

Lauren Reinhard

*Pedagogical Statement*

In my practice as a theatre maker I am always guided by the questions, “Why am I doing what I’m doing? Why am I doing it in this way? Who am I doing it for?” In my experience as a teacher, I start with those three questions as well. In answering these questions I have identified three guiding principles for myself as a teacher: collaboration, experimentation, and forward thinking inclusivity.

Everything that I do in the theatre as an artist and as a teacher is foregrounding the importance of **collaboration**. Collaboration, being the cornerstone of what we do in the theatre, is vital to the development of individual work as it is understood in a traditionally hierarchical model. Teaching students to direct, write, research, and/or act while also teaching them how to be effective collaborators and respond to one another’s work in meaningful and constructive ways is integral to my approach in the classroom.

It is through **experimentation** with the techniques of others that students begin to hone in on their own individual voice and process of making their work. While I was teaching a writing section of a devising workshop I had students engage in a writing prompt in the style of Taylor Mac and Tracey Letts. As I read their pieces I realized that by trying to combine the naturalistic style of Letts’ dialogue with the fantastical structure of Mac, students were forced to digest these elements through their own artistic aesthetic resulting in work truer to their own authentic voices. As a teacher it is my goal to share this process of learning from other’s vastly different methods with an eye toward honing in on their own. I strive to personally model this process using my own professional art making experiences and opening my processes to my students.

For me, teaching theatre is about providing young artists with key concepts and ideas they will need to nurture their own vision for their **art making future**. Much of my graduate training and professional interest has been in narratives by under-represented communities. I firmly believe it is vital to a theatre education to study and experience plays outside of the white western cannon. In my courses I include historically marginalized groups in the conversation of important voices in the landscape of the American theatre. When students enter the professional world they will not always see themselves represented in the work that is being professionally produced. The reason I teach is that the people who are our students today, if given the right education, will be the people who will change the industry tomorrow.

In my ongoing work as an educator I hope to deepen my understanding of how to address the contributions of the “great teachers” with an increasingly diverse student population who often do not feel represented by this cannon, how to encourage students to bring their whole selves in the room without exacerbating traumas they may carry, and how to help design increasingly equitable recruiting techniques that create more diversity in student populations. I always strive to meet my students where they are and I deeply believe that every student can excel if we can identify and remove the roadblocks that are preventing them from doing so.

