

## **Christine Cummings**

### **Teaching Philosophy: Acting, Voice & Movement**

I believe that the theatre has a particular ability to courageously explore truth by revealing a piece of universal human nature, therefore providing us with a view through to our souls where we might be, ever so slightly, inspired and changed by the event. The trained actor should possess the skills for unveiling an honest slice of the human experience with a clarity that comes from a deep and faithful understanding of self, coupled with a fascination in uncovering all aspects of true identity. We theatre artists, especially actors, are our own instrument, our own tool kit and must learn to be honest with ourselves about who we are and what we have to contribute to this art or else every creation will be built on a false foundation.

It is the theatre instructor's duty to help build a foundation for their students by introducing skills and methods for exploring different avenues towards reaching emotional, vocal and physical truthfulness in an environment rich with a passion and discipline for the craft. Acting is a craft and the student of this art form must be grounded in technique in order to prevent the tendency to rely solely on instinct. An element of unabashed exploratory freedom is crucial to spark an understanding, to awaken a consciousness, to open a door to truly triumphant revelations. The classroom is meant to be a laboratory for this exploration, risk-taking and discovery within the framework of basic principles for creating organic human behavior. A variety of methods must be employed as steppingstones all leading to AWARENESS. Through mastering the necessary skills, the student must learn FOCUS to live the moment, and concentrate on the partner. This focus will help them listen on stage as they actively fight for what they want and make specific choices to overcome obstacles. The IMAGINATION must be nurtured and honed allowing immediate access to emotional vulnerability, vocal liberation, and truthful physical availability. Once inundated with these concepts and experiences, the acting student may make the leap into the professional world better equipped for the myriad of challenges inevitably in store for those brave enough to embrace a career as an Artist.

Theater provides a unique opportunity to teach, inspire and effect change through our storytelling, so we as theater artists and educators must purposefully aim to tell stories about ALL of us, avoiding an ethnocentric lens of whitewashed history, so that the art we share and produce increases the capacity of our community to understand and embrace ideas that have not historically been given a voice. To that end, theater training today should, with an abundance of discipline and compassion, prepare, encourage and embolden students to create and participate in a performing arts field which reflects who they are and the stories and experiences that matter to them. As an educator, I have been fortunate to teach a wide diversity of student demographics and have become increasingly devoted to equity, diversity and inclusion practices in my classroom and department and I will integrate this in all aspects of my work with students and colleagues alike.

Much like my philosophy that Actors are never finished learning the art of acting, Educators must also continue to learn, improve and hone their skills so they might keep up with rapidly advancing technology, create a culture of equity in their classrooms, find ways to address any barriers to student's success and mindfully create welcoming and inclusive learning environments for ALL students. A fortunate aspect of my time as a full-time faculty member is that I have had the opportunity to attend a multitude of professional development workshops which inspired me to implement elements of Universal Design in my courses, I completed the CORA Equity in Education Certificate Program in Unconscious Bias and Racial Micro-Aggressions Certifications and joined a DEISA faculty group who helped me revamp my classes to make them more equitable and representative of our student demographic including selecting assigned plays that are equitable in terms of gender parity, communities of color, LGBTQIA+ communities and writers with disabilities whenever possible. As I tell my students and colleagues, the Theater Community should set an example of inclusion, compassion and love for the rest of the world.