

## STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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***“I believe a unique core self is born into every human being; the result of millennia of environment and heredity combined in an unpredictable way that could never happen before or again.” - Gloria Steinem***

At the heart of my teaching philosophy is the belief that treating each of my students as individuals is of the utmost importance. There are many different ways in which we learn and process information, and many different ways that we walk through this world. As a teacher, it is my job to find the best approach to reach and educate each of my students; to learn who they are and what they need, then apply these to how I teach them. I strive to provide each of them with a positive and fulfilling experience, whether or not they have ever wanted to step foot on a stage.

To further this endeavor, I create a curriculum that is well-rounded in terms of activities and subject matter. I want students to feel that even if they are not actors, they can still gain something from my class. Learning about and experiencing the various components of theatre is vital to understanding and appreciating the art form; but beyond that, it opens up the possibilities of how my students can take part in it. It offers a connection where they might have seen none.

Respect is also at the core of this belief. Encouraging and embracing individuality inspires not only self-respect but respect of others and their individuality as well. This could not be more important for young people, who so often confuse conforming with belonging. Students, ever-growing and learning, need to be shown and reminded that they are worthy, valid human beings; that they belong and are needed in this world exactly as they are, as is the student sitting next to them.

***“I believe that no matter what you do in life, if you learn the basics through theatre, it will help you in everything else - problem solving, communication, discipline, all of that stuff.”  
-Laura Linney***

One of the first things I do with my students is to cover the basics of theatre. We build a strong foundation by discussing the various aspects of mounting a production; the jobs that it requires, the vocabulary, how to read a script, layout of the space, and etiquette as actor and audience member. I work to expand this knowledge over the course of my time with students, giving them opportunities to explore different creative outlets in depth. Perhaps they find their joy in writing or costume design, in electrics or dramaturgy. For those who enjoy performing, delving into the wider world of theatre is still hugely beneficial. It gives them a better understanding of how much goes into a production, and a new appreciation for the strengths of their peers.

When we delve into improv and acting, the exercises and games we play are not just meant for the actors in the classroom. They build self-confidence, encourage freedom, and explore imagination and creativity, all of which can be applied elsewhere. They also help to create trust between scene partners and strengthen the group as a whole, teaching students the responsibility of having each others' backs. This, along with the aforementioned appreciation for each other's abilities, is how we foster a sense of teamwork and community in the classroom.

This remarkable meeting of individual and group is what I believe is most special about theatre. Creating theatre is a group effort, a team sport that relies on many unique perspectives and ideas all coming together to create one big, beautiful moment in time.

***“All the world’s a stage...” -William Shakespeare***

Early on in lessons with my students, I ask them to challenge their notions about what theatre is and what it can do. I show them clips of various performances; from Broadway shows and plays in repurposed spaces, to scenes on the sidewalk being done for a cause and a young woman moved by a busker's music to dance in the street. I ask them if they think each of these clips is theatre. Why or why not? What makes something theatre? Does it have to be in a traditional space? Does it have to have a large budget? Or can theatre be anywhere your imagination can come to life in physical space?

As we explore what theatre is and what it can be, my aim is to show my students how it can act not only as a connection to oneself and one's castmates but to the greater world around them as well. It can serve communities that need a hand and bring people out of their darkest moments. It can help build empathy, change our perspectives, and give us insight into different people and experiences. It is a mirror we can use not only to reflect on ourselves, but that can be turned outward to humanity as a whole.

At the end of the day, I want to enrich my students' lives and experiences through the arts, which truly are a vital part of a well-rounded education. I put time into understanding my students as individuals and building mutual respect, so that I may guide them to the aspect of theatre that will best serve them as young, growing people. They develop a sense of self that can also broaden their understanding of others, which enhances their ability to work well as a team. Together, we break outside the box of what the students *expect* theatre to be and explore the exciting possibilities of what it *can* be.