

Teaching Philosophy Olivia de Guzman

I believe that my job as an acting teacher is:

- To approach teaching as a collaboration that fosters respect, discipline, and curiosity.
- To employ inclusive pedagogy, inviting students to bring their authentic selves to their craft.
- To help students to interrogate the space between discomfort and harm and to respect their boundaries.
- To encourage a student's embodiment of acting, utilizing breath, physical impulse, and imaginative play.
- To provide a range of exercises that help clarify the concepts discussed in class.
- To uplift the abundance of knowledge gained by observation, research, analysis, and critical response.
- To engage collaboratively with faculty to offer students a sense of integration in their training program.
- To 1) offer space, conditions, and resources for a student to be led towards an experience, 2) help the student evaluate the experience, 3) help the student use their experience to articulate principles that fit into their personal, repeatable technique.

Some areas of interest and expertise:

Musical Theatre/Acting the Song

The musical provides students an incredible opportunity to explore history, innovation, heightened material, specificity, and an intense level of mind-voice-body connection. The musical also provides actors incredible challenges of contradictions: truth, active pursuit, and impulse are often lost as the student meets the precise demands of melody and rhythm. I have created (and continue to develop) a series of Acting the Song Tenets that offers students specific focus points as they explore and embrace these contradictions. In more advanced stages of the work, attention is paid to analysis, active listening, the principles of stage comedy, improvisation with music, and refining a personal practice that allows for freedom in performance. My comprehensive approach to acting in musicals has led to my students feeding back that their work is "freer than ever before," or that they "stop performing the song and feel more like living in the song," or that they discovered new strategies of "connecting the singing to the acting to tell a clearer, deeper story." I invite my students to integrate all of their skills in discovery of this unique and complex art.

Foundational Acting

A collection of concepts grounded in Stanislavski, Hagen, and others are powerful tools for my students as they hone imagination, objective, action, world-building, given circumstances, and other specificities. At the heart of acting is a sending and receiving of energy based on embodied impulse, and I invest time in developing this substructure through several exercises. Students are encouraged to build their foundational learning processes as part of a supportive ensemble.

Devised Theatre

We begin by investigating how students experience the world and what they are interested to create, pulling back layers to reveal their artistic core. Then we add back as little as necessary to tell the most compelling story. Tasked with exercises, games, improv, prompts, and a varied selection of devising projects, acting students become writers, composers, directors, and fuller collaborators. They develop their ability to take initiative, problem solve, communicate, and take ownership of an outcome. They mine their experiences and inspiration, they test their skills, and they refine their creative eye and taste. My teaching moves quickly from prescriptive to responsive, and students build the confidence to assess and improve their theatre-making processes.