

Dylan G Bollinger's Teaching Philosophy

Since embarking in a career of theatre, academic and professional, I firmly regard theatre as the pinnacle of the human experience. I also regard theatre as the combination of all art forms. As I continue to grow as an educator, I find it essential to educate the whole student. As a professor I always frame my teaching around a central question/idea, "How is what I'm teaching going to make my students better prepared than I was?" The answers to this question revolve around teaching students to be well rounded, motivated, and civically engaged.

The students I see establish early career success as theatre artists wear many hats. Gone are the days where being a one trick pony will suffice for the ever-changing theatre world. I train students to be multi-faceted artists who excel at more than one facet of theatre. My own experience as a theatre artist has been to wear many hats. My experience as a designer, production manager, director, stage manager, actor, and educator has molded me into a multi-faceted artist who, in turn, is able to craft other well-rounded artists for a workforce that demands professionals with multiple skills. I firmly believe in a well-rounded theatre curriculum to craft these artists. Through exposing students to that curriculum, they are molded into artists with a variety of skills to offer.

In addition to being a well-rounded artist, my experience has also shown that a theatre and community benefit from mutual respect and investment. Theatre should enrich a community and be an active participant in community events. I challenge students to become involved and invested in the community they find themselves in. By engaging with their community, the students provide a face to the theatre, and a vehicle for community engagement. With that engagement, the community becomes invested in the theatre, and what it can bring, artistically and educationally. This results in positive change for both the theatre and community. However, it all starts with making a choice to engage in the community. I challenge my students to make that choice whenever possible.

Not only do I challenge students to engage with their community, I strive to motivate students to be passionate about their craft. I have been disheartened by theatre artists who are less than enthusiastic about their profession. That lack of enthusiasm can carry with it negativity that infects and poisons the theatre. I challenge my students to be positive and motivated artists through consistent exposure to new and innovative theatrical conventions. Through that exposure, I have seen a new generation of theatre artists motivated to engage in theatre as an audience member, or artist.

In conclusion, it is my responsibility as an educator to instill the above values into students I encounter. I firmly believe that through creating well-rounded, civically engaged, and motivated artists the field of theatre will become a better place for creating art and changing lives.