

Statement on Teaching  
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Actor, Director, Movement and Voice Specialist

I am part of a long tradition of educators who practice their artistry and craft as professional actors and directors in order to best analyze the art form of communication. My own professional performance experience, research, and training is rooted deeply in this tradition to gain the skills, techniques, insight and sensitivity required to become a teacher of the dynamic artform of theatre performance.

My teaching methodology, as well as my performance and directing practices, continues to evolve. My process is a product of training, professional performance experience, and research in specific movement, voice and acting pedagogies, and my observations of what happens when students gain an understanding of how best to utilize their bodies and voices in the creative and performance process. I share with students my knowledge of how the physical instrument best serves them in the art of communication, theatrical or otherwise. This integrative approach is at the heart of how and what I teach.

Since joining the Theatre & Dance faculty at CU in 2008, I have had the opportunity to teach a wide range of performance and non-performance focused classes. The performance courses I have taught include: Acting for Non-majors, Acting 2, Voice and Movement for the Stage, Advanced Voice, Advanced Movement, and three courses in the BFA in Performance program (Studio II: Creating a Role/Character Development; Studio IV: Playing with Style, and Studio V: Creating an Ensemble). Non-performance classes include Development of American Musical Theatre and Professional Orientation, a course that I created. In the case of Studio IV: Playing with Styles, a period styles acting training course designed to provide the student with an understanding and embodiment of a particular time period relevant to the classical theatre canon, I have made significant changes to this course.

As a member of the BFA in Performance faculty we train highly motivated and talented students to become performing artists through a commitment to the creative and collaborative process. I also teach courses as part of the BA program in theatre, a more broadly based approach in practice and study of theatre. I am often asked to serve on a Theater MA or Ph.D., or Dance MFA thesis committee.

## **Acting, Movement, Voice - Performance Teaching**

My work as a movement and voice specialist is to assist students in the exploration of the body and voice as expressive tools of the actor. My role in this artistic development is to teach the skills needed to fully utilize these mediums of expression. In my classroom, students explore expressive behavior through a variety of methodologies, the skills necessary to create diverse characters, and how to convey convincingly the authentic differences of physical condition, class position, historical period, and emotional attitude.

I am a certified Associate of the Fitzmaurice Voice work, one of the most highly regarded, comprehensive approaches to voice training, which explores the dynamics between body, breath, voice, the imagination, language, and presence. The technique encourages vibrant voice work that communicates intention and feeling without excess effort. As part of a network of approximately 125 certified teachers around the world, I am able to provide my students with training often taught in MFA Performance programs, as well as a number of PATP (Professional Acting Training Programs) and conservatories.

I am also certified in the physical training of the Williamson Technique, created by Loyd Williamson, formerly head of Movement at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, and the founder of the Actor's Movement Studio in New York. The Williamson Technique focuses on the physical aspects of communication: the interaction of the actor's body with the people, places, and things of the imaginary world and the intersection of the human body with this process. The technique also offers a unique physical and historical approach to teaching Period Style work, which I incorporate in my Playing with Styles course. I have also studied the fundamentals of the Laban technique at the Laban Institute of Movement Studies in New York and taken extended workshops in mask-work with Joan Schirle, Giovanni Fusetti, and Antonio Fava. My interest and connection to the Alexander Technique continue in my personal practice, with advanced training to deepen my vocabulary, specificity and understanding of moving body.

In both the Fitzmaurice Voice work and the Williamson Technique, there is a clear emphasis on the intrinsic connection between the body and the voice. My professional practice and teaching are devoted to experiencing the same synergistic relationship that happens when the actor's voice, body, heart, and mind are all working toward conveying the same story.

As an acting teacher it is imperative that I guide students toward a deep understanding of the text and context of the play so that they may then *play* clearly and

truthfully to an audience. Whether the performance is a naturalistic drama, comedy or imagined fantasy, it is vital for students to learn tools to identify, discuss, embody and ultimately, wonder about the work. By encouraging students to explore the given circumstances of a play or piece, I believe they are developing into actor-artists rather than actor-performers. Through this philosophy, I provide students with a variety of situations to explore and experience an understanding of a play and role.

It is essential to establish a safe, creative and collaborative working environment in performance courses. This instills a habit of professional practices and trains the student actor-artist in ways to take control of the educational experience, in order to create life-long learners. As a theatre professional who is trained in the art form of acting, as a theatre movement specialist, a voice teacher, singer, and a director, I endeavor to model this integrated approach to my students.

### **Teaching Artist**

Early in my teaching career I was part of a nationally recognized teaching artist organization in Chicago called *Gallery 37*. This formative training in becoming a teaching artist gave me the tools to teach young people and teachers about and through the arts. The training and experience that I received in Chicago provided the foundation of what has now become a personal passion toward the implementation of arts-focused or arts-integrated lessons in theatre with students and teachers outside of the university community. I have been an active part of several exceptional Teaching Artist agencies through the years: Inside Broadway, Arts are Basic, and the Kennedy Center Partners in Education. These affiliations have allowed me to work with public school teachers to further the cause of integrating art-based lessons and the creation of the arts-integrated classroom. I see my role in this work as imperative given the current lack of support of the arts in the public education system.

As a teacher I feel my philosophy is two-fold: to teach and to practice my art form, whether that be to act, direct, or provide specific movement or voice direction to a production or curriculum. My goal is to share with students ways of approaching the art form of acting by gaining an experience of how the physical instrument serves the learner and the artist in the creative process. I also plan to continue to remain open and available myself to learn from my students and successful professional performance practices.