BRETT JOHN OLSON

New York City, NY – 701.263.7754 – brett.john.olson@gmail.com – brettjohnolson.com

Teaching Philosophy

I believe the best way to teach theatre is by letting students get up and practice what they learn. From day one, I mix theory with hands-on activities, combining readings with practical application. Team-based learning and group exercises help students understand and apply theoretical concepts to their projects. This approach helps them quickly master various techniques and build confidence in tackling the challenges of performance and the profession. A successful teaching day, to me, is when a student thinks, feels, or says, "I can do this." I aim to create an ensemble-based classroom where students celebrate and learn from each other's discoveries, which not only enhances their learning but also prepares them for the real world. By focusing on these practical, project-based methods, I hope to develop students into confident, capable, and innovative theatre practitioners.

One of the biggest challenges faced by theatre students is balancing the art of theatre with the business side. To help them overcome this, I believe in offering a "tool kit" of techniques they can use in their work. While my approach to performance is rooted in the Stanislavskian system, I also emphasize exploring Meisner, Adler, Hagen, Chekhov, Laban, Linklater, and the First Folio Technique. My goal is to help them develop their own individual performance practice. Equally important is understanding the business side, so graduating seniors feel confident following industry standards. In the classroom, this means regularly assigning self-tapes, maintaining up-to-date casting profiles on standard websites, and conducting research projects on major market opportunities. Outside the classroom, I keep an open-door policy for anything "Biz of the Biz" related, offering personalized mentorship and soft-skill problem solving. This approach enhances their versatility as creatives and equips them to navigate and adapt to diverse creative situations confidently.

To assess student learning effectively, I use several strategies designed to ensure clarity, fairness, and constructive feedback, including:

1. Clearly designed assignments,
2. Decisive rubrics,
3. Personalized feedback,
4. Practical projects,
5. Encouragement of daily practice.

By integrating these methods, I ensure that students can both understand and take ownership of their developing abilities. I want them to not only improve, but to know exactly "how" to improve, which prepares for continuous growth in their artistic careers. The state of the art is always evolving, and it's my responsibility to frequently update practices based on student feedback, evolving industry standards, and my own personal growth in life. Ultimately, I strive to create student-centered learning experiences that are fun, engaging, and relevant. My role as an educator is to ensure that all my students can graduate feeling prepared to navigate the entertainment industry, confident in their approach to performance, and with a greater capacity for empathy – both for themselves and the world around them.

With appreciation,

Brett John Olson, MFA, MA
Actor, Actors Equity Association
Director, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society
Educator, Stephens College Conservatory for the Performing Arts
BrettJohnOlson.com