

DIANE WASNAK TEACHING STATEMENT

When I teach, I'm interested in getting the student to discover how to translate their thoughts, feelings, desires and memories into the physical body and how that physical body has the power to translate the workings of the mind, heart and spirit just as eloquently, if not more so, than prose alone.

Physical gesture is the oldest form of communication. Complete sentences are made with a wink or the turn of the head. The strength or weakness of a character can be defined in a single gesture. I love taking students on a journey of the physical. To give them permission to revel in the silliest feelings. To dredge the soul of pathos. To let go of physical self-perception and how one looks. To release self-consciousness and let go of ego. To allow them to get to the essence of who they are and release layers of judgment and childhood script. By teaching them how to work through their physical limitations and give them confidence to take risks and follow their impulses, I help to move them beyond what is comfortable and into areas of new discovery using mime and movement.

Cultivating the art of observation is to have a heightened awareness of one's surroundings and experiences. These observations could be hearing a symphony, analyzing a work of art, reading a story, tasting a new food, sharing a laugh with an elder or enjoying a walk on the beach. It is experiencing life, history, art and science with all the senses and from all angles. The student takes what has been observed and expresses it with his or her own personal uniqueness. Or in the words of what my mentor, Tony Montanaro would say, "A personal style of theatre."

Class activities would be modified according to class size, length of class and progression of students. Each class would begin with a series of exercises to stimulate the student's awareness of their own body and body-mind awareness. Tony Montanaro, my teacher/mentor, developed most of these exercises while others are modifications and extensions of my own experience. The exercises are a blend of mime, movement with intention, strength and flexibility, and improvisation.