

# CHARLES M PEPITON

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## STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

A liberal arts education provides the most complete educational background for students. This is especially true for students focused on theatre and performance. The theatre is the intersection of the arts and letters. It is infinitely influenced and enhanced by all disciplines. A strong education in theatre compels students to engage with the visual arts, music, cultural theory, history, philosophy, the sciences, and literature while having opportunities to put that knowledge to work in the form of rehearsal and performance.

Theatre education should be built on strong simultaneous and interconnecting foundations of theory, history, and practice. The theoretical realm must provide ample and diverse viewpoints to inspire and root students in a lineage of practitioners. In my classes, students will always encounter opposing ideas and methodologies. A study in Stanislavski's psychologically driven performance styles will be balanced later by the more physically oriented work of Bogart or Grotowski. The goal is to provoke students to think creatively within a construct of theoretical tension. Additionally, students should have broad exposure to the literature, theories, and traditions of Western culture while simultaneously exploring contrasting methodologies and literature from traditions throughout the world, including particularly the performance traditions of Asia and Eastern Europe.

Coupled with a theoretical foundation, students must have ample opportunities to experiment with putting their knowledge into practice. Faculty directed departmental shows are but one venue for such experimentation. Students should have additional space to develop their own productions where the focus is on taking artistic risks and honing their own unique voices. The student artists should then be asked to debrief and defend their choices in order to synthesize their learning.

As a teacher, I strive to create as many chances for individual creativity as possible. In more analytical courses such as Theatre History, I incorporate experiential assignments so that the knowledge gained is not only intellectual but also immediately pertinent to the students' work as emerging artists. In performance driven courses such as Beginning Acting and Directing, students balance their work in rehearsal with theoretical assignments, criticism, and research to gain historical context and inspiration. In this way, the two foundations of theory and practice mutually support and enhance one another.

In liberal arts institutions, students regularly think across the disciplines. Similarly, thinking and listening across the human experience enhances the learning and work of both students and faculty. This is perhaps even more vital in artistic disciplines. I strive to highlight voices from a diversity of cultures, genders, and experiences in the classroom and on the stage.

My guiding principles include mentoring aspiring artists and scholars, modeling professional and collegial practices, and encouraging independent thought and curiosity.