

MOLLY ELIZABETH MCCARTER

Teaching Statement

"Men are governed only by serving them; this rule is without exception."
- Victor Cousin, French Philosopher

This simple statement is the core of my approach to stage management and to teaching. I came to stage management through a love of the creativity inherent to organization and systems. I truly believe there is an art to communication, and to diagnosing and anticipating challenges; and that these are the foundations of management. Over the 20 years I have worked as a manager in the performing arts, my greatest successes have been the result of a deepening understanding and commitment to service. I may not be the person who creates the idea, but through commitment to that idea I create the process that executes it. Focusing my decisions and solutions on support of the artist and the art has broadened my perspective and deepened my abilities and love of the work.

I came to teaching 8 years ago through this idea of service. During years of working with interns and young managers I experienced the impact a mentor could have on a young professional. That by teaching and training young stage managers in not only the hard skills needed to be successful but in leadership grounded in service and support of artists, I not only impact the individual manager but the community as a whole.

As an educator, this commitment to being of service to each student is heightened. I feel that the content of both the course and the mentoring during the production process must be tailored to the specific needs of the student and their education. Decisions and guidance must be based on an understanding of the individual students strengths and weaknesses. The production process in effect becomes a laboratory environment where the student and teacher can work together to focus on addressing weaknesses and further developing strengths.

In an academic theatrical environment every student comes with a different set of skills and knowledge. The core classroom work must ensure that all students have the necessary tools at their disposal to continue the work of the classroom out in the field. These tools begin with an understanding of the role and function of a manager. But they also include a detailed grasp of the production process, as well as an

enhanced awareness of vital subjects like management theory, communication approaches, and personnel management. Perhaps most importantly, they must develop their critical-thinking and analytical skills, and learn to effectively apply them to the production process as well as the artists they work with. It is this focus on deeper understanding, this enhanced ability to fully examine and evaluate their own work and that of their collaborators that forms the foundation of the courses I teach. It is one thing to teach students a system to follow; the more important step is to give them an understanding of the form's underlying purpose, its usage in actual practice, its context, even its history, so they are able to create their own systems and approaches suited to the ever-changing needs of a production.

The goals I hold in the classroom also guide the mentoring process. Assisting them through observation and feedback as well as engaging them in discussion and problem solving. The purpose of this process is to guide the student through the process of stage management and allow them, in a safe atmosphere, to develop their strengths and address their weaknesses. It is the role of the teacher to present the student with situations that force them to struggle beyond their limitations and to give them the tools and support to solve conflict and challenges on their own.

This is primarily accomplished by a consistent presence and involvement in the process without active interference. Once the student has all tools necessary the greatest service a teacher can provide is to allow the student learn from both their successes and their mistakes. This does not mean to imply that students are left to deal with all manner of situations on their own. Knowing that there is support system in place that is not overbearing the student can take on the leadership role confidently and effectively.

It is my professional goal to give students the foundation necessary to create confident leaders. I endeavor to teach and mentor both within the classroom and in the production environment creating a tailored support system that serves a manager's individual learning needs. In my estimation this is the best service I can provide for a student and future artist.