

Teaching Philosophy & Statement on Inclusive Practice

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The most important lesson I have learned—both in the studio and in life—is the power of presence. I teach my students to show up fully, courageously, and without attachment to outcome. In my classroom, failure is not only tolerated but welcomed; vulnerability is treated as a strength; and respect for ourselves, each other, and the work is non-negotiable. This intentional environment allows students to engage deeply with the artistry, rigor, and humanity at the heart of acting. I understand the craft of performance not merely as a skillset, but as a spiritual, physical, and emotional practice that demands truth, empathy, discipline, and radical presence.

Much of my teaching is informed by my study of the Alexander Technique, both as a student and as an educator. I guide students toward an embodied understanding of themselves; releasing habitual tension and discovering, viscerally, that they are enough physically, emotionally, and artistically. Many students arrive carrying internalized narratives of inadequacy: voices that insist they are not worthy, not capable, or not acceptable. These narratives are destructive in the classroom, in the audition room, and in life. Together, we learn to recognize those voices, interrogate them, and let them go in service of freer, more truthful work.

Discipline and presence are inseparable in my pedagogy. We respect time, space, and one another because excellence and professionalism are foundational to artistic freedom. Theatre is collaborative work, and collaboration requires trust. Trust is built through consistency, preparation, and care for the process. I challenge students to remove unnecessary defenses, to take responsibility for their work, and to step into vulnerability with courage and generosity. This is how truthful performance—and meaningful collaboration—becomes possible.

My specialization in Musical Theatre Performance and Shakespeare places me at the intersection of two highly structured and heightened forms of expression. Both demand specificity, emotional truth, and disciplined technique communicated through non-naturalistic means: sustained pitch, complex meter, rhythm, and stylized language. I teach students to engage these forms with intellectual rigor, imaginative impulse, and embodied presence, emphasizing that structure is not a limitation but a pathway to freedom. When students commit fully to form, they gain access to greater expressive range and deeper emotional clarity.

I also emphasize the physicality of performance as essential to actor training. Drawing on the movement pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq, including Neutral Mask, Character Mask, and Clown. I help students dismantle habitual patterns and discover new expressive potential. This work encourages play, curiosity, and risk while fostering a deeper understanding of form, rhythm, and transformation. Through mask and clown work, students confront universal human truths and learn that specificity is often the gateway to resonance and connection.

Practice as Research

My research interests are grounded in practice-based inquiry. I understand performance itself as a form of research—one that investigates presence, embodiment, audience engagement, vulnerability, and the translation of classical acting principles across contemporary platforms. My teaching, directing, and creative work function as interconnected sites of inquiry, each informing the other through an ongoing cycle of experimentation, reflection, and revision.

My solo performance work functions as a primary research modality within this framework. Through these projects, I explore trauma-informed performance processes, theatre as a tool for healing, and performance as a means of fostering dialogue, social reflection, and positive change. I am particularly interested in theatre as a spiritual practice: one that integrates truth-telling, embodiment, and communal witnessing as pathways toward transformation for both performer and audience.

Two major culminations of this research include my nationally recognized solo work *The Method to My Madness* and my most recent premiere, *Me:2*. These works investigate autobiographical storytelling, ethical approaches to vulnerability, and the relationship between performer and audience in deeply personal material. In developing *Me:2*, I incorporated AI-assisted tools to support structural analysis, track rewrites and revisions, manage iterative development, and document audience response across performances. This process deepened my understanding of how emerging technologies can support reflective practice, clarity of intention, and sustainable creative workflow—insights that now directly inform my teaching and mentoring of student artists.

In parallel, my ongoing digital performance project *Fostering365* functions as a living research laboratory for new media performance. Through daily short-form content creation, I examine how foundational acting principles, including truthful behavior, vocal clarity, specificity, and embodied presence, translate to camera-based and platform-mediated performance. This work allows me to investigate audience engagement, storytelling economy, and entrepreneurial sustainability while remaining grounded in rigorous acting practice.

Technology, New Media, and Career Readiness

I integrate emerging technologies, including AI-assisted tools, into my pedagogy with intentionality and care. I frame technology not as a replacement for artistry, but as a support for organization, efficiency, and clarity. In practice, this includes tools for script analysis, rehearsal tracking, self-tape preparation, editing workflows, lighting planning, and reflective revision. I guide students toward ethical and responsible use of technology that enhances—not diminishes—the creative process.

My approach to career readiness is grounded in two principles I return to consistently with students: “*The readiness is all*” and “*How you do one thing is how you do everything*.” While simple in phrasing, these ideas reflect a deeper pedagogical commitment to consistency, integrity, and preparation. I teach students that professionalism is not situational—it is habitual. The way they approach class, rehearsal, collaboration, and feedback is the same way they will approach auditions, creative partnerships, and professional opportunities. By emphasizing process over outcome, I help students develop sustainable practices that support long-term artistic lives rather than short-term success.

Across all courses, I emphasize adaptability and agency. I prepare students to move fluidly between stage, camera, microphone, and digital platforms while maintaining rigor, curiosity, and ethical responsibility. Career readiness, in my view, is not about narrowing artistic possibility, but about expanding it—equipping students with the literacy, confidence, and flexibility to navigate an evolving artistic landscape.

Inclusive Pedagogy and Ethical Practice

Inclusion is central to my teaching philosophy. Acting demands that we engage the full spectrum of human experience, and my classroom is a space where every student—regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical ability, or background—is seen, valued, and challenged. I remain attentive to the power dynamics inherent in any classroom and use inclusive, supportive language to foster autonomy, trust, and accountability.

This commitment extends to my work as a director. In my production of *Hamlet*, I reimagined Polonius as Polonia, a female Prime Minister, reframing political power and maternal responsibility within the play. I cast a brilliant gay African-American actor as Horatio and reimagined Fortinbras as a justice-driven woman inheriting the consequences of male violence. These choices were not cosmetic; they deepened the text and invited audiences to encounter Shakespeare through a contemporary, inclusive lens.

My commitment to inclusive pedagogy is deeply personal. Growing up in Concord, North Carolina, I experienced marginalization and violence long before I had language for my identity. My education at the North Carolina School of the Arts marked the first time I felt safe and artistically seen. I carry this experience into my teaching with humility and care. I maintain an open-door policy, invite dialogue, and remain committed to listening, learning, and evolving alongside my students.

I am also the father of two mixed-race sons adopted from foster care, an experience that continues to deepen my awareness of race, privilege, and the necessity of ongoing self-education. I do not claim mastery; I commit to practice. Growth happens through dialogue, compassion, and mutual accountability.

Conclusion

I believe every student is, in the words of Rumi, “a ruby embedded in granite.” My role as an educator is not to shape students into predetermined outcomes, but to help remove the obstacles that obscure their inherent brilliance. Artists create from specificity of self, but our work only matters when we listen deeply and honor the voices of others.

This is not a static philosophy. It is a living, evolving practice—one that integrates teaching, research, creative work, and ethical responsibility. It is the work of my life.