training my students towards achievement and success to work in their professional field, but it will always be the students who make the choices in how far we can go together as a collaborative community.

My ultimate goal is for my students to leave with the humility of knowing that a degree is not the goal. A degree, after all, is a piece of paper. I want them to leave with the skill to always know how to bring momentum to their learning and exploration. The only mark I can see to having a long and successful career is the ability to adapt to our ever-changing industry, but never losing oneself in it. Having a strong understanding and love of oneself, and what they can contribute to the greater conversation is the ultimate sign of success in our performance field.