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Theatre History in the Secondary Drama Classroom and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

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Current Utah State Core Standards for Theatre require that theatre history be taught at levels II (Standard 3 Objective C), III (Standard 4 Objective D), and IV (Standard 4 Objectives A and D) of high school drama classes. However, a 2011 survey of Utah high school theatre teachers indicates that only 54% include theatre history as an "important" or "very important" part of their curriculum, while another 36% say they "touch on it." This thesis is designed to be a resource for secondary drama teachers in integrating theatre history pedagogy into their drama classes, in an engaging and performance-based manner that builds on activities that are usually already present in the curriculum. It also suggests methods for crossing the curricular divide and using theatre history projects to enrich students' experiences in other core and elective classes. As continued funding for the arts in our secondary schools is threatened in the current economic climate, it unfortunately becomes increasingly important for theatre programs to demonstrate the ability to collaborate with and enhance other disciplines, as we focus on producing graduates with high-level cognitive skills.

Keywords: secondary theatre curriculum, theatre history pedagogy, history/drama collaboration, theatre history units

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PREFACE

One of the many lessons that I have learned since becoming a teacher is that there are as many teaching methods as there are teachers. Although we all adhere more or less to the core curriculum, the manner in which we present the material is unique, and we constantly send messages to our students about the relative value of curricular materials. We as teachers assign significance to the core standards in the same way that a historian assigns relative value to the events of the past. Students receive theatre through our filters, and our best hope is that they will like what they get well enough to continue the investigation on their own.

In teaching theatre, there are so many threads of investigation that the choice can be dizzying for an introductory-level teacher. We can view the subject from the point of view of the audience, the performer, the designer, the producer, the scholar, the technician, the critic, the director, the businessman, the historian, etc. In my experience as a high school teacher, it is very easy to fall into a pattern of emphasizing only one or two of these roles, and denying our students the opportunity to appreciate aspects of the field with which we are perhaps less comfortable, or which meet with more resistance from the majority of the students. Core standards for the state of Utah require the subject to be taught from multiple perspectives, and as a teacher I want to give students as full an experience as I practically can.

I have spent the past few years searching for workable solutions to this problem, particularly in the realm of theatre history, which is an interest of mine but is not generally a popular topic with my students, who have a definite preference for performance skills. I wanted to know if this was the case with other theatre teachers in the state, and what they were doing about it. So, I created a survey to inquire about their teaching methods, and what types of

activities fill most of their class time. (See appendix A) The survey indicates that many teachers are having the same struggle that I am when it comes to the topic of theatre history. Current Utah State Core Standards for Theatre require that theatre history be taught at levels II (Standard 3 Objective C), III (Standard 4 Objective D), and IV (Standard 4 Objectives A and D) of high school drama classes. However, my 2011 survey of Utah high school theatre teachers indicates that only 54% include theatre history as an "important" or "very important" part of their curriculum, while another 36% say they "touch on it."

The survey also collected data on the ways that theatre teachers have tried to approach the topic, as a critical thinking skill or a performance skill (which are not mutually exclusive.) Finally, I collected data about ways in which theatre works with other core subjects at their schools. After studying the survey results, I spoke to other theatre teachers at conferences, competitions, etc., and began to research the topic in journal articles, books, and online sources. Finally, I used my classroom as a laboratory to try out the ideas that seemed useful in my situation.

In this thesis, I will address student engagement in secondary theatre history by sharing what I have learned from educational theorists, other teachers at secondary and postsecondary levels, and my own experience. The chapters will move back and forth between theory and practice as we explore ways to translate good theory into good pedagogy. It is designed to be a resource for secondary drama teachers in integrating theatre history into their drama classes, in an engaging and performance-based manner that builds on activities already present in the curriculum. It also suggests methods for crossing the curricular divide and using theatre history projects to enrich students' experiences in other core and elective classes.

Chapter one, "Why History Matters," will cover the reasons for history's inclusion in the drama curriculum, including identity formation, the promotion of critical thinking skills, and the practical aspects of historical study. We will also discuss the place of historiography in the secondary curriculum. Chapter two will delve into the topic of engagement, beginning with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, then moving to Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's "flow theory," and looking at research in history teaching, including authentic inquiry and project-based learning. Chapter three, entitled "Making it fit" will look at practical classroom applications including breaking away from the timeline approach to history, and using performances and competitions as incentives for historical research. Finally, chapter four will take a look at cross curricular collaborations between history and drama classes, using examples from universities and my own trial-and-error approach.

The inclusion of theatre history in the secondary curriculum offers not only a richer drama experience, but the opportunity to practice critical thinking skills, increased performance opportunities, research skills, college preparation, and links to other core subjects, especially history. As continued funding for the arts in our secondary schools is threatened in the current economic climate, it unfortunately becomes increasingly important for theatre programs to demonstrate the ability to collaborate with and enhance other disciplines, as we focus on producing graduates with high-level cognitive skills. My hope is that this thesis will give other drama teachers some food for thought in their quest for productive and thriving programs that are valued by students, parents, and administrators.

CHAPTER ONE: Why History Matters

In order to fulfill all of the State and/or National Core Standards currently in place for secondary theatre classes, a drama teacher must be a jack-of-all-theatrical-trades and move the curriculum along at a brisk pace. In addition to teaching, a 2011 survey of Utah theatre teachers indicates that, (of the 40 respondents) 95% direct at least one musical per year, and 77% direct one or more plays. 59% prepare students for competitions, and 44% participate in fundraising activities. Time is at a premium, and unlike many classes, deadlines are usually not flexible. In many cases, there is administrative or parental pressure on the drama teacher to bring home trophies and other visible signs of the program's success. This pressure to perform, coupled with the fact that many students find history "irrelevant, tedious, and boring," (Foster and Padgett 357) may tempt the teacher to minimize or even erase theatre history from the class curriculum.

Why does history matter in the secondary theatre curriculum? Theatre history is a part of the curriculum that holds the potential to be of lasting value for the student, and the teacher who views it as expendable is giving up a crucial tool that allows the learner to synthesize knowledge gleaned from many areas and create a "big picture" experience. Historiography trains the student to be aware of the fallibility of historians, and look with a critical eye at the accepted narratives. This chapter will explore four arguments in defense of history's benefit to the drama curriculum. The first, of course, is simply that history currently shows up in both State and National core standards, and should therefore be a part of every theatre curriculum. Next, the study of theatre history gives students a glimpse into the important role that theatre has played in shaping our societies, and therefore ourselves. Third, history education helps students prepare for college as it develops critical thinking skills. And last, we will consider the practicality of historical learning. Instead of reinventing the wheel with each generation, we can learn from

artists of the past. What has been tried? What were the results? An understanding of what came before helps a student to gain respect for artists and craftsmen who laid the foundation for the art she loves today.

History in the Theatre Core

The Utah state core standards explicitly mention theatre history for students in Drama II and beyond. Standard III objective 3, under the heading of *Understanding Context,* requires students to "Explain how historical period might affect character action," and "Explain how different cultures might affect character action." The next courses--Theatre Foundations III and IV-- add "Demonstrate historical and cultural analysis (external research); i.e., from the viewpoint of a scriptwriter, actor, designer, and director" and "Describe the responsibilities of a dramaturge" (Theatre Foundations III and IV Objective 3). Finally, students at this level must "Report on the works of famous scriptwriters, actors, designers, directors, or dramaturges in various cultures and historical periods" (Objective 4).

According to the American Alliance for Theatre & Education, (AATE) "To maintain the quality of a student's theatre experience, standards for theatre education are essential. " (AATE Web Page, National Standards) National Core standards for theatre were created in 1994 and are currently in the process of being re-written. The national standards are more rigorous than the Utah State standards, especially in regards to history. The following is a list of the standards relating directly to our topic:

> Content Standard #1: Script writing through improvising, writing, and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history.
>
> Content Standard #3: Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions.

b) Students analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements

f) Students explain how scientific and technological advances have impacted set, light, sound, and costume design and implementation for theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Content Standard #5: Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Content Standard #6: Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and new art forms

a) Students compare the interpretive and expressive natures of several art forms in a specific culture or historical period

b) Students compare the unique interpretive and expressive natures and aesthetic qualities of traditional arts from various cultures and historical periods with contemporary new art forms (such as performance art)

c) Students integrate several arts and/or media in theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions.

Content Standard #7: Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

a) Students construct social meanings from informal and formal productions and from dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and relate these to current personal, national, and international issues

g) Students critique several dramatic works in terms of other aesthetic philosophies (such as the underlying ethos of Greek drama, French classicism with its unities of time and place, Shakespeare and romantic forms, India classical drama, Japanese kabuki, and others)

Content Standard #8: Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present

Because history is an important component of the core curriculum I assumed there would be a body of research within the theatrical community dealing with the topic: best practices, lesson plans and unit plans, etc. Part of my reason for researching this topic was a strong desire to teach theatre history with the interest and passion it deserves, and not be met with the groans and blank stares of my students when the topic is mentioned--or worse, the dreaded "Why do we have to do this?" "What good will this do me in real life?"

In my research, I have found very little written on this topic in theatre journals, even journals aimed specifically at theatre teachers. There are some university-level courses being discussed, but these articles are at best only somewhat helpful at a secondary level. Frustrated, I finally turned to journals aimed at history teaching, reasoning that teaching history as part of a theatre course is really not much different than teaching history in a social studies class. Here I found an abundance of applicable information. It seems that history teachers around the world are dealing with some of the same struggles that I am. "Numerous studies of history teaching in US schools reveal that classroom instruction frequently is dominated by lecture and recitation, is reliant on a single textual source, and is concerned primarily with having students memorize unrelated facts for short-term multiple-choice tests…not surprisingly, students often find the subject irrelevant, tedious, and boring" (Foster and Padgett 357). The scholars I have mentioned and the national standards committees are asking whether history education has enough relevance to warrant continued inclusion in the secondary curriculum.

The issue seems to be getting a lot of attention in Europe. In October 2007, a "History Matters" campaign attempted to promote the benefits of learning history, but as Richard Harris wonders, "How have things got to the stage where we need a campaign such as 'History Matters?" He continues, "A recent QCA [Qualifications and Curriculum Authority] report on history teaching revealed that the majority of pupils actually enjoy studying history but their grasp of why they were doing it was extremely shaky, even in schools where there were strong departments and inspiring teaching… Most responses focused on jobs; very few mentioned the skills, dispositions and type of thinking that the subject can engender so well or that it represents a study of human action"(29).

Other European nations have traveled even farther down the same path. In Spain, history is currently being taught as a distinctive subject only during the last three years of secondary school (ages 15-18) (Cercadillo 8). "In Scotland a handful of schools have dropped history from the curriculum entirely in favour of subjects that are more 'relevant' (Harris and Rhea 29).

In the US, we are in the middle of a furious re-write of State and National core standards on all fronts, with math and English leading the way. State and National re-writes of core standards for theatre are in process, with a goal for implementation in 2013. While it does not appear that history education has anything to fear from US standards committees, the manner in which we approach the subject is being re-evaluated by many scholars and educators. Teaching any type of history requires critical thinking and judgment calls. It is an intensely personal pursuit, because just like the historians who wrote about past events, each of us sees the past through the lens of our own experience. The study of theatre historiography, as explained by Henry Bial and Scott Magelssen, is "the study of the foundational assumptions, principles, and methodologies that determine how theater history is written. To practice theater historiography means to look beyond the record of 'what happened' to analyze how and why such records are constructed" (i).

Historiography in the secondary theatre classroom is a critical part of the equation as students need to understand that plays were and are not written to be factual accounts of historical events, but as entertainment or sometimes propaganda. This type of thinking can enhance a student's connection with the material as she compares historical literature to today's media. Bial and Magelssen feel that,

> a new generation of would-be scholars, raised on the shifting sands of Internet and global media culture, reads history from a fundamentally different perspective than prior

> generations. The hard-won understanding that history is not and cannot be an impartial record of facts and events is, for such students, a commonplace. They understand that history is a complex and contested act of cultural memory. (ii)

It can be exciting for students to realize that history cannot be contained in a textbook, that the people who "created" history were human beings just like themselves, and that their own interpretation of the material is as valid as anyone else's. The benefits of this type of study can be formative for the student, as they create for themselves an identity based on an expanded world view, and begin to attach a personal significance to past events. As teachers, we need to be careful to avoid pouring history through the funnel of our own agenda, but allow students to access the documents, do their own research, and come to their own conclusions.

History and Identity Formation

One benefit of history education is that it can bring perspective. Perspective is a vantage point that allows a student to situate herself within her society—helping to create a personal, social, familial, religious, and national identity. As far as theatre history is concerned, until the twentieth century theatre was a powerful political force in many societies. Playwrights were not just entertainers, but activists, philosophers, satirists, educators, and creators of lexicon. They understood the power of words. One of the amazing things about theatre history is that we still have those words--in many cases in the exact configurations used by the playwright-- and while they may not have the same significations now that they did then, they may still have a message for us. The simple act of becoming familiar with the accepted narrative of one's society can promote identity formation.

A great deal of identity formation, particularly in the social realm, takes place during the junior high and high school years. Freud, Erikson and other educational theorists have noted the

importance of identity formation during adolescence. Erikson defined identity as "a conscious sense of individual identity…an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character… maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity" (Erikson 102). Young people "seek to identify themselves through affiliation with peer groups, clubs, religion, political movements, etc. These groups provide opportunities to try out new roles, much in the way that someone might try on jackets in a store until finding one that fits" (Miller 155). Naturally, "trying out new roles" is something we know how to do in a drama class. When those new roles take us inside new cultural perspectives, our world shrinks just a little and feels a bit more comprehensible. When the culture we are exploring is historical, we begin to have an understanding of the complexities of any society, and how we, our parents, and their parents, and so on, have all shared in the collective narrative of human emotions, politics, and longings that in some ways are the same for every generation.

Just as we must understand where we are starting from when reading a map, a student must have a sense of her own cultural identity before she can set out to explore others. "Schools should give students the tools with which to explore their identity" (Spinner-Halev, 39). The "tools" might include books or media, opportunities to interact in groups, feedback from teachers and peers, field trips, and exposure to ideas and cultures different from their own. By exposure to the unfamiliar, a student begins to decipher what she is and what she is not.

Of course, teachers must be cautious when approaching the realm of identity. Identity should never be forced on a person. While our self-image can expand to include many different personas and ideas, only the individual can decide which experiences will be shaping forces in identity. Teachers have a charge to offer a smorgasbord of information, but not to dictate what

will be devoured. As Spinner-Halev states, "Overtly teaching about identity can have worrisome consequences; what schools should do is to deepen students' understanding of aspects of both their own and other cultures"(39).

A drama class is an ideal place to explore identity in a non-threatening environment. In historical dramatic literature we find rich characters and intense conflicts. "History …offers the richest imaginable source of moral examples and moral dilemmas, which are themselves the essence of great fiction, great drama, and life itself" (Antony Beevor, *the Guardian*). Empathizing with a teenage character in a contemporary comedy is something many students do every day as they watch television after school. Empathizing with Julius Caesar or Joan of Arc may be a lot more work, but the payoff will come as the student gains perspective, insight, and then confidence in her ability to explore and perform historical literature.

Critical Thinking Skills

History education helps students prepare for college by developing critical thinking skills. College professors sometimes lament of a lack of critical-thinking skills in the students they see arriving on campus. As theatre professor Dorothy Chansky states,

> I am thrilled that students like plays… but when "plays" means only recent or contemporary or over coded canonical work in which they can appear without having to resort to contemplating the past as a foreign country, the history professor is left to ponder the skill sets and preparedness and even the wisdom of assuming that students can grapple, however rudimentarily, with what they are reading. ..I am very worried about the skills students are asked to develop in the undergraduate package in which theatre history is embedded. Curiosity—yes; the ability to present the material in multi-media

> performative ways,--yes. But what about the languages? What about the skills to parse literature? ("Yes, No, Maybe" 21)

Literature and history can work hand-in-hand to "involve students in historical thinking in a way that textbooks usually do not"(Berard 22). And so we come to the question, "What exactly is critical thinking, and how do we go about teaching it? In a seminal study on critical thinking and education, Edward Glaser defines critical thinking as follows.

> The ability to think critically, … involves three things: (1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences, (2) knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and (3) some skill in applying those methods. It also generally requires ability to recognize problems, to find workable means for meeting those problems, to gather and marshal pertinent information, to recognize unstated assumptions and values, to comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity, and discrimination, to interpret data, to appraise evidence and evaluate arguments, to recognize the existence (or non-existence) of logical relationships between propositions, to draw warranted conclusions and generalizations, to put to test the conclusions and generalizations at which one arrives, to reconstruct one's patterns of beliefs on the basis of wider experience, and to render accurate judgments about specific things and qualities in everyday life. (6)

The development of these skills is obviously a long-term process, but in my own classroom I have seen some of the ways in which students' excitement about a historical play, coupled with some instruction in play analysis, can lead them to "consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects" of the play as it relates to their lives, and then to "use methods of logical inquiry and reasoning" to make the character they are playing comprehensible and

rational in their own minds. For example, in our 2011 production of The Winter's Tale, I asked the students to complete a lengthy character analysis involving a detailed history of the character's background. We decided to set our Winter's Tale around the year 1200. I was delighted with the way that most of the students took hold of this assignment and independently researched the time period as they created a plausible background for the character they were playing. In order for the actor playing Leontes to adequately understand his character's reaction to his wife's imagined infidelity, he had to have a good understanding not only of medieval and Elizabethan morality, but also the ways in which those moral codes were relatable to his life in the in the present day. Although this show required a lot of intellectual and emotional effort on the students' part, I saw a great deal of growth in their maturity and confidence as they successfully tackled difficult historical literature. As we help students leap the language barrier in the study and performance of classic plays, their skills and confidence grow.

One enormous barrier to college readiness is confidence. A student who knows that she can understand ancient literature will have the confidence to state and defend her opinions about any piece of literature. A confident attitude will allow her to try new skills and then accept constructive criticism with good will. Confidence also engenders the tenacity necessary to succeed in a university culture, which can be a daunting experience to many new freshmen.

In theatre classes we have a unique opportunity for students to work on authentic tasks, which provide a great deal of motivation for learning. While a given drama student may not be naturally inclined toward the writing of critical essays, the practice of historical inquiry in the drama classroom can, over time, train her mind for more academic pursuits. With the reward of her classmates' laughter as she performs Moliere, Oscar Wilde, or Goldoni, she may feel more inclined to research the style of skirt the character would have worn and defend her choice of

costume. Researching, sorting, and decision-making are critical-thinking skills. When cognitive skills are embedded in authentic tasks that are meaningful to the student, she will be much more likely to embrace and even excel at traditional academic skills such as researching, organizing, planning, presenting, and writing.

Practicalities

Theatre is a wonderful blend of theory and practice. The opportunity to take an abstract idea and turn it into a sensory experience that can be shared with others is what attracts people to the art. Each time this happens the experience is unique, depending on the materials available, the personalities involved, and their shared vision. But as much as we all enjoy this process of creation, most would agree that the results are much more satisfying when experienced artists take the lead in shaping the project. Imagine a group of scientists who start each project with a "blank slate," without the benefit of the experiences and records of those who have gone before. They might still be working on the wheel!

Theatre history serves a practical purpose in allowing us to build on the knowledge of those who have come before us. In scenery, lighting, make-up, rehearsal techniques, sound design, etc. we save tremendous amounts of time and energy by having a prior knowledge of what has been tried and found successful (or not) in the past. Playwrights, actors, directors, designers and technicians all owe a debt to those who started with less and used their own ingenuity and inspiration to solve problems and engage audiences. In my experience, the theatre is full of people whose creativity amazes me. I am sure the same was true in past generations. We would do well to honor their contributions by remembering and by opening our students' eyes to the rich culture that exists, and has existed for thousands of years in the theatre. Every student who has tried to make his friends laugh by putting on a ridiculous costume or pretending

to walk into a wall should understand how long those same gags have been funny to audiences, and why they still are funny in 2012. A student who is moved to tears by an anti-war film will be enriched by the knowledge that the same struggle has been replayed on the stage and in the hearts of audiences for literally thousands of years.

The fact that acquiring historical knowledge requires a sustained effort, and often a good deal of new vocabulary as well, is no excuse for us not to make the attempt at the secondary level. Joseph Roach was not speaking about High school when he made the following statement, but the sentiment applies. "Why can't every performance research program recognize its obligation to the history of the subject by renewing its teaching of the subject of history? Why? Because the list of difficult words may change from time to time, but it will never get any shorter. So why not?" (10).

Theatre history is a mandated part of the state core, but it can also be an intriguing way to teach critical thinking skills and give students a sense of identity. However, it may seem overwhelming to an already-stressed drama teacher to add a historical element to her classroom curriculum, especially when her students are resistant to anything that smacks of academics. In the next chapter we will discuss the "rules of engagement" for students, outlining proven strategies for engaging the types of students typically found in a drama classroom and instilling in them a sense of excitement and investment.

CHAPTER TWO: The Rules of Engagement

It is the first day of drama class, and the students buzz with energy as the bell rings. They are excited to interact with friends, and relieved to be in a class where they can use their growing social skills and practice some hands-on learning. Some are nervous. Everyone senses that Drama class will be an outside-the-box type of experience. The teacher enters the room, quiets the students, and hands each one a thick packet. "These notes will form the basis of our learning this semester. Everything on the tests will come from the packet. Worksheets will be due every Monday. There will be no talking or getting out of your seat. You may begin to read the packet."

Obviously, a drama teacher using this approach would not be a popular one, and the school's theatre program would suffer as fewer and fewer students decided to choose drama as one of their elective courses. Experience tells us that students who take drama do not do so because they want to sit in a chair and read about it. In order for a student to realize the benefits of studying theatre and in this case theatre history, she must become engaged in the topic. This chapter will investigate what engages students and identify the types of classroom activities most likely to entice students to participate in historical inquiry by looking at research on flow theory, authentic inquiry, and project based learning.

The first step toward creating an atmosphere conducive to student engagement is an understanding of the learning style of the typical fine arts student. "Learning style research has indicated that students succeed academically in learning environments that match their learning styles" (Jones, Reichard & Mokhtari 364). So what type of student do we typically find in a drama classroom? In terms of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, drama students tend toward the linguistic or musical, the bodily kinesthetic, the spatial, which is linked to visual, and

the interpersonal. Students typically attracted to theatre classes tend to be visual or kinesthetic learners, who do well in active learning situations. Zonash and Irum conducted a study of the learning styles of students in various disciplines, and their findings were that "Extroversion was seen dominant in students of fine arts as compared to students of mathematics, and architecture" (93). Extroversion is "a general tendency to be assertive, active, warm, and talkative. Extroverts enjoy being with people. The domain of extroversion is positively related with self-expressive learners" (94). Engaging this type of student in a critical-thinking lesson or assignment can be tricky. It will require something more active than a textbook. But engagement is absolutely critical to learning.

Flow Theory

Flow theory, as proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, posits that when people are working on a task that is enjoyable and challenging, but not overwhelming, they can enter into a state called flow, where they are no longer thinking about themselves, but only about the task. Csikszentmihalyi likens the feeling to being carried along in a river where the swimmer is not struggling or fighting, but enjoying the ride and completely immersed in the experience. Being in a flow state means that a student is fully engaged. Arts education has a unique ability to produce "flow" experiences because it consists of "intentional and self-directed activities" that many students find enjoyable. When a student is completely involved in drawing, playing an instrument, scoring a goal, or creating a character onstage, she experiences "flow," and wants to repeat it as often as possible. This helps to explain why so many students are attracted to drama, as well as other arts, athletic and academic activities. But how exactly do we create a "flow" experience in the classroom?

Flow activities have four basic characteristics. The first is that the activity is designed to challenge the student at their current skill level. Too little challenge and the student is bored. Too much, and they become frustrated and discouraged. The activity is usually something that could be viewed as a challenge or an obstacle, depending on the participant's point of view. In the case of a true flow experience, of course, the student has decided to see the activity as a challenge in which she has a reasonable hope of success. Second, there must be a clear goal and immediate, constructive feedback. Third, while the student may begin participating in the activity hoping for extrinsic rewards—a good grade, a trophy, etc.—they soon discover that they genuinely enjoy the process of participating in the activity, and will continue to do so regardless of external incentives. And last, when students are actively involved in the task, their entire focus is on what they are doing at that moment. Irrelevant concerns fade away, self-consciousness disappears, and there is a sense of control and freedom that is enjoyable and begs for repetition. Flow experiences are one way to give students motivation to engage in class activities. Becoming immersed in a good book, listening to or creating music, drawing, sculpting, dancing, and acting are all natural candidates for this type of activity, as are many sports. Luckily for us, these types of activities are a natural fit in a drama class.

As teachers, we live for the days when our students are fully engaged, when their minds are open and receptive to new ideas and they are immersed in the day's task. We cannot always predict when this type of learning will occur, because there are so many factors that contribute to an ideal learning environment. We have all experienced the day when a sure-fire activity failed miserably, as well as the day when, for some unaccountable reason, a hastily planned activity clicks in the minds of the students and the entire class seems to be one big flow experience. We may not be able to predict when these experiences will occur, but there are things we can do as

teachers to increase the likelihood and frequency of their occurrence. And this begins with knowledge of what does and does not engage students.

Unfortunately, many of our students are disengaged, distracted, or even sullen in the classroom. As stated by M. Csikszentmihalyi and U. Schiefele, "The major obstacles to learning are not primarily cognitive in nature. It is not that students cannot learn; the real problem is that they don't want to..." (90). Learning is a voluntary process. People don't typically work for something unless there is something of value to be gained by it. Unless our students can see a real-world, immediate application for the skills and knowledge they are struggling to acquire, which does not happen all that often, they must feel a sense of enjoyment in their classwork, or there is little motivation to put forth any effort. Even the best teacher cannot *force* a student to learn something.

To look at the issue from the other side, Teresa Amabile, author of *The Social Psychology of Creativity,* explains four ways in which spontaneous interest can be destroyed. First, adults can try to exert too much control over a child's performance by laying down strict rules and procedures that stifle creativity. One example of this is the director who dictates every gesture and intonation, not allowing the actor to exercise her creativity and find the character within herself. That director may produce successful shows but will probably not produce successful actors.

Second, adults may place an extreme emphasis on evaluation or outcomes, including rewards and punishments. While high school acting competitions can be a wonderful opportunity for students to receive feedback, a drama coach who places too much emphasis on winning will negate the benefits of attending the competition. Third, an authority figure that turns the activity into a competition between participants. Pitting students against one another

for roles or for trophies will remove the "safety zone" that should exist in a drama classroom, and prevent students from reaching their full potential as part of their mind will always be aware of what the other students are thinking of them. And fourth, as a natural outcome of numbers 1-3, the child is kept in a constant state of self-consciousness that precludes real engagement.

As drama teachers are well aware, a student must feel safe in order to fully engage in most theatre games and exercises. Comparing students, creating a competitive atmosphere, and criticizing too harshly can shut down the most enthusiastic young artist. We need to find more ways to create flow experiences in our classes, particularly in the teaching of theatre history. One way to do that may be to give students a voice in how they will be assessed. For example, if the class is working on a Greek theatre unit, students could be given several options as a culminating project: they could design costumes, write a script, act in a scene, sing, dance, build masks, film, compose, etc. Giving the students a choice of project creates a greater likelihood that they will become engaged in the topic. Giving them an opportunity to be creative in different media allows all to showcase their strengths or create new skills, and assessing each student's work individually gets us away from harsh comparisons between students.

Another strategy that may help students engage in theatre activities is to practice and teach the art of giving positive and constructive criticism. In my experience, students can be more harshly critical of one another than I ever am, and they need to be reminded often that we are all learning, and that stating the positive is just as important as pointing out areas for improvement. Students who feel emotionally safe in a drama class will be much more capable of taking on the kinds of challenges that will prepare them for life after high school, as well as more open to "flow"-type experiences that will bring enjoyment, learning, and confidence.

Authentic Inquiry

While flow experiences engage students through intrinsic enjoyment, history educators have been searching for a way to make historical thinking applicable to a student's life and interests. One of the exciting things about studying science is the awareness that there are still many scientific mysteries to solve, diseases to be cured, and inventions to come forth. A student who works hard has a chance to make a contribution to the ongoing work of making the world a safer and more comprehensible place. With history, students may feel that the work has already been completed, and a student's job is simply to take in the information and regurgitate it on command. This is of course a misconception. New historical data is discovered daily, allowing us to reassess and refine our view of the past, sometimes radically. While the past is past, our view of it is constantly changing, and that view influences the way we think about culture, government, and our lives today.

Research in history education has shown that a classroom curriculum can be very effective when students create authentic questions and projects as the basis of their work, shifting the role of learner from "consumer" of information to "producer" of information (Foster and Padgett 358). "Working within an authentic context changes the purpose and motivation for learning" (Andersen). He goes on to describe a student's motivation for learning (to pass a test) versus a scientist's motivation (to solve a problem). Authentic Inquiry in a drama class setting would necessarily involve the student working on research that would be of use to the class, and would not have a pre-determined outcome, or a "right" answer, decided ahead of time by the teacher.

John Dewey (1913) also advocated for educating students through practical activities rather than abstracted classroom instruction. As Henry Bial says, "The lure of theatre history is

the lure of the unknown. Indeed, scholarship of all disciplines and methods is a process of discovery… We must not present theatre history as a complete and unbroken narrative, a finished piece… If we are to demonstrate to our students that theatre history is an active, ongoing tradition, we must make it clear that there are still opportunities to join the band." (85)

Students may tend to think of History as a long list of dates and places to be memorized, but real learning goes far beyond memorization. Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives, as updated by Lorin Anderson, places "remembering" at the bottom of the educational pyramid, and "creating" at the top, representing the highest level of thinking. As educator John Fine quipped, "Rote-learning history can serve only the interests of quiz contestants. It cannot be used, and is therefore useless" (125). According to Bloom, high-level cognitive skills are required for such activities as designing, writing, constructing, developing, and formulating. High-level cognitive skills are more challenging and therefore more likely to engage students than lower-level activities.

So, how do we help our students in theatre history formulate questions that will interest them and have significance in their eyes? One way is to link their research to a practical application, which in a drama classroom is usually a production of some sort. Assigning each student a responsibility connected with a historical performance gives an innate motivation to follow through. For example, if a student is assigned to design the hats for a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, she will be compelled and hopefully excited to research the fashions of the time in order to complete her assignment and support her peers in their joint endeavor. Along the way, if the project is properly set up to incrementally support student learning, or scaffolded, she will gain an appreciation for the functionality of nineteenth century head coverings, the social ramifications of certain styles of hats and when a hat should and

should not be worn. This gives her an in-depth look at a very small slice of history, and allows her to experience success at historical research, present it to the cast, and gain the satisfaction of seeing her research brought to life in the costumes created for the production. If every student in the class has a different responsibility on the same production, (shoes, pocket watches, chairs, etc.) the teacher should have a group of students eager to listen to some background information about the time period (ie: notes!).

But what if the teacher is not able to mount a historical production in order to spark the students' interest? Reading or watching a play can achieve the outcome, although it will be difficult to muster the same degree of interest in the students. Having students create a film-style storyboard for an imagined feature film of the historical play can be exciting, especially if it is a huge storyboard covering a wall of the classroom for all to see. And of course, one scene or one act of a play is often much more manageable than the entire work. At American Leadership Academy, there is a media arts class that is always looking for projects to film, and so filming is another way that students can get a wide audience for their work on historical scripts without the extended time required for a full production.

The wonderful thing about historical scripts is that they are original texts. History educators expound the benefits of exposing the students to original-source documents and allowing them to draw their own conclusions, hearing the words just as they were recorded at the time. Usually, that idea brings up images of bored teenagers halfheartedly trying to commit the preamble to the constitution to memory without much comprehension. Contrast this with students eagerly vying to play (and of course memorize) the part of Julius Caesar or Antigone in the school play. Some may argue that plays are fiction and therefore of less value than political or biographical texts, but they still offer us rich cultural insights and opportunities for research

and discussion. R. N. Berard states: “Novels, plays, and poems are in themselves ‘cultural documents’ which convey a mythology, which transmit to even the younger reader the thoughts, assumptions, fears, hopes, and values of the society from which they come” (24).

Berard continues in an eloquent defense of teaching history through literature. “Literature does not substitute itself for history but acts as a catalyst for the development of historical skills. Students are often wary of literature-based assignments but in most cases they become captivated by the characters in a well-written book” (22). History is comprised of stories, and the ability and imagination to play those stories out in the mind is an important skill for a historian or anyone involved with the humanities. And, like reading a good book late into the night because you can’t put it down, history brought to life through the lens of literature can be personal and exciting. While research conducted by high school students may not create new chapters for the next theatre history text, it will hopefully create engaged, enthusiastic scholars.

Project Based Learning

Project based learning has a basis in a few classic educational theories. “Cognitive psychology and socio-constructivist learning theory posit that knowledge is constructed by learners in complex and interactive ways” (Foster and Padgett). Constructivism presents the idea that learners construct their knowledge through interaction with their environment. Therefore, each learner’s world-view is unique. Constructionism takes this idea further in stating that an individual learns best by constructing a personally meaningful artifact that can be shared with others and reflected upon—a poem, an Eiffel tower made of toothpicks, a film, etc. Lastly, social learning theory proposes that we learn from each other—by observation, imitation, and modeling. These theories are the basis of project based learning, an approach that has been shown to be very effective in engaging students and promoting retention of information.

The Buck Institute defines project based learning (PBL) as "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning essential knowledge and life-enhancing skills through an extended, student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks." In the classroom, PBL looks like small groups of students—usually between three and five—who create a driving question, design a project within the parameters given by the instructor, assign individual responsibilities, research, and create a product to be shared not only with the class, but with an outside audience. PBL is learner-centered, in that the students choose their project and design it in such a way that it is meaningful to them. It encourages twenty-first century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and presentation. Students are graded individually using a carefully crafted rubric that accounts for each step of the process.

An example of a PBL project might be a history teacher who divides the class into groups charged with creating displays for a World War I museum. Each small group assigns a researcher, a designer (who creates the display itself, based on collaboration and research), a writer (for the information to be posted near the display), and a curator (who presents the project to the class and answers any questions). Of course, the teacher would have given some background information on WWI prior to this, but the students are expected to synthesize their knowledge, research to fill in the gaps, and, perhaps most importantly, jointly decide what events or items have significance and relevance to themselves and their audience. Students sign a group contract that spells out the responsibilities of each group member and the consequences for failure to complete their tasks. Once the project is decided, a timeline for completion is decided upon, with teacher check-in after each step.

One unique aspect of PBL is that it requires projects to be presented to an audience outside of the class and the teacher. Like in the performance of a play, this outside audience adds a level of excitement and hopefully increased expectations to the process. It is best if the audience can be comprised of professionals in the area of the project, or at least people with some expertise. In the museum example, the staff of a local historical museum or college history faculty would be a good match. If this is not possible, the presentation of the projects can be filmed and perhaps broadcast on a local station or posted to a website for others to view.

Projects such as this may not be practical for every unit taught, but a few times a year it can be a great way to engage students by giving them authentic questions to answer and tasks to complete. Of course, the production of a play, musical, or evening of scenes makes for an ideal project. It is in the nature of theatre that each person has a unique responsibility, with ramifications for the group as a whole if the job is not well done. The outside audience removes the burden of motivation from the teacher in most cases.

In my classroom, when a performance is cast, each student also receives a backstage responsibility, including costumes, set committee, props, advertising, music, and sound. This gives the students a chance to contribute to the production in another medium besides performing. It also helps them appreciate the amount of planning and work that goes into every show. Students are graded on both responsibilities, and also grade one another on their production committee work. This is not to say that everything produced by the committees is usable in the show without some adult assistance, but this project based approach to performances has helped my students be more well-rounded in their craft and uncovered some hidden talents among the group. Other projects well suited to a theatre history unit might include a documentary-style film about a playwright or other historical figure, an animated version of a

historical script, a re-enactment of a past event, or a festival or fair celebrating a particular era or playwright.

In theory, creating an atmosphere of excitement and engagement in a drama classroom should not be as difficult as it sometimes proves to be. As we know, not every student who walks through the door will respond to our best efforts at creating flow experiences, promoting authentic inquiry, and experiential or project based learning. But there are some guidelines that produce fairly consistent student engagement among fine arts students. Active is better than passive. Moving is better than sitting, and social interaction is better than books and pencils. When the end result is a performance, many fine arts students will happily engage in activities that would shut them down in an English or History class. The next chapter will expound more specific strategies for using these principles in the secondary drama classroom, and how to make these types of activities work in a tightly scheduled curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE: Making It Fit

A large cast musical. A straight play. A one-act festival. Shakespeare competition. Region competition. Technical theatre. Improv competitions. Acting, writing, directing, and design. The list goes on and on. How can a drama teacher add one more thing to an already-jammed theatre curriculum? Specific methods for teaching theatre are as varied as teachers themselves. Some drama teachers are more focused on performance, others on process, and most of us are a combination of the two. In every case, a drama teacher arrives at her curriculum over a period of years and with a great deal of trial and error. A teacher who has worked hard to hone her craft and who already logs hundreds of extracurricular hours per year, as many drama teachers do, may be wary about the prep time involved in a theatre history unit. However, with some careful planning, a strong academic emphasis on theatre history can fit into a teacher's existing curriculum without excessive additional prep time. Examples taken from some strong programs in Utah can perhaps guide us toward a successful and engaging teaching model. This chapter will propose three specific curricular approaches: project based learning, thinking outside the timeline, and using school plays, musicals and competitions as a springboard for historical inquiry in the classroom.

Project Based Theatre Instruction

In chapter two we discussed the theoretical basis for project based learning. This style of curriculum has proven effective in many schools throughout the state and nation. It encourages students, usually working in groups, to create a driving question, then research and collaborate on a project that produces a viable product to be assessed by real-world standards. Project based learning is often a natural fit with theatre instruction, as we tend to work toward a performance

goal, and in theatre particularly we often work in small groups. The Buck Institute for Education is a group that is "dedicated to improving twenty-first century teaching and learning by creating and disseminating products, practices, and knowledge for effective project based learning." According to the Buck Institute Project based learning (PBL) handbook, there is a wide range in the types of culminating projects that can work for students--anything from the creation of an artifact to an oral report. Some of the culminating projects suggested in the PBL handbook connect particularly well to the theatre curriculum.

Written:	Presentation Products:
Narrative	Speech
Poster	Play
Brochure (Program)	Dramatic Re-enactment
Script	Exhibition of Products
Technological Products:	Media Products:
Computer Graphic	Audio Recording
Website	Video
Graphic Presentation	Oral History (Larmer 49)

One activity that occurs in most theatre classes is the performance of scenes. The performance of a scene is a good example of a culminating project. Scene work is often used to teach acting principles, but is also necessary in order to prepare for Shakespeare and region competitions. Many Utah teachers responding to the survey mentioned that they teach theatre history in a project based format by dividing the class into small groups and having each group prepare a performance of a scene from a historical play. Most require the group of students to do in-depth research in order to prepare for the scene. One major difference in the approaches taken

by different schools is in the emphasis from which the assignment is given. In some schools surveyed, this type of group work springs out of a unit on historical costume design. For others it is scenic design. Many use it as part of a unit on dramatic literature. And for Joshua Long at Hillcrest High School, this activity is paired with an overview of historical acting styles.

Mr. Long assigns each small group of students a classic playwright and an acting theorist, which they then research. On presentation day, the group discusses their findings with the class, and then performs a scene from one of the playwright's works, in the style of the assigned acting theorist. What a great learning activity! The practical application of historical research is built in. The culmination of the group's work is not simply reading a Wikipedia-style summary to the class, but a performance. In this case, the driving question might be "What would the final scene of *Oedipus Rex* look like if it were directed by Constantin Stanislavski?"

One thing to note here is that in order for this activity to truly qualify as project based learning, the final performances should be for an audience other than just the class and the teacher, and ideally for someone from the community with some expertise in the subject matter. This gives the student groups a high level of motivation to be accurate and detailed in their research. If possible, it would be optimal to ask a college theatre educator, professional actor, costume or scenic designer to attend the class on presentation day. If this is not possible, there are some creative alternatives available, such as performing for history classes, or filming the presentations to be shown later in the community. My school has a partnership with a local cable channel, where educational content, such as student projects, can be viewed daily. Of course, it is preferable for the students to receive audience feedback on their work if possible, but a television audience is better than none.

Assessment of culminating projects usually involves input from the student, the other group members, the teacher, and the audience or recipient of the project. In designing projects, teachers create a detailed grading rubric that is handed out with all other project materials at the outset. But because project based learning seeks to engage the student in authentic tasks, the comments of community members or experts in the field of study are particularly important. This is one way that we can help students build a bridge between education and employment.

While this type of group presentation is definitely not the only way to approach theatre history in a project based format, it seems to be one of the most popular among Utah theatre teachers. Among teachers who responded to the survey, about 20% teach theatre history strictly as a critical-thinking unit, while 37% integrate history into their performance curriculum, or do some combination of the two. Many reported using dramatic literature as a springboard into the topic of history, with the performance of a scene as a final assessment for the unit.

A survey of theatre history lesson plans in local databases such as the Utah Advisory Council of Theatre Teachers' website and Brigham Young University's Theatre Education Database shows that this is the most popular format for approaching the topic with the possible exception of direct instruction, in which the teacher lectures and the students take notes. And, while there is definitely a place for direct instruction in the theatre classroom, research shows that the more a student is actively involved in answering questions of her own choosing, the more she will learn. This research would suggest that while a teacher may offer her expertise in lecture format on a limited basis, the bulk of the information a student uses in any project should come from her own research.

In addition to historical scenes, other types of projects can lend themselves to student involvement in theatre history. Some Utah theatre teachers report teaching units on historical

costume or scenic design. Allowing students in small groups (the Buck Institute declares four to be the ideal group size) to design costumes or a set for a classic play of their choice would fit well within the parameters of project based learning. In this case, the culminating project would be the rendering of a set, or a set of costume sketches. The research involved in this project would need to be fairly extensive, including a thorough knowledge of the play, the playwright, and the performance customs of the time, as well as clothing styles (for costumes) or artistic movements (for sets) of the era. Other ideas could include the creation of an advertising poster for a historical play, a program for an imagined or actual historical performance, a reader's theatre or puppet show version of a historical script to be performed for younger students, or an original scene written in the style of a selected playwright. In that case, the driving question might be: What would happen if Ophelia met Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the woods and they had a conversation about their mutual friend Hamlet?

But where does a drama teacher find the time for this type of project in a curriculum that is filled to the brim? One idea is to take activities you are currently including in the curriculum and give them a historical emphasis. For example, as we discussed earlier, most drama classes do quite a bit of scene work already. Requiring some of those scenes to be from classic plays will give students a double dose of learning in about the same amount of time. Another idea is to multitask, allowing some students to be working on group projects while others are preparing for competitions or performances. In my classroom, there are often times where I need to work with a select group of students, and the rest of the class are on their own to rehearse or observe. If a project is well set-up, student groups should be able to work toward their goal independently, making use of time that might otherwise be less utilized. It all comes down to scaffolding, or creating a series of steps that lead the students through a project timeline.

The creation of a scaffolding system for projects does require some teacher prep time. However, this can be time well spent. If a sufficiently general set of forms and rubrics is created, the same outline can be used for an unlimited number of student projects with little or no additional teacher work. Teachers can personalize this in any way that fits their classroom culture, but the Buck Institute suggests that each project begin with a group contract, wherein the students agree to the basic rules of conduct for group work. It may also be helpful at this point to have the students write a section of the contract that delineates each member's responsibilities. One of the tenets of PBL is that each member of the group has a different "job," such as a writer, a researcher, a graphics specialist, and a presenter. Of course the students must work closely for cohesion, but each job should be graded separately.

Individual grading creates the need for a detailed rubric, which the students have from the beginning of the project. Other useful items would be a project calendar, with due dates for each phase of the project, and individual and group work reports. It may be a good idea to show examples of completed projects at the outset, and for some projects, a list of possible resources (readings, websites, organizations, etc.) could save students a lot of time. Sample forms can be found online, which can of course be modified to suit teacher preferences, but it is not necessary for teachers to reinvent the wheel, or the scaffolding!

Lastly, it is important to remember that an assessment does not have to be a written test or even an oral exam. Proponents of differentiated instruction advocate for diversity in our assessments. This idea lends itself nicely to a drama classroom, where some students would much prefer a performance, presentation, or an artistic creation to a paper and pencil. A project based assessment will usually demonstrate a much higher degree of topic mastery than a memorized list of dates and names--which is not to say that there is no place for quizzes and tests

in a drama classroom, but there should also be space for students to pursue questions of their own choosing and share that knowledge with their peers and, ideally, the community.

Thinking outside the Timeline

One concern that has been expressed by teachers is that in PBL the students go into great depth on a narrow topic, but may not come away with a sufficient breadth of historical knowledge. Most of us grew up learning history in a very linear fashion, and timelines definitely have their uses. But it is also important to remember that students can have a rich experience with theatre history even without this textbook approach. Lou Bellamy, in the keynote speech for the Mid-America Theatre Conference in 2008, asked us as theatre educators to look for "moments of encounter" in our teaching. The important thing at the secondary level may not be that the students come away with an overarching narrative, but simply a positive and insightful experience with one or some plays from one or some different places and times. The 2006 theatre history text titled *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* is an example of non-linear thinking, as the book is "organized unlike...any other theatre history text." The authors have grouped events according to "the key developments in modes of human communication that have reshaped human perception. Performances and cultures are center stage throughout" (xvii).

As a High School Drama teacher, it can be overwhelming to consider the question of what specific plays and movements to teach, and in what sequence during the course of beginning, intermediate, and advanced Drama. This is left completely to the discretion of the teacher, as the state core does not specify what periods or plays are to be taught. Of course we all have our favorites, and that is probably a good place to begin. A teacher who feels passionately about Japanese theatre is going to have much more impact on the students than the most well intentioned educator who includes Shakespeare out of a sense of obligation. Many

teachers have a system of units through the drama sequence. For example, at Hillcrest High School, students study the Greeks in Drama I, Elizabethan theatre in Drama II, and the more advanced courses rotate through several different eras. This ensures that students enter college with at least some exposure to classics of the western canon.

One idea that I have used at American Leadership Academy (ALA) to save prep time is to teach the same historical period in all levels of drama classes at once, but rotate the focus each year. For example, all of my drama classes studied film history last year. Because we do not have any film courses, I decided to teach a brief introduction to the subject. As I prepared lesson plans and located film clips, I used them in all my classes, including Junior High classes, although of course it was modified for the younger students. This year I plan to do a unit on US theatre history that coincides with our school play. Next year I will probably teach a unit on French theatre, as I hope to choose a play from that tradition. I will begin early in the year, when excitement about play preparations is high, and modify the plan somewhat depending on the class level. For the Drama 4 class, who will all probably have parts in the play, I will focus on character background with research assignments relating to their roles, which they will share with the class. Drama 2 and 3 will be assigned to create some kind of pre-show that is appropriate to the period and tone of the show. Drama 1 will be involved in design elements, such as the creation of key props or costume pieces. In all the classes, I will give introductory information about the playwright and the era, and then ask students, usually working in groups, to do more detailed research.

As long as there is at least a four-year rotation of units, (or in my case a 6-year rotation, because I also teach junior high classes) no student will repeat the information. This format works well for me, because I have many different preps, and it is nice to have some continuity in

my teaching. I also like the idea of being able to tailor the curriculum to suit our performances. I have begun to re-use material I created six years ago, but I like having the flexibility to change from year to year, depending on how much prep time I have.

Using Plays and Competitions as Springboards

In addition to the rotating units, my classes all get at least some Shakespeare each year as we prepare for competition. The Utah Shakespeare Festival High School Competition, with forty-four percent of survey respondents attending, makes this a natural fit for a theatre history curriculum. However, region and state competitions, attended by sixty percent of survey respondents, also have a category for classical scenes, which can be used as a springboard for a history unit. An idea that some schools utilize in order to maximize historical emphasis is to study one play or playwright in preparation for competition, and take all your scenes and/or monologues from the same source. This allows the students to become very familiar with the material and keeps the class "all on the same page" so to speak. The disadvantage is that the style or characters of the chosen play may not accommodate the strengths of your particular students. If chosen carefully, however, this can be a good way for students to have a "moment of encounter" with a historical play, with the upcoming competition serving as a strong motivator.

Another obvious choice for a secondary drama teacher would be to choose a historical work for performance as the school play. According to the survey, forty percent of Utah schools have never produced a play written before 1900, and of those who have, fifty-seven percent were Shakespeare. Greek tragedy made up seventeen percent, with nineteenth century playwrights coming in at twenty percent. In chapter four I will discuss some of the possible reasons for these low numbers, but whatever the reason, teachers are giving up a valuable tool for encouraging student engagement with theatre history when they avoid historical material. The lure of a major

production will attract even the least cerebral of students, and the excitement of auditions and an upcoming performance creates a strong motivation for learning. I have seen this happen in two productions at ALA, *The King Stag* by Carlo Gozzi and Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale.

Both *The King Stag* and *The Winter's Tale* were unknown to my students when I announced them as the next school play. Both were met with some trepidation at the outset, but after reading each play and discussing it in class, it was wonderful to see every student in my class excited to audition. These plays were cast from and rehearsed in my drama practicum class, which is specifically designed as the drama performance class. We do, however, use the class time for more than just rehearsal. I will outline the process we followed in producing *The King Stag.*

After reading the play for the first time, while the students were given time to be working on their audition pieces outside of class, we used the class time to discuss the era and setting in which the play was created. We briefly discussed the unities of French neoclassicism, commedia dell'arte, and the rise of opera in Italy. The students were intrigued by the story of Gozzi and Goldoni. We delved further into commedia characters and masks, using improvisation to create our own bits of business for the characters, some of which actually made it into the show.

By this time we were ready for auditions. Many parts in the show were double cast, although there were not enough boys to double all the male roles. This allowed the actors to work in pairs to come up with character backgrounds and physicalization. Each student in the class was also placed on a production committee, and charged with the creation of props, costumes, sets, advertising, or music. While some committees functioned more efficiently than others, in the end all were able to complete their assignments and received a grade for this portion of the class. Through the committee work, we came up with the idea of using

contemporary music in the show, which led to a *Star Wars*-style climax that audiences enjoyed. The set committee was able to create a simple, portable set that suggested several locations without much need for scene changes. It was great to see students step up and take leadership within the committees, and to see some students use talents other than acting in the service of the production. We held a mask making party after school one day after looking at sample masks online during class time. The resulting half-masks were not perfectly formed or painted, but did a nice job of delineating the characters in a show that can be confusing because of magical body-swapping and people turning into animals.

From the outset, my idea for this production was that it would just be one component of a historical festival to be held at the school. I will speak more about this in the coming chapter on cross-curricular applications, but in preparation for the festival activities we used class time to learn juggling and basic swordplay, research period foods and festivals, and create huge banners to decorate the school lobby. In retrospect, I would change the way that I did some of this in order to make it even more student-led, but I felt that the students were engaged most of the time in class, and that it was a productive use of class time. The students became excited-- not just about the play, but about the commedia tradition and the day-to-day lives of the people who participated in that tradition. At the end of the year I asked the students to write a paragraph about what they had gotten from the class. One student said,

> Working on King Stag made theater history come to life for me. It was very interesting to apply what I learned from the history of Commedia to my acting. Acting in a show that was historical made me want to explore more aspects of theater and its history, to further my craft and knowledge of the art of acting. Studying historical theater and the people

and places from that time really helped deepen my knowledge of myself and of human nature.

The students' excitement was infectious. I looked forward to teaching the class, and I felt that we all enjoyed being there. The students' ideas for music, costuming, and blocking were often incorporated into the show, allowing them to experience a high degree of investment in the production. While we didn't get the large audiences we had hoped for, those who attended commented on how much fun the students were having in the show. One woman said it was the most fun she had ever had at a play, and called it "good therapy." After the show was over, we were able to use two scenes from the play in the classical scene division at region competition, which took a little of the pressure off for region preparation.

For *The King Stag* we had a unique situation in which we were able to have an entire year of class time to prepare for a performance. I am aware that this is not the norm for most schools, and it has not happened at my school since that time. But when possible, using class curriculum to support a historical performance can lend a great deal of applicability and excitement to the task of teaching historical literature. Even when the performance is not an entire play, but perhaps simply scenes or monologues, as long as there is an outside audience there will be enhanced connection and interest from the students.

Theatre history is not and should not be a topic reserved for college students. By making use of project based learning, thinking outside the timeline, and performance as motivation, secondary students can become invested in historical research and literature. Critical thinking skills will develop as students put forth the effort necessary to achieve their performance goals. Language barriers (speaking of historical language) and cultural differences are not insurmountable obstacles to an involved student actor, technician, designer, or director. The

skills developed in these pursuits will be valuable in the student's core education--ie: history and English classes--and in promoting overall college readiness.

The next chapter will suggest ways that history and drama classes can work together for the mutual benefit of both programs. Drama teachers and history teachers share at least two objectives: finding ways to elicit from their students a genuine interest in the people and events that shaped our world and developing the critical thinking skills to evaluate and assign significance to those people and events. Is there enough common ground in arts history and political history for periodic collaboration to be fruitful for both disciplines? I believe there is.

CHAPTER FOUR: Theatre History across the Curriculum

Two weeks after school got out for the year in May 2012, I received a phone call from the director of the charter school where I have taught Drama and French for the past six years. "I need to talk to you about your classes for next year," she said. I was immediately on guard, because at a charter school, your job is never secure. "We are trimming elective courses, and you will need to move to part-time or teach something else in addition to Drama and French." Luckily, I have an additional certification for English, and we were able to round out a full-time position with some English classes. I was happy to keep my job teaching the subjects I love, although with quite a bit of additional prep time for English classes.

Then I started hearing the same story from other elective teachers at my school. The Orchestra teacher will take on yearbook. Musical Theatre gets Creative Writing, etc. I thought perhaps our school was simply responding to the economy and the effect of two new district schools being opened in our area in the coming year. But then I started hearing similar stories from teachers at other schools. Both of the large new schools in our area were hiring only part-time Drama teachers. A teacher from a very large junior high school in the state was dropped to half-time and warned that if he wanted to keep his program, he needed to "increase the purpose of drama (so that it) reaches beyond theatre." Apparently, this minimization of arts electives is a statewide trend.

These stories are all the more poignant to me in light of the research I have conducted on this thesis. The arts, and in this case theatre arts, provide a unique perspective and motivation for students to become engaged in core subjects. Many students I am acquainted with have told me "If it weren't for my fine arts classes, I would drop out of school." This chapter will focus on some ways that drama and history classes can work together for the benefit of the students, and

in the process, benefit the theatre program. In this age of vanishing electives, theatre classes can perhaps demonstrate their value to school administrators and boards through academic collaborations with history classes.

Bare-bones education budgets are a hard reality today, but if we take a long look at what it means to be "educated," I think it becomes obvious that the arts have an important role. As John Goodlad stated, "There is enormous potential in the arts not just for preparing one to participate in the artistic or aesthetic part of the human conversation, but for rounding out the contribution of the other fields of knowledge and knowing" (34). While there is a persistent notion that the "three R's" are the repository of the most valuable knowledge to be acquired in a school setting—and certainly one would be handicapped in our culture without them—being an educated person connotes an ability not just to recite facts, but to contextualize and utilize that information, to work with others toward a common goal, which includes speaking and presentation skills. The addition of an arts component in a history curriculum can fill gaps and extend learning, enabling a true education. Similarly, as discussed in previous chapters, an emphasis on history in theatre classes can have a great impact on a student's overall academic skills.

Cross-curricular Collaboration

Collaboration has been tried in various ways at secondary and postsecondary schools throughout the nation. In some schools, the Drama teacher makes an effort to coordinate plays or class projects with the English, history, or even science curriculum. In some cases, the classes work together on a project, perhaps even an event such as a festival or fair. Another intriguing idea was reported by a faculty member at Calvin College, where a troupe of "wandering

thespians" goes into the classroom of any professor that requests them to perform scripts, short stories, poetry, debates, re-enactments, etc. Perhaps we can glean some insights through a brief examination of these efforts.

Before looking at specific examples, I think it is important to clarify the type of collaboration being discussed here. There is a great deal of writing currently being done on the use of drama activities in the core-subject classroom. For example, asking literature students to read a novel and then re-write it in play form, or having history students dress as a historical character and give an oral report as if they were that person. There is also some exciting research in the realm of process drama, wherein students (usually at the elementary level) learn about the parts of a cell, or the solar system, or the inner workings of a radio, etc., by assigning each student a role and acting it out. Research has shown these types of arts-related activities to be very effective in promoting comprehension and retention of complex concepts.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, "cross-curricular applications" will refer to ways in which a drama class can collaborate with a course from another discipline, in this case history. These types of collaborations between classes require an amount of cooperation and planning between the teachers involved, but can result in satisfying experiences and even measurable outcomes for the students in both areas when carefully executed. In a successful collaboration, all classes involved are meeting the needs of their students and making progress toward teaching their own state core curriculum. Some arts advocates, such as T.M. Brewer, worry that in many cases the arts are reduced to a "teaching strategy" in the service of other disciplines, which can "deny (the arts') value as a distinct discipline" (103). Ellen Winner states her conclusion, "Even when arts programs do add value to non-arts academic outcomes, it is dangerous to justify arts education by secondary, non-arts effects" (4). Further, she adds that art

is another way of knowing and expressing and is just as important as science. With this in mind, I looked for situations in which both sides of the collaboration were equally served by the exercise. If collaboration can create a synergy that adds excitement and motivation to an academic discipline and simultaneously bring structure and application to an arts course, then that is an activity worth looking into.

Sometimes collaboration can require copious amounts of planning and coordinating, but in other cases, it is simply a matter of students being allowed to share what they are already doing. The theatre teacher survey I conducted in 2011 indicates that some schools in the state are making use of their preparation for competitions by performing scenes and monologues from historical or classical plays for history and English classes. This can be done during class time, or in the evening. A few schools mentioned holding a "Shakespeare Showcase" event prior to Shakespeare competition where students studying England, poetic forms, etc., are given extra credit for attendance. Similarly, history students can present PowerPoint presentations or oral reports to drama students when their topic aligns with the drama curriculum. This would represent a very basic level of collaboration that could be achieved with a minimum of prep time used, although the presentations on both sides would need to be limited to the most pertinent pieces in order to maximize the class time spent.

A natural extension of this idea would be for the drama teacher to choose a play or musical with input from the history faculty. Of course this may not happen every year, but with buy-in from both departments, a production could serve as a jumping-off point for much fruitful collaboration. Perhaps history students could "dramaturg" the production, creating a program and/or study guide packed with historical notes. Or they could work on the design elements of the show, with research into period-appropriate sets, costumes, hairstyles, etc. Drama students

could perform the show, or a selected portion of it, during the day for history classes. This has been successful at my school, where optional assembly performances for history classes have helped to drive interest and attendance at historical plays, especially when study guides were distributed to teachers in the weeks before the performance. It was very gratifying after our 2012 performance of *The Winter's Tale* to hear even some of our Junior High School students discussing the plot at length and with excellent comprehension.

The theatre teacher survey indicated that only a small percentage of high schools in Utah have performed historical plays in the last 5 years, and the number grows horrifically small if Shakespeare is removed from the equation. I do not know all the reasons for this, although I can guess that the need to sell tickets and make money on the show is high on the list. Collaboration with history classes can go some of the way toward fixing this problem, as students tend to support events that they are invested in. And, there are some definite advantages to performing a historical script. The first, of course, is that there are no royalties on many older scripts, and no regulations on cutting lines, changing the gender of the characters or altering the setting. Historical scripts, while usually dealing with important subject matter, rarely need to be cut for language or sexuality. Parents and administrators are generally supportive of students spending time on "the classics," where *Horror High* (one of my starring roles in High School) may not earn such approbation.

Another reason that some teachers may shy away from historical material is that they think it is boring. When pressed, most will define boring using some variation of "wordy." I recently held a conversation with a teacher who felt that another teacher had killed an entire drama program with a bad version of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. While there are some people with a higher tolerance for "wordiness" than others, effective teaching and direction will

go a long ways toward making a classic accessible to a large audience. Following are a few ideas.

First, it is absolutely critical that the students acting in the play understand and relate to the words they are speaking. The best director in the world cannot make an actor effective if she does not understand every word she is saying and why she is saying it. This is a very basic but often overlooked fact. I have seen a six-year-old happily sit through a full-length Shakespeare production twice in the same day—a production in which the actors were fully invested in every word they spoke. And it was performed without a set, and with extremely minimal costuming and props! It is not the words that are the problem. It is sometimes the manner in which actors deliver the words.

Next, judicious cutting can go a long ways in helping a contemporary audience understand and enjoy a play. While theatre patrons in former times were fans of poetry, today's generation was raised on cartoons and action movies. Long speeches lose their attention within a few lines in most cases. Of course, any lines relating to plot action or objectives must be kept intact, but extended background stories, allegories, flowery descriptions and repetitions can often be axed without losing the central themes or the beauty of the work.

Third, providing a "frame" for a classical play will sometimes give an audience enough information to keep them involved in the plot even if they are not grasping all the verbiage. A frame creates a play-within-a-play. It usually consists of a character or group of characters from outside the setting of the play that serve as an introduction to the work and a link to the audience, kind of like an interpreter. The frame usually has its own plot line or at least a reason for its character(s) to be interested in the story playing out on the stage. Sometimes the actors in the "frame" section are the same as those in the main play and sometimes they are different. In our

production of *The Winter's Tale,* an old clockmaker introduced the plot with a speech about the nature of time, and he occasionally interrupted the action on the stage to discuss key plot points. He could do that, because he was telling the story. This device seemed to help those who had a hard time with the Shakespearean language.

Finally, a "concept" production will sometimes reach an audience when a traditional version will not. By concept, I mean a play in which the setting has been changed to a place and time that are more familiar to contemporary audiences. A classical example is Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet.* The problems experienced by the ancients were usually not that different from ours today, but the names and the clothing are different. Setting *Macbeth* during a nasty contemporary political crisis gives it a new immediacy. Seeing *Lysistrata* set in the 1960's anti-war protest era brings a richness of cultural heritage to the production that can make it hit home for larger audiences. These four ideas, alone or in combination, can go a long ways toward bridging the accessibility gap.

Roman Comedy Festival

Another project that invites collaboration between history and drama classes is a historical festival or fair. Some schools or communities hold renaissance or medieval fairs, but a similar fair could be held for any period of history. Dorothy Chansky, professor of theatre at the University of New Mexico, writes about her experiences in teaming up with a professor from the classics department to sponsor an inter-departmental weeklong Roman comedy festival. While the project presented many logistical difficulties, Chansky and her cohort both felt the desire to "challenge the assumption that the performance of old plays primarily illustrates history and that history's role in theatre is to undergird a performance with 'accuracy'" (Chansky 131).

Chansky's Roman comedy festival included presentations by visiting scholars, a student-directed production of Plautus' *Braggart Soldier*, and a series of Hollywood films depicting ancient Rome. All events were free and open to the public, and local high school students and an Elderhostel group were invited to selected performances. Students in the introductory-level theatre class were enlisted for help in marketing, fundraising, photography, and publicity, as one of Chansky's goals for the project was to "expose the Introduction class, composed mostly of non-majors, to aspects of theatrical production not connected directly to design, directing, or acting" (134). Chansky's theatre history classes were also very involved with the project.

Naturally, a big part of the challenge came in balancing the needs and wishes of both departments, and making sure that neither felt that they were just background support for the other. In addition, the activities chosen for the festival needed to be supported by coursework in both departments. According to Chansky, this proved to be a difficult but satisfying endeavor.

> If rooting Roman Holiday in theatre as much as in classics and linking it to Theatre History class were the least glamorous aspects of the project, they were also among the most crucial in demonstrating how theatre can offer a nexus of performative approaches to studying culture, literature, architecture, clothing, decoration, mass communication, and even ideas of what is funny. Arguably, this ability to think simultaneously across disciplinary borders via theatre is the bedrock of a good postmodern education and a task to which theatre history is uniquely suited (138).

Naturally, Chansky chose to make Roman comedy a prominent focus in her classes that semester. She began the unit by asking students to write anything they already knew about the subject. Only a handful put anything down on the page. Over the course of the unit, she assigned her students, among other things, to read two plays by Plautus, write an additional scene

for one of the plays, see and review *The Braggart Soldier,* and attend the presentations by visiting experts. It is interesting to note that even at a college level, Chansky decided that in order to engage her students' interest in the plays, the class would read the first few scenes aloud together. This helped the students understand the characters—who had long and unfamiliar names—and solidify the situation in their minds before setting out on their own to finish the reading. By the end of the semester, one-third of the students chose to write their term papers on Roman comedy.

For the most part, Chansky suggests that the event was a success. The goals she had made for her classes were met. She notes that 132 undergraduate students were exposed to a portion of theatre history that they would not otherwise have been, especially in such depth. Also, "the vast majority became relatively comfortable with the idea of reading and seeing such (previously alien) plays; the contemporary relevance, spontaneity, and fun of Roman comedy were clarified for everyone. Its limitations also became clear: a tendency toward stereotyped characters and a very limited range of plots."

Another positive that came out of the experiment was that it "fostered campus-wide awareness of the importance of studying theatre history, especially among those outside theatre who continued to perceive the field as primarily literature-based and those within theatre who see it as a kind of handmaiden to the 'real' work of theatre." Audience reaction to *Braggart Soldier* was generally positive, with many students expressing their surprise that the ancient script was lively and accessible. Student critiques tended to focus on design elements or the acting style, which was somewhat stylized. She does not discuss the University administration's reaction to the festival, other than to mention that the theatre department relegated the production to studio status, feeling that ticket sales would not warrant a main-stage audience. Also, she was

disappointed in the fact that her colleague in the classics department had hoped to teach a class on Roman comedy the following year, but was not permitted to.

Chansky's collaborative effort was on a much larger scale than most high schools would be able to attempt, but we can take some ideas and perhaps some cautions from her experience. Chansky and her colleague made their festival free and open to the public, which I assume boosted attendance and helped each of them achieve their objectives for the project. Chansky does not indicate how the festival was funded. At a secondary level, a project of this nature may need to generate the funding to pay for itself in order to be approved by the administration. This was the case in 2011 when my advanced drama class sponsored a commedia festival in conjunction with other fine arts classes. In chapter 3 I discussed our production of Gozzi's *The King Stag*, which we then performed at the commedia festival, along with period-appropriate performances by the choirs, the orchestra, the musical theatre class, and displays by the elementary art students. Our festival was also free of charge and open to the public, but we did charge for the play. Our expenses had to come out of ticket sales for the show, and revenues from food sales.

My Experience

The Commedia Festival at American Leadership Academy (ALA) ran for two hours each night before the play, with many activities geared at families with elementary-aged children. In separate classrooms, cast members taught juggling, swordplay (with foam swords), mask making, and an art activity. We had period-appropriate food for sale, performances by the choirs and orchestra, a parade, and displays showing the research students conducted about what was happening in politics, food, fashion, etc. at the time when *The King Stag* was written. This presented a little bit of a problem because the play is based on commedia traditions that are much

older than the script itself, but in order to avoid confusion we held a pre-show presentation explaining commedia and a little bit about Gozzi. We held assemblies throughout the day for history classes, which is the extent of the "collaboration" we did with the history department on this project, but in retrospect I can see many areas where collaboration could have been valuable, if there had been enough advance planning and enough buy-in from the history teachers. My theatre students got very excited about their research into foods, mask-making, Italian festivals, costumes, commedia troupes, etc. It was inspiring to see how research with an immediate application became fun for them. I believe that history students could have shared the excitement, if their teachers had been "on board" from the beginning.

Chansky mentions that creating a collaboration that was equally beneficial for both departments was one of the most difficult aspects of her Roman comedy festival, and I would have to say the same about our Commedia Festival. Other teachers, especially core-subject teachers, have their own long list of curriculum to cover, and they definitely are not interested in making more work for themselves in order to support a theatre project. Even in the collaborations we did at ALA within the fine arts department, I could see that they considered their participation as more of a favor to me than a teaching opportunity, although I did encourage them to use it as such. In order to make the project a true collaboration that is beneficial to both sides, I would suggest involving collaborators in the choice of theme and make sure that each department's goals are clear from the outset. With history classes, teachers are usually going to want their participation to be limited in time and scope, because they do not have the luxury of resting too long in any one period of time. But history teachers dread the blank stares and drooping eyes of bored students just as much as the rest of us do, and if a project is carefully presented to them, perhaps they will jump at the chance to bring more current relevance and

group dynamic to their lessons. In project-based learning, a teacher makes a conscious decision to devote a certain unit of time to delving deeply into a topic, perhaps sacrificing some breadth of information in order for the students to have a memorable "moment of encounter." Teachers who are familiar with project-based learning will probably be more amenable to a collaboration of this sort.

Of course, in order for any collaboration to work, there must be a certain level of trust and respect between the collaborators. Drama teachers sometimes get a bad reputation within a school community for anything from keeping students out late on performance nights to getting more attention than other teachers from the principal (which is not always a good thing!). Theatre teachers need to make a conscious effort to support other departments' academic agendas, becoming part of the "team" of faculty who put education first. While we may be a little crazy with deadlines staring us in the face at certain times of the year, perhaps we could plan other times to use our resources in supporting other departments and our school. This will give us more credibility when we approach the by-the-books history teacher with a new idea.

As important as it is to have mutually positive relationships between collaborating teachers, there is another relationship that can make or break your event, and that is your relationship with your community or intended audience. In our case, the students in the theatre class were very excited about the event. They performed in assemblies, hung posters, sent out a school wide "robo-call," sold tickets in advance, etc., but still attendance was disappointingly small. In retrospect, I believe that a large part of the reason for this was that we did not do an adequate job of communicating to the public exactly what to expect at a commedia festival. The problem began with the title. I was hoping that people would make the jump from "commedia"

to "comedy", but I'm not sure that happened. Students who attended and wrote reviews reported a very positive experience, but they usually expressed surprise that the play was funny.

The posters were another factor. A student in our school's graphic design class created them. Despite my insistence that they should be colorful and upbeat, he brought me something that was lovely, but very brown and historical-looking. Upon coercion he added purple to the background. It was my fault that there was no more time to adjust the design. I believe that the posters gave students the impression that a commedia festival was dry and scholarly. In the future, I will start on the posters much earlier in the process and have my drama students take a more active role in their creation.

As I discussed in chapter three, *The King Stag* was the impetus for a very fun and engaging classroom unit on theatre history from the Middle Ages to the age of the Enlightenment. Preparations for the festival were equally popular, especially among those preparing to teach juggling and sword fighting. Food research, including tasting, was well liked as well. Speaking for my classes, the students had a memorable experience. I cannot speak for the other fine arts teachers who were involved with the festival, but several of them told me that they appreciated the opportunity to focus on a specific era in their teaching for the term, and most were open to the idea of another historical festival in the future.

Wandering Thespians

One more model from higher education that can perhaps serve as a springboard for cross-curricular application comes from Calvin College, where a group of actors who call themselves Wandering Thespians perform in classrooms all over the campus. The group was started when professor Debra Freeburg and her colleagues in the theatre department saw a need for more visibility and faculty support for theatre on their campus. They knew that theatre could provide a

valuable educational experience in many disciplines, but how could they demonstrate that to the faculty? And so the idea of Wandering Thespians came into being.

At the beginning of each year, faculty director Debra Freeberg posts an open invitation on the campus electronic bulletin board for any professor to request that the troupe perform in their class. The professor must then provide a ten-minute cutting of the material to be performed. Freeberg states, "We have interpreted everything from Socratic dialogues to plays to oral histories to nineteenth-century trial transcriptions…we have also performed short stories, excerpts from children's books, and poetry selections" (95).

Freeberg accepts requests until the schedule is full, then divides her theatre class into groups to read and interpret the material. It is important to her that the theatre students read the entire work that the excerpt comes from. She writes, "It is a wonderful idea to do scenes from lots of plays, but unless students know what they are doing, the whole crew is considerably less effective as an educational tool" (98). Students are required to participate in several performances throughout the year, either as an actor or a director. Between performances, studying the material, and rehearsal time, the student actors stay very busy and gain a lot of "experience and confidence in their abilities."

In summary, Freeburg feels that the Wandering Thespians program has had positive effects on her students, the theatre department, and the campus as a whole.

> The benefits of Wandering Thespians extend beyond what we first imagined. It has provided meaningful academic service to many departments, creating good will among faculty members who sit on strategic planning and educational policy committees. It reminds the deans who have fiduciary responsibilities in their division that theatre is valuable to the college. It even helps promote our season

> plays. When play content relates to course content, some of our colleagues in history and English have made the final play a requirement for their classes. Many of these faculty colleagues are now attending our performances and talking about our campus productions in their classrooms. (98)

One Calvin College student, after seeing a scene from *Antigone* performed in her classroom, summed it up: "To read about Antigone is one thing; to see her stand there not three feet away from you, with a rope around her neck, is quite another…." (99).

While it would probably not be possible to replicate the Wandering Thespian experience in its entirety at the secondary level due to rigid class schedules and the inadvisability of pulling theatre students out of other classes for performances, there are opportunities for our students to provide the same type of experience on a limited basis. In most schools, at any given time there are classes being taught in every department. Students could perform for history classes and other core subjects taught during the same hour as their drama class. Another possibility would be for the theatre students to film performances so that they could be shown at any time. We have already discussed the idea of an assembly, where all history classes could see the performance simultaneously. This is a good option if your administration is willing to be a little flexible with the schedule for the sake of collaborative efforts.

Teachers in all disciplines are feeling the pressure to "up their game" as jobs are more in demand and NCLB legislation is making schools and individual teachers more accountable in the realm of charts, graphs, and test scores. With funding cuts, fine arts classes are once again in a position of having to defend their continued existence. A. Aprill says, "Studies reveal and acknowledge that 'the authentic connections between the arts and the rest of learning' will, in the long run, be the strongest argument for the importance of arts education" (25).

As drama teachers, we have hard choices to make in terms of allocation of resources. There is never enough time or budget to do all of the things we would like to. If we can make opportunities for our students to have the types of flow experiences they crave with historical literature, and then transfer that knowledge and confidence to their academic subjects, it seems to me that everyone benefits, especially the student. There is still much to be tried and assessed in the realm of cross-curricular collaboration, and it is to be hoped that arts programs will be given the time and resources to once again prove their worth.

CONCLUSION

At times when I have felt tired and overwhelmed in my job, I have found myself thinking "What kind of career is this? I am an adult who helps teenagers to play dress-up. How is that making the world a better place?" And yet even on those days, deep down I know that I am very lucky to have the privilege of spending my days teaching in the arts. Charts, graphs and statistics can never fully explain the joy that comes from throwing body, mind and spirit into a creative project that you hope in some small way will change someone's world for the better. Most often in a high school theatre setting, that person is a student who works on the show and not an audience member.

Why do we teach drama? I do not mean in the organizational sense, but on a personal level. Why have each of us chosen to make a career out of drama instruction? I am sure that every teacher has a story in answer to that question. And the story certainly does not contain the words "I'm in it for the money!" I would venture to say that the emotional fulfillment that all teachers find in helping young people make their way in the world is amplified for arts teachers, because we also get to experience the joy of introducing young people to an art form that we love.

As a theatre teacher I have two main goals: to use the students' time well and to use the audience's time well. Many drama students spend literally hundreds of hours a year in rehearsals and performances, and I believe those hours are well spent if they are used in promoting personal growth—learning discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and critical thinking. Spending time on material that is well written and challenging to the students, that may help them to connect to another time, place, or culture is rewarding. Getting an audience to follow you on that journey can be a little more difficult, but also rewarding. Historical material often fits my criteria for a project that is worth those collective hundreds of hours--not only because it is

historical, but also because it gives us a much larger pool of choices than if we limit ourselves to contemporary literature.

Certainly many good things can and often do come out of a secondary theatre programs without a history component. Students can learn life skills like discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and critical thinking from many types of theatre experiences. So why does theatre history matter at the secondary level? Aside from the fact that it is a required component of state and national core curriculum, history matters because it helps us to understand how we came to be who we are. While we can never know the past, we can gain a sense of the wonderful and complicated humanity that came before us. Reading, pondering and acknowledging the works of those who lived and worked in the past is a necessary step in forming both a personal and a community identity. The study of history promotes critical thinking skills in ways that other subjects cannot. It will help to prepare our students for college, and life! Their love of performance can be deepened and layered as they gain a respect for the innovations, courage, and hard work of artists through time.

So with all these advantages, how do we get students to engage in a topic that they may feel is dry and academic? The key lies in understanding what motivates many drama students. In a nutshell, that is performance. There is a reason that drama students were attracted to the class in the first place, and for most of them, the energy that is created between a performer and an audience is that reason. Performance is a flow experience that they are driven to want to repeat. Making theatre history one component of a group's preparation for performance makes it an authentic task rather than a pointless exercise. By assigning students different areas of responsibility on a production, their learning becomes project based and teamwork oriented, teaching 21st century skills along the way.

This all sounds great, but how do we do it? How do we cram one more thing into a curriculum that is already packed with competitions, productions, fundraisers, and core-mandated instruction? One idea is to get rid of the timeline approach to theatre history, and instead look at offering students "moments of encounter," or in-depth experiences with specific historical periods, plays or authors. These "encounters" can become a part of activities we are already doing in class, such as preparing for productions or competitions. Each time we choose to produce a historical piece as the school play or musical, we open up the world a little more for our students, allowing them to feel comfortable walking and talking in the shoes of those from another time and place. And isn't that the same thing that the history teacher down the hall is trying to do?

Collaboration between drama and history classes can be productive for both sides. A bit of cooperation and planning can yield projects that will add depth to drama's performance focus and fun and excitement to history's research focus. Some ideas can be gleaned from other secondary and postsecondary schools, where fairs and festivals have yielded satisfying results, as well as, in one case, a group of performers who travel from class to class performing whatever material the instructor requests.

In summary, there are many ways to make theatre history an effective part of the drama curriculum in secondary schools, and to have successful collaborations between drama and history classes. And these things will yield benefits in terms of critical thinking and academic motivation in our students. But is there more that secondary teachers can do to promote critical thinking skills and college readiness among drama students?

My experience at a small school is that we are losing many of our theatre students between high school and college because they do not have the academic preparation necessary to

carry them forward to the next step. Although I could find no statistics for this demographic, there are many books and articles touting the benefits of arts education in preventing dropouts, and I firmly believe it is true that arts education can offer students a perspective and a level of engagement that core classes usually do not. In my school, we have a handful of highly talented arts students each year who either do not graduate, or manage to get a diploma but then work at a low-paying job after high school because they could not get into college because of grades, ACT scores, or sometimes just a lack of emotional readiness for college. Surely we can do more to reach these students while they are still in high school.

In this age of research into every cell and synapse of the human mind, it seems that the time when students spent years of their lives sitting still and being quiet in class should be coming to a close. We have the research to show that active learning is much more effective. In this vein, are there ways that drama classes could collaborate with subjects besides history? English is a natural fit, and many Utah schools responding to the survey reported collaborations based on Shakespeare or other classic literature. But what about science? Technology has many applications in the theatre, especially in film and multimedia. Math is a more difficult fit with theatre, but I have no doubt that there are ways to approach the subject that could make it more accessible to fine arts students. There is much more research and experimentation to be done.

Whatever the reasons we chose to be drama teachers in the first place, I would venture a guess that most of us stick with it because we love the students. We love to see them succeed in accomplishing their goals. With some forethought, we can use their love of performance to help them on their way. Theatre is about people—past and present. Historical plays are the closest thing we will get to a glimpse of the past. And if we can introduce the teenagers of the present to the voices of the past, we may be helping them toward a brighter future.

APPENDIX A: Utah Theatre Teacher Survey

1. How many years have you been teaching theatre?

	Response Percent	Response Count
This is my first year	5.0%	2
2-5 years	**30.0%**	**12**
6-10 years	20.0%	8
10-20 years	22.5%	9
20+ years	20.0%	8
Other (please specify)	2.5%	1
answered question		**40**
skipped question		**0**

2. In a typical year, does your school participate in: (check all that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Shakespeare Competition	43.6%	17
UHSAA Region and State Drama Competition	59.0%	23
UTA Conference	69.2%	27
One or more school musicals	**94.9%**	**37**
One or more school plays	76.9%	30
Fundraising activities for theatre events	46.2%	18
International Thespian Society	23.1%	9
Other (please specify)	10.3%	4
	answered question	**39**
	skipped question	**1**

3. Do you use class time to prepare for any of the following? Please mark all that apply:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Shakespeare Competition	36.4%	12
UHSAA Region and State Drama Competition	**60.6%**	**20**
UTA Conference	27.3%	9
School musical(s)	57.6%	19
School play(s)	51.5%	17
International Thespian Society activities	3.0%	1
Fundraising for theatre activities	15.2%	5
	answered question	**33**
	skipped question	**7**

4. Please mark all drama classes that are offered at your school:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Drama 1	**84.2%**	**32**
Drama 2	**84.2%**	**32**
Drama 3	65.8%	25
Drama 4	47.4%	18
Drama Tech	65.8%	25
Set building	34.2%	13
Playwriting	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		18
answered question		**38**
skipped question		**2**

5. Please prioritize the following curricular units in terms of the amount of time allotted to each in your drama III and/or IV classroom over the course of a typical school year:

	High priority	Important	We touch on it	Never	Only in specific classes	Response Count
acting instruction	**72.7% (24)**	24.2% (8)	3.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	33
playwriting	10.0% (3)	20.0% (6)	**63.3% (19)**	6.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	30
directing	21.9% (7)	34.4% (11)	**40.6% (13)**	3.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	32
design	9.7% (3)	29.0% (9)	**41.9% (13)**	19.4% (6)	0.0% (0)	31
technical theatre	16.1% (5)	**32.3% (10)**	22.6% (7)	25.8% (8)	3.2% (1)	31
theatre history	24.2% (8)	30.3% (10)	**36.4% (12)**	3.0% (1)	6.1% (2)	33
analysis/criticism	33.3% (11)	**51.5% (17)**	12.1% (4)	3.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	33
competition preparation	34.5% (10)	**37.9% (11)**	3.4% (1)	24.1% (7)	0.0% (0)	29
performance preparation	**60.6% (20)**	36.4% (12)	0.0% (0)	3.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	33

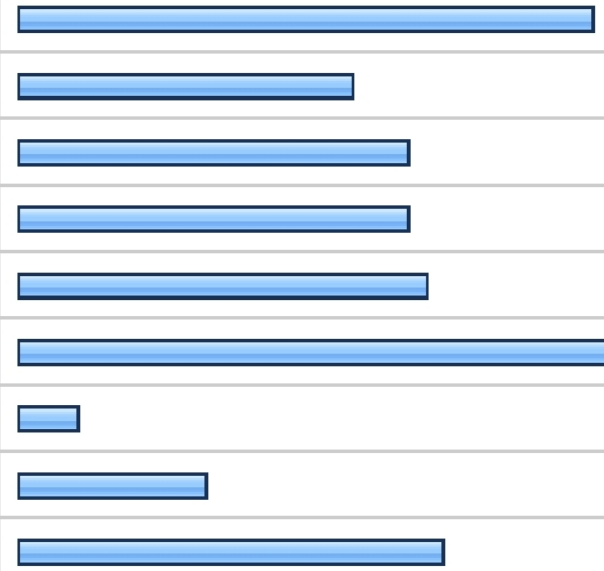
answered question	**33**
skipped question	**7**

6. How do you meet state core curriculum standards for teaching theatre history (in particular Standard 4 objective C)in your upper-level (III and IV) drama classes? Is theatre history taught as a critical-thinking skill or is it integrated into your performance curriculum?

	Response Count
	31

answered question	**31**
skipped question	**9**

7. What time periods/cultures do you include as part of the curriculum in any/all of your theatre classes? (Please mark all that apply):



	Response Percent	Response Count
Greek	86.1%	31
Roman	50.0%	18
Medieval	58.3%	21
Commedia	58.3%	21
Renaissance	61.1%	22
Elizabethan	**94.4%**	**34**
Opera	8.3%	3
Oriental	27.8%	10
Realism	63.9%	23
Other (please specify)		6
answered question		**36**
skipped question		**4**

8. Have you ever produced a full-length historical (pre-1900)production at your school? Please mark all that apply:

	Response Percent	Response Count
None	40.0%	14
Shakespeare	**57.1%**	**20**
Moliere	8.6%	3
Greek tragedy	17.1%	6
19th-century (Ibsen, Shaw, Wilde etc.)	20.0%	7
Other (please specify)		3
answered question		**35**
skipped question		**5**

9. Has your drama program ever tried to collaborate with other classes in the school, such as History or English literature? Please give a brief description.

	Response Count
	32
answered question	**32**
skipped question	**8**

Q1. How many years have you been teaching theatre?

1	35	Sep 28, 2011 7:09 AM

Q2. In a typical year, does your school participate in: (check all that apply)

1	In school Shakespeare competition	Sep 28, 2011 7:20 AM
2	Musical Theatre Review	Sep 27, 2011 12:57 PM
3	short "mini plays" for our elementary students	Sep 27, 2011 11:05 AM
4	variety show	Sep 27, 2011 10:11 AM

Q4. Please mark all drama classes that are offered at your school:

1	Speech/Drama/Debate 7th and 8th graders	Oct 11, 2011 6:23 AM
2	musical theater, please note that my drama 1 and 2 are combined	Oct 1, 2011 7:39 PM
3	7th grade speech and drama, 8th grade drama exploratory	Sep 28, 2011 7:20 AM
4	costume design, children's theatre	Sep 28, 2011 7:09 AM
5	Shakespeare Performance	Sep 27, 2011 6:16 PM
6	Theatre Production. The students are involved in EVERY aspect of the productio, from selection to performing to design and construction to dramaturgy, etc.	Sep 27, 2011 1:46 PM
7	Musical Theatre	Sep 27, 2011 12:57 PM
8	Film and Literature	Sep 27, 2011 10:11 AM
9	IB Theatre, Productions Company	Sep 27, 2011 9:49 AM
10	Musical Theatre, 5th/6th Grade Drama	Sep 27, 2011 8:11 AM
11	I teach theatre in an elementary school...	Sep 27, 2011 7:58 AM
12	musical theatre/productions	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
13	Musical Theatre, Play Productions	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
14	Productions	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
15	Musical Theatre	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
16	Drama 7 (intro to theater)	Sep 27, 2011 7:56 AM
17	Musical Theatre	Sep 27, 2011 7:56 AM
18	Musical Theatre	Sep 27, 2011 7:54 AM

Q6. How do you meet state core curriculum standards for teaching theatre history (in particular Standard 4 objective C)in your upper-level (III and IV) drama classes? Is theatre history taught as a critical-thinking skill or is it integrated into your performance curriculum?

1	I teach some to my 9th graders	Oct 11, 2011 6:23 AM
2	critical thinking, but I am just adding it this year so I have not done it yet.	Oct 1, 2011 7:39 PM
3	Unit on Dramatic Lit.	Sep 30, 2011 5:48 AM
4	I teach it as both critical thinking and integrate it into performance curriculum, by discussing acting styles that are known and hypothesized in regards to said time period. As for the dramaturg issue I usually discuss it lightly in drama history but in more detail when discussing theatre based careers.	Sep 28, 2011 4:32 PM
5	Don't do upper level since we are a Junior High but I teach it over the course of several weeks at the beginning of each period while working on other activities.	Sep 28, 2011 7:20 AM
6	Taught in a series in every class theatre 1-4	Sep 28, 2011 7:09 AM
7	We cover Greek Theater in Drama 2, and Elizabethan in the Shakespeare class. We are a junior high, so I leave more advance history work to the high school teachers.	Sep 27, 2011 6:16 PM
8	it is given its time periodically throughout the year	Sep 27, 2011 4:00 PM
9	Both critical thinking and production/performance.	Sep 27, 2011 1:46 PM
10	We have a 4 week course in Theatre History based on set design, but not limited to it. It ends with designing a set for a classic play.	Sep 27, 2011 1:02 PM
11	I do not teach Drama 4	Sep 27, 2011 12:57 PM
12	I cover it in passing but haven't taught a unit focusing on it yet.	Sep 27, 2011 12:15 PM
13	Intergrated into performance curriculum. Theatre II students must do "Period Pieces" and research the playwright, genre, and historical context of the piece.	Sep 27, 2011 11:05 AM
14	Intergrated into performance curiculum	Sep 27, 2011 10:11 AM
15	Integrated with performances. Each unit has a famous playwright and acting theorist paired together. We study the acting theorist/style and their place in history and then they all perform a piece by the given playwright.	Sep 27, 2011 9:49 AM
16	I use classic theatre scene work to teach various theatre history. Performance curriculum is taught alongside history curriculum so the students are working with theatre history texts.	Sep 27, 2011 9:29 AM
17	I do a full unit on Theatre History. It is not integrated throughout but is it's own separate unit. It is a critical thinking skill.	Sep 27, 2011 9:22 AM
18	Theatre history and research is taught as part of the acting curriculum. Students must research the time period and customs for each of their acting pieces.	Sep 27, 2011 8:46 AM
19	Perhaps this question isn't worded right. Standard 4 Objective 3 (c) in Theatre Foundations 3 and 4 isn't about theatre history.	Sep 27, 2011 8:29 AM

Q6. How do you meet state core curriculum standards for teaching theatre history (in particular Standard 4 objective C)in your upper-level (III and IV) drama classes? Is theatre history taught as a critical-thinking skill or is it integrated into your performance curriculum?

20	I teach it as a 'history' class with performance based assessments.	Sep 27, 2011 8:11 AM
21	I have no upper level classes.	Sep 27, 2011 8:11 AM
22	It is typically integrated.	Sep 27, 2011 8:05 AM
23	We do all of it	Sep 27, 2011 8:03 AM
24	N/A	Sep 27, 2011 7:58 AM
25	Theatre History is my entire Drama 3 course "theatre history through performance. We study the time period, read a play from the time period, and then perform a scene or monologue from the play incorporating all we have learned into that scene.	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
26	Critical Thinking skill ... not integrated well enough.	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
27	Students work in groups and are assigned a topic in theatre history. They give a presentation on their section and also perform a scene from a popular play from their period of theatre history.	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
28	Group presentations, performances, handouts- students assigned an area of history to perform in.	Sep 27, 2011 7:56 AM
29	Currently taught as a critical thinking skill.	Sep 27, 2011 7:54 AM
30	It's integrated into my performance curriculum	Sep 27, 2011 7:53 AM
31	We take notes, tests, and have oral reports.	Sep 27, 2011 7:48 AM

Q7. What time periods/cultures do you include as part of the curriculum in any/all of your theatre classes? (Please mark all that apply):

1	I think. I am adding them this year.	Oct 1, 2011 7:39 PM
2	Modern	Sep 30, 2011 5:48 AM
3	Sturm and Drang, Melodrama, Sur-realism	Sep 28, 2011 4:32 PM
4	Musical Theatre	Sep 27, 2011 7:58 AM
5	French Neo-Classicism Contemporary American theatre	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
6	Theatre today	Sep 27, 2011 7:56 AM

Has your drama program ever tried to collaborate with other classes in the school, such as History or English literature? Please give a brief description.		
1	no	Oct 11, 2011 6:23 AM
2	we have done shows the last 2 years that are studied in English classes - The Importance of Being Earnest and The Crucible	Oct 1, 2011 7:39 PM
3	Participate in some cross curricular activities.	Sep 30, 2011 5:48 AM
4	Regretably not at my current school, however at the charter school that I worked with English and history in regards to which plays we read in class as well as what theatre time periods we would work on in class. In my tech theatre class at the charter school we would work with the science classes on light transmission and sound.	Sep 28, 2011 4:32 PM
5	I've tried, but they are not much willing to work with cirriculum other than what they have set up.	Sep 28, 2011 7:20 AM
6	Humanities English	Sep 28, 2011 7:09 AM
7	We perform contemporary scenes about health issues for the Health classes. (Eating disorders, suicide, etc.) We also use scenes from the current novels being read in the English classes to practice writing dialogue and staging.	Sep 27, 2011 6:16 PM
8	no	Sep 27, 2011 4:00 PM
9	Yes. In fact, this year we are performing Angel in the Night, and collaborating with both the English AND History departments.	Sep 27, 2011 1:46 PM
10	no	Sep 27, 2011 1:02 PM
11	no.	Sep 27, 2011 12:57 PM
12	We offer an "Evening of the Bard" each year in cooperation with the dance company and the english teachers offer extra credit to their students for attending.	Sep 27, 2011 12:15 PM
13	On several occasions we have performed scenes from a text (Anne Frank, Romeo and Juliet, To Kill a Mockingbird) for the English class reading the text. I have worked with the History department on role drama and theatre of the oppressed when they covered the civil rights movement.	Sep 27, 2011 11:05 AM
14	English with 12 Angry Men	Sep 27, 2011 10:11 AM
15	We're doing Death of a Salesman this year and working with the english classes as they study it in their honors curriculum.	Sep 27, 2011 9:49 AM
16	Yes. While performing Inherit the Wind I worked with the History department/Evolution, Darwin and Monkey/Scopes trial.World War I and Bury The Dead. Also English with One Acts/Shirley Jackson The Lottery.	Sep 27, 2011 9:29 AM
17	Yes, when we studied the Crucible we coordinated with the history and English departments. We have also collaborated with other schools on a few projects.	Sep 27, 2011 9:22 AM
18	We have done the Crucible, Midsummers, Othello and R & J while the English	Sep 27, 2011 8:46 AM

Q9. Has your drama program ever tried to collaborate with other classes in the school, such as History or English literature? Please give a brief description.

	classes were studying it.	
19	No But I should.	Sep 27, 2011 8:34 AM
20	English classes attended a spoof on Romeo and Juliet.	Sep 27, 2011 8:29 AM
21	No	Sep 27, 2011 8:11 AM
22	na	Sep 27, 2011 8:05 AM
23	Every year. We do a play based on a novel that the Language Department is reading or a play based on events from a historical era that the Social Studies classes are teaching.	Sep 27, 2011 8:03 AM
24	I have to integrate theatre into every grades' curricula.	Sep 27, 2011 7:58 AM
25	YES, I collaborate with History, English, and Art all the time on productions. Historical and literary classics are done on stage all the time and we try to sync the performance to when other classes are studying that unit. We often ask for help from the art department for painting, and set decoration etc...	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
26	The collaboration is purely picking scripts that the english class studies and they attend the performance.	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
27	History and English With The Civil War Unit, Huckleberry Finn, and Big River...Studied at the same time ended Units with the performance. Collaborated with English studying and performing the following: The Taming of the Shrew, Loves Labours Lost, The Crucible, and All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. Design has collaborated with Art and making a backdrop, welding making props and set pieces, and wood shop building period tables ect.	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
28	I also teach history and I use theatre in my classes and have my acting students perform short scene in my history classes. However, this collaboration is not school wide.	Sep 27, 2011 7:57 AM
29	Yes. When we did Tom Sawyer, we had the English teachers talk about the show and give extra credit on watching the performances. This year we are doing Suessical the Musical and they are talking a lot about poetry and rhythm in the english classes	Sep 27, 2011 7:56 AM
30	Not at this time.	Sep 27, 2011 7:54 AM
31	Yes, we've tried to pick a classic play every year that is taught in our English Classes.	Sep 27, 2011 7:53 AM
32	Yes, History and English classes for our Shakespeare Showcase. We perform for them before we compete at the Shakespeare Competition.	Sep 27, 2011 7:48 AM

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