

21st Century Skills for Theatre Arts Students

The Theatre Arts programs are ideal for preparing students for a career and citizenry in the twenty-first century. The practice of theatre arts can help the student to prepare for the workplace whether in the field of entertainment or practically any discipline. The developmental benefits throughout the K-12 program make the theatre an ideal study for a well-rounded citizen of the world.

Collaboration and Communication

The spirit of collaboration lives in the very heart of theatre study. Theatrical production includes a dynamic mix of all the arts, as visual art, music, dance and literary works are all embraced in recreating stories of the human condition. The study of theatre arts is a group dynamic. To produce theatrical works requires an interaction of artists and technicians from many different disciplines. This interaction is inherently related to the interaction our young citizens will encounter in their roles as citizens in the greater society. Theatrical production is a microcosm for the societal values, cooperation and appreciation they must learn and master for success in an ever more world-aware social realm. In preparation for a theatrical event, planning, staffing and practicing are required of the entire company of actors, artisans, managers, designers, technicians and marketing specialists. The result of this intense working-together is an understanding and appreciation of leadership, talent and reliability. A work of theatre for an audience is the reenactment of conflict and consequence in time and space, as interpreted by the group in plot, characterization and spectacle. This provides the essence of understanding and loving a community bound together by language, custom, age, gender, history, race or privilege.

Information Literacy

Processing the awareness and demands of a diverse modern world is ever increasingly a function of an individual's ability to embrace what the world offers with one's imagination, inventiveness and attention to detail. The research required to master a fraction of theatrical endeavor entreats the student to utilize all the sources available for study and to know the laws and limitations relevant to their audience, community and culture. Theatrical production, as well as study in history and criticism, demands knowledge of customs, ideals, and technologies. Theatre students must use their knowledge from all the other disciplines, including history, politics and social studies, mathematics and science, as well as media technology and mass communications, in order to create and to understand their roles and created environments. These bodies of knowledge must be enhanced by the skills and awareness in knowing where and how to find the information and how to discern its truth and relevance. What follows lies in knowing how to utilize the information in writing, characterization, directing, designing and fashioning implements and environments. The theatre becomes a synthesis of lifestyles from all over the world and the spectrum of disciplines from all of history.

Invention

Exercising the creativity and inventiveness of the human soul begins at the very first stages of theatre study and continues beyond the high school years. The actor learns to take risks in characterization and spontaneity; the writer learns to explore all possibilities of development; and the technician learns to solve all sorts of problems in non-verbal forms. Each time a theatrical production is undertaken, it is a new invention, no matter if that title has been done before or it is an original work. The solutions to that particular production concept are inventions created to serve the performance; the particular invention may live only in the time and place for which it is created, or it may be discarded after performance, but the inventiveness and the appreciation for that solution will live on in the individual and the group. Each time an actor, out of technique or spontaneity, creates a personal event or interpretation, or each time an artisan creates a working piece of scenery, sound effect, implement or environmental effect, or each time a publicist finds a new incentive for a greater audience, an invention has come to life. The appreciation of new inventions also has a place in theatre study, as the discerning theatre group always embraces the newest technologies and latest developments in theory. The skill developed in the creation of the moment, the implement or the method will serve the theatre student through many years to come.

Critical Thinking

As this century progresses it becomes ever more clear that the world needs citizens who are able to penetrate the unfolding of events and conflicts with pure thought. The greatest exercise for the development of solid rationalization and logical solution has to do with problem solving and critical response. Whether searching for strong or better choices in production or dramatic literature, or exploring the spontaneous ingenuity of improvisation, the mind is engaged in analytic and logical examination. Through script analysis, character analysis, design interpretations or marketing planning, the theatre student develops practical thinking skills along with the ability to respond through writing, speaking and logical expression. Equal to the ability to develop thought through observation and identification of substantive ethic in plot, character, or style is the mindfulness of how one's choices affect others within the theatre group and from an audience. Once the mind is engaged through decision making in writing, directing, acting, critiquing, using mathematics in design and construction or simply attending a performance, the theatre student is developing abilities and skills which serve society to progress and evolve, to be flexible in solving cultural conflicts, and to celebrate the uniqueness of the individuality and the common bond in humanity.

Self-Direction

The guiding lights for students of the theatre are in learning the concepts of initiative and responsibility. Because of its collaborative nature and that a task must be completed on time and out of one's own initiative, theatre production is an invaluable tool for developing the personality and sense of community responsibility. Each individual finds an important place to contribute to the whole of the project, and each one

learns to express themselves to their best sense of excellence for the good of the entire company. For personal growth, the theatre equips the participant with the communication skills and the ego strength to make mature choices and evaluations. As they progress from learner to leader, they have the opportunity find their gifts and individual talents. The theatre student learns to rely on him or herself and to trust the response of their community of artists and their audiences. To stand in the midst of fellow students, teachers and administrators or facing an audience and deliver the fruits of their labor and study is the most internally strengthening human activity. Students of the theatre can rely on this strength for self-expression and self-direction, as it stays with them for the rest of their lives.