

Find your students' inner actor

A master class by Justin Greer

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- In theatre, whether dance, song, spoken word or physical movement is your medium, the most important aspect of the performance is **WHAT YOU ARE SAYING**. Students need to have a point of view, an opinion, emotion or thought behind what they are doing, to give their learned techniques value in the theatrical realm.
- In Musical Theatre, we tell our stories using three main techniques—dance, music and character acting... the “Triple Threat”. A student of Musical Theatre must hone their techniques in all three genres, if he or she wants to be commercially viable. The economics of commercial theatre these days limits cast size, so everyone has to do everything...at the same time.
- Using images to which the students can relate helps them find their “in” to the piece. It is important to come to the work from a place that is personal.
- Linking physical action to lyric makes the piece easier to memorize. It also eliminates unmotivated dance steps, which can look typical and cheesy.
- The more freedom you give to the kids to contribute to the piece, the more ownership they have of the piece, and subsequently, the more **PRIDE** they feel in the accomplishment of the piece...plus it looks cool.
- It isn't about **SMILING** (although that helps). It's about **POINT OF VIEW**. What each individual student has to bring to the work is what will make **THEIR** work **SPECIAL** and different from everyone else...and we **WANT** that.
- I believe very strongly in curricular connections in this work, which is why I challenge and question the students throughout about vocabulary, history, and cultural relevance. In working with your students, try to remember that our art comes out of current event and cultural norms. Art is what a civilization gives to history. Use your classes to open up dialogues into time periods, historical events, emotional journeys, mores and customs of days gone by, cultural differences. All these and more can be fully explored (and indeed **SHOULD** be fully explored) while working on a piece of art, regardless of its genre.
- Don't let it be a competition (there's plenty of time for that in the real world). Let it be a learning experience by challenging them to see what catches their eye, and then ask **WHY** does it catch their eye??