

Cassie Kay Hoppas

Teaching Philosophy

Both theatre as a whole as well as costume design and production are creative and collaborative works of art. It is my goal to help students develop a working knowledge of costume design and production, communicate with other theatre artists and collaborators, and understand the expectations of the professional world. I believe that students learn best from a combination of shared knowledge and academic research along with hands-on practice and execution.

Courses that develop design and technical skills are fundamental for theatre students. Individualized assessment should play a key factor, making sure courses are designed to capitalize on the strengths of students while simultaneously strengthening their weaknesses. Classes should focus on areas including costume and social history, figure drawing and rendering, color theory, design research and application, costume construction, creative problem solving, knowledge of textiles, principles and elements of design, and script analysis. These skills must also be paired with the ability to work successfully with a production team as well as balancing time management and budget.

In order to have a successful collaboration one must be able to effectively communicate. Producing theatre involves many artists with many different backgrounds, training, experiences, and personalities. Courses and lectures that stress the growth of effective communication skills and creative collaboration are integral to the growth of theatre students. Working with a variety of peers, instructors, and professionals helps to build diverse experiences for students to learn from and sharpen their collaborative talents.

Learning the expectations of the professional world will better prepare students to go out and pursue careers in the field. Professionals from various theaters, companies, and production houses are an invaluable resource for academic settings. From these professionals students can learn a wealth of knowledge in a variety of ways, including portfolio reviews, discussions and the encouragement of getting firsthand experience via internships, apprenticeships, and seasonal theatre employment.

Another key factor in the learning process is to encourage discovery not just in a students' successes but in mistakes as well. It is not enough to simply learn what is the right way and what is the wrong way; students must be encouraged to think about and discuss why they made a choice and why that choice worked or why it was not successful. It is my belief that this is a key to learning and growing in a creative field like costume design and production.

Theatre and costuming are art, and in the arts there has to be individuality; each student will learn and grow as an artist and will have different successes as well as challenges. It is important to monitor and assess each student's progress on an individual level. This, along with focusing on the development of technical skills, creativity, collaboration, and comprehending the demands and expectations of a theatre professional produces well-rounded students who have a developed understanding that will carry them into the world of costume design and production in both academic and professional theatre.