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Higher education lies in the midst of a changing paradigm. Politically conservative and market-driven pressures are now holding universities accountable for delivering a more cost-efficient education that provides students an adequate return on their investment (Schejbal). This paradigm shift calls for a systemic review of theatre education. As researchers engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning, our purpose in this essay is to review alternative learning strategies already evident in our field, yet lacking in widespread applied practice. First, we address several interdependent challenges facing undergraduate theatre training and the changing characteristics of today's students. We then offer initiatives for revising an undergraduate theatre curriculum.

Challenges Facing Departments of Theatre in the Twenty-first Century

While a college education in and through theatre theoretically provides valuable interdisciplinary depth and breadth across the liberal and performing arts, theatre academics have debated challenges in undergraduate pedagogy since the founding of theatre departments in the mid-1920s. As Anne Berkeley explicates, pragmatic "arguments for production-based curricula" gave birth to "the so-called *craft or culture* debate about the mission of educational theatre that escalated in the 1930s and 1940s" (13; emphasis in original). Since then, theatre departments have demonstrated theory versus practice divides between scholars and artists whereby conventional approaches to theatrical production and praxis-based courses autonomously coexist with academic studies courses in dramatic literature, theatre history, and critical theory. Despite Jill Dolan's "exhortation to dismantle the borders too often drawn in our field" (2), little progress has been made pedagogically and institutionally over the past four decades. Bonnie Marranca agrees that "[o]ver the last thirty or forty years, the basic framework of undergraduate theatre programs . . . has changed little" (1) since the field's extensive growth and instructional specializations during the 1970s (Hobgood 5). This self-perpetuating pedagogy has not substantially changed since the last snapshot of the curriculum in 2004, when Anne Fliotsos and Gail Medford addressed the interchangeable relationship between theory and practice. Today, theatre professors seem to merely recycle what they were taught, albeit with new infusions of technology.

One of the primary challenges we face in revising theatre curricula is rethinking how to identify successful learning outcomes for our students, in part by surveying our alumni after graduation (Lena). If we define *success* in the context of future careers, then we should consider the prospects for graduates who aspire to work in the entertainment industry and professional theatre, where a surplus of job-seekers exponentially outweighs employment opportunities. Actors' Equity, for example, reports that roughly 43 percent of its members average sixteen weeks of annual employment for a median salary of $7,100—a figure that has decreased over the past five years (DiPaola). For designers and writers (collapsed among various industries), the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates respective median salaries between $44,000 and $55,940, in comparison to the national average of $57,616 for those holding bachelor's degrees. A TCG survey of nearly 1,600 self-described "theatre artists" reports a median income of $39,600, a figure ranging from $50,200 for college educators to less than $29,000 for "multi-disciplinary" artists (Shugoll). On average, 42 percent of these incomes

derive from theatre work, as many respondents augment their earnings through non-arts-related jobs. At best, the data indicate that one needs to supplement one's income earned from doing theatre with other resources. This information, of course, raises an ethical question regarding theatre training in higher education, as Marvin Carlson (120) queries: How can we continue sending nearly 15,000 graduates annually into an oversaturated market with little hope of having a career in their purported professions?

Despite these grim statistics, approximately 900 undergraduate programs mimic an estimated 1,773 regional theatres for which they are presumably training students for employment (Bial; Voss and Voss). As such, a planning committee is typically charged with finding plays to fill slots for a given season's program, thereby leaving little opportunity for innovation through "a shared sense of purpose" among actors, designers, dramaturges, and directors (Shalwitz). Nonetheless, no faculty member in his right mind would consider abolishing their bachelor degrees and departments, as Tony Kushner "modestly" proposed to ATHE members in 1998. In light of changing perceptions about higher education and the concern of students—and their parents—on getting a favorable return on their investment, faculty must reposition theatre education as a vibrant and viable course of study for today's undergraduates (Kindelan iv).

We are selling our students short if we strictly focus on their job placement and prospective careers in the conventional sectors of the entertainment industry. Today's Millennials (born between 1982 and 2004) will most likely change jobs multiple times before age 30 and collaborate with colleagues and coworkers in contexts and professions that are as varied as they are unique. An ethos of neoliberal individualism in higher education, however, forces students and faculty to pursue singular agendas at the expense of collaboration and interdisciplinarity. Faculty-artisans continue to craft individualized courses for small and large groups of "consumers of knowledge" (Singleton-Jackson et al.) while corporate publishers increasingly control course content. Students receive independent grades for separate courses along what can be described as "an industrial, degree-granting assembly line." Moreover, faculty members unilaterally pursue tenure and promotion and operate individually (or in very select groups) when seeking grants, earning merit pay, and attempting to meet their institution's qualitative and quantitative measures of accountability. The interdisciplinary and collegial ethos alleged to be the cornerstone of higher learning has, in reality, become a sphere of self-serving efforts, with students and faculty alike promoting their personal and professional agendas at the expense of the greater good.

We also need to contend with the pervasive impact of swiftly changing technologies, as computerization is predicted to replace nearly half of white- and blue-collar jobs in the foreseeable future (Frey and Osborne 2, 45). Yet, as Jim Groom and Brian Lamb (3–6) argue, students are wasting valuable time using inflexible learning-management systems (e.g., Blackboard) that do not allow them to transfer more practical web skills outside of school, while faculty serve as data-miners for administrators, who, in turn, synthesize statistics for state and federal agencies. Meanwhile, as students spend countless hours multitasking with social media, their academic performance suffers and further harms the ongoing physical maturation of their brains (Giedd; Junco and Cotten). To buck these prevailing trends we need to emphasize creative and social skills to ensure that technology serves our desired learning outcomes.

As emerging adults, today's college students are trying to determine what they really want in life, how they fit into unstable and constantly changing worlds, and what it means to accept adult responsibilities as self-sufficient and financially secure people (Arnett 9–20). These cohort features explain why many come to theatre to express, explore, and discover their personal identities by performing, directing, and designing their own and others' shifting worlds. Theatre courses and productions provide unique transitional sites for literally and figuratively playing theatre games like curious children engaged in the ongoing process of growing up. Theatre supplies the requisite space and time for students to cultivate their innate dramatic instincts in shared relationships with peers and faculty mentors.

While some academics argue that Millennials are the most educated generation of all time because of higher college enrollments, Mark Bauerlein relies upon a wealth of evidence in declaring them "the dumbest generation" while depicting troubling declines in their skills relative to what employers require. Although college seniors highly rate their levels of intellectual competence and literacy, published assessments indicate that only 30–40 percent are proficient in critical thinking, reading, and writing (Finley 13). These disconcerting figures reflect similar proportions of high school seniors' college readiness based on ACT and SAT benchmarks, as well as long-term academic trends in reading, writing, and civics as reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In short, Millennials may be going to college in record numbers, but their academic proficiency is floundering.

Whether we like it or not, a twenty-first-century college education must account for the literacy skills and civic responsibilities of today's students. Regardless of disciplines, all faculty need to cultivate young minds, for as Judith Shapiro, the former president of Barnard College, counsels students: "You want the inside of your head to be an interesting place to spend the rest of your life" (qtd. in Delbanco 32–33). Although we cannot entirely predict the jobs that our students will seek upon graduation, an inherently sociocultural field like theatre offers them the potential to envision a future for communities at both the local and national levels while developing their careers. Like many of our colleagues in other humanistic disciplines, we claim that we already provide students with learning outcomes that foster civic discourse, critical thinking, imaginative expression, inter-personal communication, corporeal intelligence, creative problem-solving, empathic awareness, and intercultural knowledge. While some theatre departments internally assess these outcomes among their students, unfortunately, we have no such published assessments on a national scale. Nevertheless, we must underscore these values of a theatre education in conjunction with revising our pedagogical strategies to meet the educational demands, needs, and expectations of Millennial students.

Toward a Revised Theatre Curriculum

Given the aforementioned challenges, we seek to address learning outcomes by posing the following questions: Why does studying theatre matter? What are the criteria for success in an undergraduate theatre education? How can the experiential skills and knowledge we provide our students not only give them the tools for launching a self-fulfilling career, but also for shaping the world in which we live? What can our field offer a society in which technology outpaces the more natural rhythms of daily living? If we intend to serve students, then how do we reconcile the stark differences between what stage-struck 18- to 23-year olds *want* (to be an actor) and what they *need* as emerging adults and socially responsible citizens? If we intend to serve audiences, then how do we persuade the 85 percent majority of the adult population who are not theatregoers to appreciate the necessity of live theatre (NEA; Voss and Voss)?

To reclaim the inherent values of theatre in higher education, we propose a "post-course" curriculum, as envisioned by Randy Bass, in which "*bounded, self-contained courses*" no longer serve as the "*primary* place where the most significant learning takes place" (24; emphasis in original). He argues that we must disrupt academe's divided organization of the curriculum in favor of a student-centered pedagogy steeped in inter-/intradisciplinarity, collaboration, peer review, and learning communities. Bass contends that the "formal [undergraduate] curriculum has reached its end" insofar as it no longer adequately addresses the learning needs of today's students (ibid.). His model offers a blueprint for revision based on experiential, inter-/intradisciplinary, collaborative, and participatory learning practices, a pedagogical paradigm that readily applies to theatre. For example, a post-course initiative might suggest that theatre productions and coursework be conceived within a campus-wide context involving multiple departments and university partnerships (Tarantino; Watson). Furthermore, we need to rethink how today's students learn relative to the current resources availed to us as teachers, a strategy that is potentially conducive to studying theatre. A selective and strategic use of the internet and social media, for instance, could help reframe theatre courses by empowering students to connect

to one another and have greater ownership of their work. All told, Bass's post-course initiative offers us a basis for reimagining an undergraduate theatre curriculum relative to the learning process and outcomes that we desire for our students.

To some extent, theatre faculty are already using some version of a post-course strategy. As evidenced in past issues of *Theatre Topics*, professors have been redesigning their courses and re-centering their curricula through such high-impact practices as first-year seminars (Gendrich and Hattery), community-based projects (Armstrong), service learning (Mohler), collaborative capstone courses (Young), and professional internships while utilizing the resources of their campus teaching centers. Although these examples mark a progressive direction for our field, they are still too few in number and limited in their disciplinary scope to suggest a seismic change to our curricula at large. Thus, we offer and elaborate on four themes—or complementary pillars—of a future-oriented curriculum that interconnects students, faculty, and local audiences toward revising an undergraduate theatre education. To address Millennials' academic needs and bridge theory/practice divides, we emphasize experiential, student-centered, and performative pedagogies within all courses. Following Bass, we argue for collaborative, entrepreneurial, and community-based learning strategies in order to disrupt individualistic silos, initiate alternative careers, and create innovative forms of theatre.

Emphasize Experiential Learning and Cognitive-Affective Skills across All Contexts

As departments gradually shift toward a post-course model, stand-alone classes will likely remain the building blocks of our discipline for years to come. Nevertheless, we hope that faculty will collaborate with students by disseminating their expert knowledge within an experiential learning environment. We need to cultivate the curious minds and personal epistemologies of students within each dynamic learning space, more than teaching theatre per se, and to deploy learner-centered practices and critical pedagogies that position students as co-decision-makers (Klein; Lazarus 55–88). Rather than deliver course content primarily through teacher-centered lectures, student-centered teaching means devoting more class time to engaging students actively in problem-solving and inquiry-based experiences, while positioning ourselves as skill-facilitators guiding students to discover their emergent identities (Kruse and Pongsajapan 4–5). As Richard Isackes makes clear in teaching stage design—for example, by *guiding* instead of *criticizing* students' decision-making—we honor our mutual intransitive processes and continual self-interrogations of our respective work (43).

If we use technology (e.g., Blackboard) as "offstage" activities, we can then refocus our "onstage" classroom time cultivating students' imaginations and creative skills by researching, developing, and producing live performances in every course we teach. Many performance courses already employ Bloom's taxonomy of creation, evaluation, analysis, application, understanding, and remembering (Krathwohl) by scaffolding a series of assignments that culminate in a final project using backward course design. For example, in her Introduction to Theatre course, Claire Syler guides students to apply, analyze, and evaluate theatre practices using their own narratives per "an event that resulted in personal change" (173) through thirteen instructional steps. After analyzing their written narratives, students examine characters as actors, choose staging treatments as directors, and present metaphorical concepts as designers. Similarly, Julia Guichard scaffolds a series of seven tasks in her voice and speech class (e.g., interviewing a native speaker) to prepare students to teach a dialect to their peers and deepen their critical thinking skills.

In order to resolve craft and culture divides, we need to infuse performative pedagogies into so-called academic studies courses and integrate critical theory into skill-based practice courses. For example, in their introductory communications course, John Warren and Deanna Fassett make critical race theory visceral by guiding students to create imagistic tableaux and brief performances that embody emergent themes and behavioral patterns of white privilege within texts and everyday events. In his Performance and Social Change course, Bryant Alexander likewise links theory and

performance by having students translate, interpret, and perform the arguments of scholarly articles. In their special topics course, James Peck and Kelly Howe invite students to disrupt the theory/practice binary by adopting Gertrude Stein's tropes through role-playing to uncover new meanings of students' habitual behaviors in site-specific campus landscapes.

Theatre history and script analysis courses also offer role-playing opportunities, such as script-in-hand readings of scenes from dramas, thus sparking debate in their historical contexts. By staging Little Eva's death in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for instance, students can viscerally imagine how and why spectators engaged in the anti-slavery debates that led to the Civil War, thereby applying subsequent manifestations of these debates to more recent and current racial conflicts (Condee). Likewise, when students use primary sources to debate anti-theatrical rationales as US colonists, they discover how and why such prejudices against theatre still resonate today. Or clowning techniques, such as those described by Laurel Butler, might be integrated into history units to help students trace a genealogy of comedic forms. Just as theatre companies throughout history have had to decide what plays to produce, students may reimagine respective artists' decision-making processes and argue why certain works should be selected for their university seasons. Therefore, by asking students to stage dialogic arguments on their feet, whether improvised or scripted, we can not only dramatize theories in practice, but also create learning communities comprised of experientially engaged critical thinkers, speakers, and writers.

Research-based principles from cognitive psychology and neuroscience likewise offer new approaches for learning by improving students' self-reflection skills and empathetic sensibilities (Ambrose et al.). To encourage students to become responsible, self-directed learners, we might begin each semester by making them aware of their "fixed mindsets" and deploy strategies causing them to reconsider their conventional thinking toward taking creative risks, consequently inspiring intellectual curiosity and developing empathic awareness (Dweck). For example, Beth Cherne teaches students to present multicultural characters in the third person, thereby decreasing egocentric impulses and increasing perspectives on the concept of the "Other." To make personal points of view more dramatic, we can also arouse students' emotions and instill reflective silence by slowing down our speech with purposeful voices and gestures. By creating emotional tensions that induce empathic awareness, we can further engage listening skills while inspiring affective and lasting memories of course content.

As Terry Doyle and Todd Zakrajsek (45–55) delineate, our brains learn best by engaging our bodies kinesthetically—moving, seeing, hearing, touching, and engaging other sensory and mnemonic images—the physical foundations of human imagination and artistic creativity. Obviously, our performance courses and rehearsals already keep students moving on their feet; but for sit-down-and-listen situations, we can ask students to stand on opposite sides of a room to discuss contradictory viewpoints over acting methods and historical controversies rather than remaining seated for entire class periods. Because our brains best remember visual images, asking students to translate abstract concepts into physical tableaux and action sequences encourages them to see patterns and create categories of theoretical concepts toward increasing synaptic connections. Megan Shea heightens tactile sensations and complicates ways of seeing by pushing her students to reexamine their relationships with personal objects (e.g., smartphones) in order to slow down and deepen their fractured thinking and writing (56–57). In sum, by emphasizing experiential skills in which students engage their whole bodies, learners can build on their existing knowledge, as well as their intra- and interpersonal competencies—learning outcomes that are applicable to a range of potential careers.

Collaborate within and outside of Our Departments in Inter-/Intradisciplinary Ways

As an inherently collaborative and interdisciplinary field, theatre involves working in groups, with each collaborator distinctly contributing to any given project's process and performance (Stufft 53–57). Group problem-solving, collectively unpacking questions, and working in teams takes us

out of our fabricated learning silos to engage at the inter-/intradepartmental level within the context of a student-centered learning environment (Bass 26). Acting and theatre history, for example, each could be taught in tandem. Perhaps the acting teacher might require her students to study the socio-historical world of a particular acting theorist or practitioner. Instead of focusing exclusively on Stanislavski's approach to the actor's craft, she could work with a theatre history colleague to teach students how the advent of dramatic realism changed the conception of acting. Moreover, she might consider collaborating with colleagues in the behavioral and cognitive sciences to further contextualize Stanislavski's system. Perhaps a performance of some sort and a corresponding symposium could be organized interdepartmentally as a culminating activity for such an alliance. The collaboration need not stop there, however, as librarians and the campus writing center could offer supplemental support in educating students about research strategies in helping them become more cogent and argumentative in scripting academic prose. And yes, we recommend that praxis-based courses like acting and design should be fortified with high- and low-stakes writing assignments, as advocated by Margaret Werry and Stephanie Walseth.

A post-course model extends beyond a teacher's individualized pedagogy to include the expertise of peers in creating a learning experience rich in content and context. Whether one collaborates with sociologists and philosophers to teach a course on the AIDS epidemic or joins a colleague from Jewish studies to produce a play on the Holocaust, some theatre faculty are, in fact, embracing such approaches (Gagnon; Kindelan 121–34). The September 2013 issue of *Theatre Topics* documents a number of projects that transcend disciplinary and institutional boundaries toward "challenging rigid divisions between art and scholarship [to] forge new paradigms for the production of knowledge" (Peck ix). One such example cites a seminar that combined research and performance to explore how one experiences Shakespeare through the seemingly contrarian practices of reading and/or spectating his work. A collaborative effort undertaken by Dani Bedau and D.J. Hopkins, their "Shakespeare Laboratory" actively involved students in a project that disrupted the preconceived divide between Shakespearean studies and the performative practice of his oeuvre. In doing so, they combined the classroom and the rehearsal hall to jointly develop critical thinking and performance skills in an investigative learning environment that placed students at its center, thereby having them assume an active role in the pedagogical process.

While challenges naturally arise when working with colleagues both from within and outside one's department—namely, an increase in time and energy to synthesize and execute the curricula— these types of collaborations are crucial to teaching and learning in the twenty-first century. Social media and blogging, for example, can help support student/faculty correspondence across disciplinary and geographical divides toward creating learning communities that are as diverse as they are distant. A beginning acting class, for example, might use Twitter or Instagram to facilitate students sharing their experiences as part of a group discussion organized at the national and/or international level. A responsible and sensible implementation of this strategy could coordinate remote exchanges among students to enhance their learning while demystifying the inhibitions, fear, and confusion that can accompany a beginning acting class, especially when designed for non-actors/majors. Faculty members at three different CUNY campuses put this theory into practice during the spring of 2013 by having their students respond to prompts, share research, and express ideas via Twitter. Using a shared Twitter account, the exercise allowed participants to directly interact and discuss what they were doing, learning, and experiencing in their respective classes. One of the faculty members, Eero Laine of Staten Island College, described the process "as a little bit like opening up our classrooms to one another," thereby exemplifying the collaborative spirit encompassing faculty and students alike.[1] Indeed, digital media and remote learning can facilitate and support cross-disciplinary collaboration at large, with faculty sharing their expertise and knowledge in select and strategic ways among departments and their students. This ethos is, after all, at the very heart of what it means to be collegial.

Engage Students in an Entrepreneurial Approach to Learning and Practicing Theatre

Taking ownership of one's education lends to what we are defining as an "entrepreneurial approach to learning." A key criterion for developing the theatre curriculum, *entrepreneurship* implies a sense of risk-taking and initiative in conjunction with creativity, imagination, personal responsibility, and organizational skills. Although commonly applied to the business sector of our capitalist society, we are using this term in an artistic context, consisting of innovation and initiative—two necessary skills for developing and deploying one's craft.

Currently, a small though growing number of theatre departments are using entrepreneurial learning strategies, such as the Pave Program in Arts Entrepreneurship at Arizona State University (ASU), which provides "greater capacity to support [one's] actualization and self-efficacy as an artist." In addition to offering seminars, workshops, and classes that train students to become innovative and proactive in creating and distributing their artwork, the program sponsors a peer-reviewed journal specifically dedicated to promoting the artist as entrepreneur. It also has a funding mechanism to underwrite student-generated projects, a resource that has resulted in work going beyond the ASU campus to include locations and venues from the Phoenix and New York Fringe festivals to the HERE Arts Center in New York City. Under the moniker of Pave's Arts Incubator Project, this wing of ASU's School of Film, Dance and Theatre has spent the last ten years nourishing "innovation and creativity" by producing and promoting the devised work of students. According to Pave's founder Linda Essig, the current moment beckons us to provide students "with [the] skills to harness an entrepreneurial spirit to further artistic goals" (124). A leader in the developing subfield of entrepreneurship and the arts, she bluntly addresses the outdated practice of preparing students for regional theatre careers: "The regional theatre model that we grew up with is dying, so what does it mean to train people to have fulfilling artistic careers in different worlds?"[2] Her question is as relevant as it is significant and appears to be one of the underlying influences of the Pave model. Instead of training students to act or design on behalf of not-for-profit theatres, Essig and her ASU colleagues have created an apparatus that provides students with resources to initiate independent work that can potentially shape their artistic identities. Such was the case with John Caswell Jr., an ASU alumnus and recipient of a Pave incubator project grant, who claims that the program was "life-changing" insofar as it provided him with the opportunity and confidence to self-produce theatre work, which has led to affiliations with the NY Fringe Festival, Joe's Pub, and Ontological Theatre Company. The founder and artistic director of the NYC-based Progressive Theatre Workshop, Caswell specializes in devised work for social change and credits Pave for teaching him the value of "taking ownership of his artistic life and career"[3] (fig. 1).

An entrepreneurial ethos has also been embraced at Carnegie Mellon University's (CMU) Department of Drama, where an initiative called "Playground" facilitates student-generated work as part of a festival of devised theatre. Although the department continues to prepare and place its graduates in the conventional sectors of the performance industry, Playground indicates CMU's awareness of the importance "getting students to understand their potential as artists."[4] Every year, the department ceases its classes and formal production practice for a week in favor of turning over the building and its facilities to the students, who are charged with creating new work. The students have to submit a proposal for acceptance to Playground in advance of being granted the resources to rehearse and produce their original and interdisciplinary pieces. The allotted week for Playground constitutes a "flurry of creative activity," resulting in several days of performances of roughly fifty projects (fig. 2). It is as exhausting as it is rewarding for both students and faculty alike, according to Barbara Mackenzie-Wood, the former head of CMU's Acting/Musical Theatre Program: "It is pure inspiration. It is a time when the kids become alive with unique creativity. Everything has to be new. That's the point. As a teacher you learn new gifts and interests about your students."[5] Students from across the discipline collaborate on a range of theatrical endeavors: scenic and lighting designers team up with playwrights, actors, stage managers, technicians, and directors in a wondrous mosh pit of creative energy and practice. The faculty function as facilitators not judges of this process,

Fig. 1. *God Hates This Show: Shirley Phelps-Roper in Concert, Live from Hell*, written and directed by John Caswell Jr., presented at Joe's Pub at The Public Theater, New York City (2014). (Photo: John Keon.)

Fig. 2. "Playground 2012." (Photo: Tom Strong, courtesy of the Department of Drama, Carnegie Mellon University.)

thereby creating a truly student-driven learning process. One of Playground's salient achievements has been the formation of PigPen Theatre Company, a multidisciplinary troupe that features puppetry, music, storytelling, and theatre as a wholly unique aesthetic. Consisting of seven graduates of the acting program, PigPen has received acclaim for its eclecticism, an achievement that company member Arya Shahi directly traces to Playground's inaugural year in 2004, when he and his freshmen comrades mounted the first of their many devised works. Today, they plan to revise that same work (*The Hunter and the Bear*) as part of a commission from the Manhattan Theatre Club[6] (fig. 3).

The ASU and CMU examples provide a potential direction for revising the theatre curriculum. While many of our students naturally want to become actors, directors, dramatists, and designers in the conventional sectors of the entertainment industry, the fact remains that jobs are scarce and the system is stacked against them insofar as maintaining any sense of agency. An entrepreneurial approach can afford them the skills, confidence, and values needed to shape their artistic identities and emerging careers by creating a context for them to practice, develop, and distribute their work. Devising new work and becoming more varied in their skillset will empower students to build a professional profile without slavishly relying upon the traditional powerbrokers of the business (e.g., agents, casting directors, and producers). The critical thinking, creative learning, and interpersonal communication skills developed in a theatre-based curriculum can readily apply to a number of professional pursuits and should be presented as such. Some form of an entrepreneurial ethos is therefore essential to preparing students for a variegated professional landscape, both within and outside the métier of theatre.

Create More Original Theatre for Civic Engagement

Just as laboratories invent new products to improve the quality of our lives, we argue that theatre departments need to redefine their educational missions with a renewed sense of collective purpose that transcends the mere delivery of escapist entertainment. Departments should rethink their sole reliance upon producing scripted plays that place the entire burden of innovation on playwrights. Instead, devised theatre works promote collective innovations while provoking audiences to confront current crises of democracy. While we engage students in inquiry-based projects, departments might explore self-directed initiatives that engage their local community to discover its most pressing needs and challenges. After identifying and deciding on the content of these challenges and developing research questions, faculty and student actors, directors, and designers may then venture into collaborative processes by experimenting with performance and production methods. For instance, in their two-year Building Home project, faculty and students at Virginia Tech engaged their community in storytelling circles and Boalian techniques and toured the region to address the civic concerns of local residents (Leonard). When students leave campus to collect oral histories from residents, they offer themselves and their communities a heightened sense of social responsibility (Armstrong 113–14).

Community-based projects can also be applied to college campuses. Since 2000 the CRLT Theatre Players at the University of Michigan have been producing topical pieces that address matters relevant to their academic community. Overall, they have produced over fifteen interactive and emotionally engaging sketches that employ Boalian techniques to explore sexism, disabilities, racial diversity, student and faculty anxieties, mentoring and advising, tenure and promotion, and other pertinent issues that effect relationships among junior and senior faculty, as well as undergraduate and graduate students. Triangulated assessments of the CRLT program have revealed transformative changes in participants' subsequent perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors within classrooms, departments, and administrative offices (Kaplan, Cook, and Steiger). Similarly, a sexual-assault prevention program at Rutgers University further demonstrates the benefits of employing undergraduate actors as peer educators through interactive theatre. After receiving biweekly training about sexual violence, a group of actors develop scenarios that dramatize different bystander perspectives before, during, and after a depicted sexual assault. At the end of this seventy-five-minute performance, the

Fig. 3. PigPen Theatre Co.'s production of *The Old Man and the Old Moon* at The New Victory Theater, New York City (2014). (Photo: Courtesy of PigPen Theatre Co.)

actors remain in character and field questions from their peers in a Boalian forum. Assessments of this program find that student actors successfully alter their peers' bystander attitudes and rape myths (McMahon et al.). Troupes such as these serve to validate the social purposes of theatre while extending the visibility of theatre departments.

Despite its "potholes" (Schirle) and collaborative challenges (Morrow et al.), devising original productions and collective creations has inspired innovative forms of theatre while training students for entrepreneurial careers. At the Dell-Arte International School of Physical Theatre, Schirle and her colleagues train multifaceted actors in alternative methods that encourage students to think globally and challenge the limitations of type-casting and commercialism (Canavan 58). Since the March 2005 special issue on devising in *Theatre Topics,* numerous articles and books have suggested how theatre departments can institute devised performances as a post-course model (e.g., Bowles and Nadon). As Ming Chen and her colleagues explain, performances created collectively disrupt traditional spheres of artistic control by encouraging each team member to solve problems outside his or her discipline and thereby promote cross-curricular creativity (124). As such, original projects created and developed in classrooms and community-based outreach programs might be substituted for and integrated into university theatre seasons to showcase student work for broader public audiences. For instance, fall semester projects could be designed, built, re-rehearsed, and produced during spring seasons; or a group of freshmen and sophomores could continue to experiment, refine, and test a project with peers before scheduling a formal production for paying audiences in the future.

Furthermore, we need to stop presuming that "if we build it, they will come." Rather than always expecting audiences to arrive at our venues, where we have complete control over technical elements, we should consider going to where people congregate both outdoors (e.g., public parks and local farms) and indoors (e.g., museums and churches) by staging and designing performances for and in their actual settings. Producing works in urban storefronts, for example, encourages students to analyze actor/audience relationships within the confines of intimate spaces (Bergman).

Further examples abound at the professional level, such as Reverend Billy's performances of materialistic shopping in malls and downtown business districts. Imagine reenacting your community's signature historical event by bussing spectators from one local site to another. As Condee affirms, visiting historical sites in relation to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* allows participants to experience and better understand white responses to slavery (38). To save money on building large-scale scenery (not to mention throwing much of it away), scripted plays that require one primary setting may be staged in their actual locations. For example, the Kansas City Actors Theatre recently staged Jeffrey Hatcher's *Three Viewings* in a funeral home (Zazzali 72). Giving up control of spatial elements would force us to experiment with each location's existing scenery, lighting, and sound, while allowing us to embrace and improvise with spontaneous "interruptions" in here-and-now contexts.

These theatrical innovations could excite and attract new audiences that are hungry for live experiences while inviting us to work in an interdisciplinary, student-centered, and community-oriented way. By conceptualizing our departments as creative research-and-development laboratories that conduct theatrical experiments, such innovations could also provide new production models for regional theatres. Such public engagements, interdisciplinary possibilities, and collaborative partnerships are seemingly endless.

Coda

The basis of our curriculum has not changed much over the past four decades. We still educate our undergraduates through separate theoretical and practical courses to ostensibly prepare them for careers in entertainment industries. Students learn how to act, direct, design, and write in the hope of applying these skills to the conventional sectors of the profession. Those who receive a more generalized course of study in theatre have, perhaps, greater flexibility in their job prospects in that they can use their liberal arts education in a more variable way upon graduating, yet a critical mass of these students will most likely pursue predictable careers as well. As we have demonstrated, the sheer number of jobs available to these aspirants remains slim and the prospect of having a lasting career as an actor, director, playwright, or designer therefore unlikely. In using their education to earn a living, students should identify intellectual, experiential, empathic, and kinesthetic skills as key learning outcomes of their theatre education. As such, we propose a post-course model as the basis for revising the curriculum within which collaboration, inter-/intradisciplinarity, and entrepreneurialism complement experiential learning practices and the devising and dissemination of original work. This blueprint for change may positively and powerfully help to resolve the craft versus culture (theory versus practice) divide that has intensified within our field over the past forty years. Finally, as Millennials continue to grapple with their personal and professional development within the context of a variegated yet shrinking job market, theatre educators have the unique opportunity and distinct responsibility to foreground the aforementioned skillset so that our students can better shape their professional, personal, and artistic identities. By empowering students to become talented artists and dynamic citizens every bit as much as collaborative creators and innovative entrepreneurs, we can facilitate their self-initiated formulations of life's opportunities, professional and otherwise.

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Peter Zazzali is a theatre director, actor, and scholar whose work is recognized internationally. A member of the theatre faculty at the University of Kansas, he has acted and directed in over 150

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Notes

1. Eero Laine, personal interview with the author (Zazzali), 15 March 2015.

2. Linda Essig, personal interview with the author (Zazzali), 8 September 2014.

3. John Caswell Jr., personal interview with the author (Zazzali), 14 September 2014.

4. Peter Cook (head of CMU's Department of Drama), personal interview with the author (Zazzali), 14 February 2015.

5. Barbara Mackenzie-Wood, personal interview with the author (Zazzali), 15 August 2014.

6. Arya Shahi, personal interview with the author (Zazzali), 23 June 2014.

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