

THEATRICAL EXPRESSION IN CREATIVE OUTPUT

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ABSTRACT

For the gifted, talented and creative, there are very few options. However, the theatre and drama and plays are an apt venue for their emotional and creative expression. This paper reviews this domain, and cites relevant literature and provides an in depth overview of this realm.

Keywords: *creative expression, theatre, drama, plays*

Creativity is one of the most important topics to discuss in the entirety of the education of Gifted and Talented students because of its essential nature to their growth and development as well as its beneficial addition to any program. "Creativity and productive thinking are stated goals of most programs designed for the gifted and talented" (Feldhusen & Treffinger, 1985; Gowan, Khatena, & Torrance, 1979)

"The demands of the times, national needs, recent discoveries, and a few sustained research efforts with some resulting accumulation of knowledge about the nature, measurement and development of the creative thinking abilities have fostered among educators in all fields and at all levels an unprecedented interest in creativity. The urgent demands of the moment are reinforced by several quite legitimate concerns of long standing among educators. These persistent and recurrent legitimate concerns include such educational goals as the production of fully functioning, mentally healthy, well educated, vocationally successful individuals. Recent research findings indicate strongly that these goals are undeniably related to creativity." (Torrance, 1969)

According to Davis there are many levels of creativity, which are "Intuitive expressive level, academic and technical levels, inventive level, innovative level and genius level" (Davis, 2011). There is a list of characteristics of creative persons that has been compiled by Csikzentmihalyi that details ten paradoxical characteristic items that creative people exhibit. They are:

1. Much physical energy, but also often quiet and at rest.
2. Smart yet naive; uses both divergent and convergent thinking.
3. Playfulness and self-discipline (endurance).
4. Imaginativeness rooted in a sense of reality.
5. Both extroversion and introversion.
6. Both humble and proud.

7. Tendency toward androgyny.
8. Traditional and conservative, rebellious and iconoclastic.
9. Passionate and objective.
10. Sensitivity and openness to both suffering and pain and also capable of great enjoyment. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996)

Csikszentmihalyi gives us a nice baseline for the creative gifted student, which of course helps us in the development of curriculum centered around creative gifted students as well as understanding the nature and behavior of the creatively gifted. The creative outlook can take many forms including music, art, creative writing and of course theatrical expression. Involvement in the theatre arts can be considered one of the highest forms of art since it combines several of the aforementioned forms of expression under one umbrella of artistry.

Theatrical productions utilize art and carpentry in the construction of scenic environments, creative writing when performing original works, music (including singers and orchestra members) if the production in question is a musical and of course the creative talents associated with acting and directing a theatrical production. Because of their inclusive nature, theatrical productions are an ideal measure of a gifted student's creative abilities. Students need not be talented in the realm of acting to express themselves in a theatrical production and therefore we are still able to measure their creative output via any of the other production aspects that are involved.

With theatre being an all-inclusive art form it's important to look at both the validity of it being used as a form of expression for creative gifted students as well as the practical uses and benefits that can be derived from participating in a theatrical production. By its very nature, plays and musicals give gifted students an outlet for their creative expressions in a constructive manner. They are taught the importance of teamwork and given problem solving skills. On top of all these things, the arts are an area where constructive feedback is not just part of it it's vital and teaches students how to handle constructive criticism as well as how to apply it. At the end of all these things, the students get a product which they are then able to showcase and be proud of. Their is an endgame culmination to all their hard work and they are able to see just how all the moving pieces came together to create the overall bigger picture. That in itself should make theatrical productions a valid form of expression not just for gifted students but for all students in a school system.

To have a fair discussion of the benefits that come about from involvement in a play or musical, we can begin by looking at the Wallace Model, which looks at the creative process in a set of four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification (Wallace, 1926). These four stages can not only be used to discuss the creative process in general but can also be used as reinforcement material to go along with some of the teachings of the greatest theatrical practitioners from the Twentieth Century. These four stages could be broken down to describe the rehearsal process of an entire production or just the moment to moment problems in a rehearsal period. We could even break these four stages down to describe the plight of an actor preparing their role. Indeed, Constantin Stanislavski, Uta Hagen,

Sanford Meisner and many other acting teachers recommend variations of these four stages in their tomes that describe the process in discovering a role. It's crucial to note that many of the great teachers in this craft describe the process as one of "discovery" and while pre-meditation does factor into it, many of the great moments they discuss and advocate are ones of natural discovery that part of an organic and ongoing process.

In the preparation stage we are told to clarify and define the problem and to gather relevant information. This stage involves a lot of research and outlining the parameters of "the mess" that is front of you. For a gifted student in the arts we can direct their focus to the creation of a role. When creating a role it is not only vital that one displays the emotion but also that one genuinely feels the emotion as well. I always describe to my actors the concept that these characters are merely borrowing their bodies for a night in an effort to tell their stories and that they will use only what the actors are able to supply them.

Preparation is pivotal to both a gifted learner's process as well as the process of role creation. When creating a role we want to know everything about the character, every last little detail that the play provides us and from there it is on to educated guessing. Some sample questions I will give are:

1. What is your name?
2. What are your parents' names?
3. Where are you located (city, state, country)

It is important that we be as specific as possible so as to begin creating a clear picture of the character or the "problem" at hand. If we say a character is from the South that gives us very little to go off of other than they are from a great swath of the United States that can encompass many different states, environments and lifestyles. However if we say that a character is from Kingston, Tennessee then that gives us a geographical reference, vocal characteristics, clothing style and depending on the time and setting it can also give us a historical reference as well.

Specificity is important to instill in gifted learners because it teaches them to not just take the problem at face value but to also dig for solutions. Sometimes the first solution that comes up might be right but it may not be the absolute best one they could use. By applying this to characterization we are instilling this concept in them in a safe and constructive manner that also alleviates them of the pressure they may feel in the classroom. They'll be learning something without even necessarily being aware that they're learning it.

Being specific in the preparation phase is incredibly important because for every solution it presents it also gives us a new definition to the problem. We may know that a character comes from Tennessee but how many questions did we just raise by answering the first one? What does that character think about coming from a small town in Tennessee? How do they contribute to the local economy? Where were they when the power plant disaster happened and what are their thoughts on it? All of these questions came out of one answer in the midst of our preparation. Yet all of these are necessary in establishing the nature of the problem and proceeding with the discovery of the character.

The depth of questioning goes deeper, however, with questions such as:

1. What is your (the character) favorite color?
2. If you were an animal, what would you be?
3. What is your favorite movie, music piece and novel?
4. What is your Super Objective?
5. What tactics will you employ to accomplish your Super Objective?

Questions like this give insight into different aspects of the character that won't necessarily be covered in the script itself. It also gives students a chance to do some creative detective work while also teaching them how to think outside the box in order to solve a problem. These aspects of preparation are important to teach gifted students as well as actors because it shows them that all sides of a problem can yield an answer. It assists with the preparation portion of the Wallace Model.

We can also look at this part of the process as brainstorming. Brainstorming always has a leader, in the case of a play production the director, and the leader guides the brainstorming sessions. Osborn (1953) recommended that a leader of brainstorming sessions be well versed and trained in creative problem solving. Osborn saw the group leadership role in a brainstorming session as central to its success.

The problem of character discovery goes beyond the paperwork that is associated with the beginnings of character development. If an actor truly wants to dig at the heart of the problem of creation they must begin to process their own emotions and learn how to access them in service of the character. For many of the students found in gifted programs, they are at a critical time in their lives in terms of emotions and development and the lessons that are taught in character development can help them process their feelings and learn how to cope. The job of a gifted program should extend beyond the obvious fostering of their learning and providing a creative outlook but also teaching gifted students how to deal with their emotions in a constructive manner that can also lend itself to problem solving.

After we address character background and history, an important step that teaches gifted students the benefit of research and application, we begin the process of finding the emotions of the moment and how we access those appropriate feelings. Stanislavski began by favoring the actor over the character until his later years when he moved to character over actor. He would actually go on to move away from many of the teaching points he began with, which is where Sanford Meisner would begin. Meisner had a history with the Group Theatre, which Lee Strasburg and Stella Adler were also a part of, and their mission was founded on Stanislavski's early teachings of affective memory. Adler, however, would find this system did not work for her and sought out Stanislavski himself in Paris. Upon her return to the Group Theatre she reported the Stanislavski had moved away from affective and emotional memory, news which effectively lost Strasburg control of the Group.

Meisner would begin to develop his own system and move on to the Neighborhood Playhouse, where he taught for the remainder of his years and instructed students such as Sydney Pollock, Eli Wallach and even Sandra Bullock. The basis of the Meisner system can be summed in “Acting is the reality of doing” (Meisner, 1987). This teaches students that we do not merely give a performance, we live a performance, full of all the emotions and information that comes with it. That statement formed the principle which guided Meisner’s teaching philosophy in all his years and if we were to apply that to our gifted students we can teach them that it isn’t simply good enough to get the information but we must also know how to apply it as well. If we are merely teaching students how to find information then we are only doing half of the job. To really reach them they need to understand how to live and impact this world, something the arts can do. Meisner understood this.

“All my exercises,’ he told an interviewer nearly a decade ago, ‘were designed to strengthen the guiding principle that I learned forcefully in the Group - that art expresses human experience.’” (Meisner, 1987)

That human experience should be consistently reinforced when working with the gifted students so that they understand this isn’t merely a creative outlook for their expressions but is also an important outlook to understanding the human condition. At the turn of the Twentieth Century as American playwrights began to come into prominence, they moved away from what had been traditionally written about and began exploring the issues that face American families. Eugene O’Neill wrote about the morphine addiction of his mother and alcoholism of the men in his family, Arthur Miller discussed the American Dream and how that dream can occasionally become a nightmare and more recent playwrights such as David Lindsay-Abaire explored the issues that scared them the most, ala the death of a child.

By exposing students to these different authors we can give them a historical perspective while also showing them the practical uses these artistic endeavors can have. With theatre being an emotional experience there can be many opportunities for educators to teach students how to access and, more importantly, process their emotions. Take the script for *Rabbit Hole*, which deals with the death of a toddler and his parents’ reaction to it eight months later. While most gifted students won’t know what it’s like to lose a child to death, many of them will understand loss in many forms as it is an essential part of our human experiences.

A speech delivered by one of the characters sums up the thesis of loss of the play perfectly. “I don’t know. The weight of it, I guess. At some point it become bearable. It turns into something you can crawl out from under. And carry around—like a brick in your pocket. And you forget it every once in awhile, but then you reach in for whatever reason and there it is: ‘Oh right. That.’ Which can be awful. But not all the time. Sometimes it’s kinda...Not that you like it exactly, but it’s what you have instead of your son, so you don’t wanna let go if it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn’t go away, which is...Fine...actually.” (Lindsay-Abaire, 2006)

That speech, which is in reference to the loss of a child, is a moment that can elevate to a teachable moment with a gifted student. It's not only critically important to examine that speech in order to understand the character that delivers it, which is covered in the early part of the process in the paper work aspect, it also gives educators an ample opportunity to discuss the process of loss and how we cope with it. By applying the Meisner technique of "Acting is the reality of doing" we give students an opportunity to face often terrifying emotions in a safe environment where there can be discussion and follow up. This teaches students how to process difficult emotions while at the same time giving them a place to experience them.

The real world application of scripts doesn't just include discussions of loss and how to cope. It can also extend to the historical perspective. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* not only deals with the Salem Witch Trials, it is also an allegory for the McCarthy trials that consumed America in the 1950s.

"If she is innocent! Why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers? I'll tell you what's walking Salem—vengeance is walking Salem. We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! This warrant's vengeance! I'll not give my wife to vengeance!" (Miller, 1953)

An actor preparing to play the role of Parris would have to know and understand the working of that speech inside and out. It's important to not only understand the context of it within the play but also look at its historical perspective. *The Crucible* came out of the McCarthy trials just as Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* did. Kazan, however, took a more passive approach whereas Miller brought out all his rage and frustration in what the country had become. Students can use that historical perspective when studying *The Crucible* and preparing the roles in it.

That wouldn't be the first time that Miller would criticize America and the dream that is promised within. *Death of a Salesman* is his Pulitzer Prize winning masterpiece and gives us the disintegration of the American everyman in the persona of Willy Loman, a faded out salesman that refuses to see the reality in front of him. Willy's name even implies the double meaning he represents. Willy sounds like we are asking the question "will he?" and Loman sounds like "low man". His son Biff in an explosive confrontation sums up the destruction of that dream as well as Willy's delusion.

"I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them! I'm one dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it. A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!" (Miller, 1949).

Again we see a moment to discuss important themes in a historical perspective while also showing the preparation it takes to create such an important role. This speech is so integral to Biff's character and is a compelling moment for any performer to explore and live. It is not a moment that just happens

and it takes preparation, both background and emotional, and it takes a guiding facilitator to assist students and actors to get to that place they need to be.

One final script we can take a look at as a point of discussion involves the Muslim experience in post 9/11 America. The character of Amir gives an impassioned speech that is illuminating and inflaming.

"Here's the kicker. And this is the real problem:

It goes way deeper than the Taliban.

To be Muslim – truly - means not only that you believe all this. It means you fight for it too.

Politics follows faith?

No distinction between mosque and state?

Remember all that?

So if the point is that the world in the Quran was a better place than in this world, well, then let's go back.

Let's stone adulterers.

Let's cut off the hands of thieves.

Let's kill the unbelievers.

And so, even if you're one of those lapsed Muslims sipping your after-dinner scotch alongside your beautiful white American wife - and watching the news and seeing folks in the Middle East dying for values you were taught were purer - and stricter - and truer...you can't help but feel just a little a bit of pride." (Akhtar, 2013)

Looking at the inflammatory remarks made by the character of Amir it could be very easy to be enraged and offended. However if gifted students are given the chance to look at the script for *Disgraced*, which won a Pulitzer in 2013, they will be given an opportunity to examine race relations in America and be allowed to express their own feelings on the matter. Going back to the points that Torrance made in 1969 to produce "fully functioning, mentally healthy, well educated, vocationally successful individuals," we should give them ample opportunity to expand their minds and give voice to their values. Theatrical endeavors, and yes this can even include the simple act of reading and studying a play script without the intent for performance, gives gifted students a window into the world and lets them understand the way the arts are moving and how they can be a part of it.

Many gifted students were too young to remember or understand the way the world changed overnight on 9/11 and it is scripts like this that gives them an idea on those concepts. We expose them to ideas and ideals they may not have so that we can then have a healthy conversation about it. Again the theatrical world provides a safe place for students to express themselves and their thoughts, which is important to their development and nurturing. This is just one of the many ways the arts are able to teach compassion and empathy, something not only gifted learners need to develop.

All of this falls under the umbrella of preparation but it shows just how important preparation is, the arts are to gifted students and how we can make the arts something that is immediate and important to them.

It is sometimes difficult when building a character to see where preparation ends and incubation begins, however the Wallace Model defines it as a period of

preconscious, fringe conscious or even unconscious activity that takes place, perhaps deliberately, while the thinking is engaged in another activity. The idea of taking your mind off the problem to work on the problem is important and can be fostered in other approaches that are associated with preparing a role.

Uta Hagen leans heavily on emotional memory and dedicates a chapter to the Five Senses because of their importance to developing a character. "Full human contact employs all the senses... A great danger is to take the five senses for granted." (Hagen, 1973). Incubation is where we begin to employ our senses and the Uta Hagen method teaches students to embrace all of their emotions in the creation of a role. With incubation being a period of engaging our mind and senses into something else in order to find a means to solve the problem, we can apply that portion of the creative process to discovering emotional memory and how our senses can work in that favor. With follow up, we can discuss how the senses were able to trigger our emotions and how using them to distract ourselves from the problem we can also be working to solve the problem at hand.

Emotion memory is different from sense memory, which is the memory that is found in the five senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing and speaking. In emotion memory "or emotional recall deals with the problem of finding a substitution in order to release that big burst of tears, the shriek of terror, the fit of laughter, etc., demanded by the playwright, the director or by yourself as interpreter when the given circumstances of an immediate event in the play (something done to you by something or someone) fail to stimulate you sufficiently to bring it about spontaneously. Sometimes the direct substitution is not suggestible enough to bring about the desired result. Then the hunt must go deeper in the search for the memory of a big emotional moment." (Hagen, 1973).

If we go back to brainstorming, we can find a series of advice that has been given that we can apply to what has already been discussed.

"1. Put brainstorming in perspective. Brainstorming is only one part of a larger creative process. It is a good tool for groups of students who need to generate many, varied, and unique ideas.

2. Be prepared. The success of the brainstorming effort depends on the effective execution of the group leader's role before, during, and after the session. Central to this is the responsibility to prepare the group, the task, and the environment for maximum productivity. The teacher, trainer, or facilitator must have an adequate level of training, background, and experience in brainstorming and creative problem solving.

3. Have a robust tool kit. It is important that people have more than one tool in their tool kit.

4. There is no substitute for experience. The best teachers and/or practitioners of brainstorming have extensive experience actually using the tool. This experience helps the user know when and how to apply brainstorming." (Isaksen, S.G. and Gaulin, J.P, 2005)

It's true that brainstorming, or in the case of role preparation the paperwork and background work, is only one part of the larger creative process. We've examined that paperwork and background information is only the beginning of the process which eventually yields to emotional output. "To act is to do, not to think."

(Hagen, 1973). If we want to apply the advice given to brainstorming to the overall creative process then point number two is incredibly important. Isaksen is referencing what is expected of the facilitator or educator (in our case the director) but be prepared is advice that covers the director's process and it also covers the actor's background work as well as the experience they need going forward.

To examine point number three, Meisner, Hagen and Stanislavski are constantly doing things to give the actor a robust tool kit. Hagen spends most of her method discussing Emotion Memory and Sense Memory as means to developing an honest performance. We can look at more recent texts for different advice. In twelve guideposts, Michael Shurtleff outlines his own process:

1. "1. Relationship.
2. What are you fighting for? Conflict.
3. The moment before.
4. Humor.
5. Opposites.
6. Discoveries.
7. Communication and Competition.
8. Importance.
9. Find the Events.
10. Place.
11. Game Playing and Role Playing.
12. Mystery and Secret." (Shurtleff, 1978)

Shurtleff specifies that love should be found in every scene and that every story is a love story. He asks that actors break down the relationships found in the script and identify the conflict. Conflict is something that hasn't been touched on much yet but it is absolutely key to identify and understand when creating a role. Of course educators can use a discussion of tactics to also facilitate a discussion about conflict both in theatrical productions and everyday life to also stimulate a discussion about conflict resolution.

Point four says that there is no substitute for experience, which we can attribute to emotional memory as discussed by Uta Hagen. Hagen, however, was not the first person to advocate emotional memory. That goes to Constantin Stanislavski, who spent three volumes outlining his actor training method. This is, of course, where we get the term "The Method".

"That type of memory, which makes you relive the sensations you once felt when seeing Moskvina act, or when your friend died, is what we call emotion memory. Just as your visual memory can reconstruct an inner image of some forgotten thing, place or person, your emotion memory can bring back feelings you have already experienced. They may seem to be beyond recall, when suddenly a suggestion, a thought, a familiar object will bring them back in full force. Sometimes the emotions are as strong as ever, sometimes weaker, sometimes the same strong feelings will come back but in a somewhat different guise." (Stanislavski, 1936)

Stanislavski touches on both emotion memory and sensory memory, albeit he doesn't necessarily call it that. Sensory memory is something that was deliberately separated by Hagen whereas Stanislavski tended to umbrella them both together. Experience is pivotal to understanding both emotion and sense memory because they're both rooted in it. Without experience we would have nothing to draw from, both emotionally and sensory, and it also takes experience to understand how to access both and display both.

In addressing sense memory, Stanislavski says "People generally do not know how to make use of the physical apparatus with which we nature has endowed us. They neither know how to develop this apparatus nor keep it in order." (Stanislavski, 1936).

He goes on to discuss physique and how to use the body in service of a character, however sense memory is an important part of it. It takes experience to understand that.

All of this can lead us to the Illumination stage, which is the moment a solution appears. For theatrical endeavors we can apply this stage to many different moments. There's the moment an actor understands a part of a role and is able to apply that knowledge to their performance. It is the moment that a director finally cracks that piece of blocking that has been troubling them. It is also the moment where a musician finally perfects a piece of music they have been working on. The creative arts can and generally are filled with several moments of solutions.

"Let me repeat that the best thing that can happen to an actor is to have his whole role form itself in him of its own accord. In such instances one can forget about all 'systems', techniques, and give oneself up wholly to the power of magic nature. This, alas, did not happen to any of you. So we tried all possible means available to nudge your imagination, attract your feelings, in order to get you to put natural, direct, intuitive life if not into your whole role at least into a part of it. Some of this work was successful; in different spots in the play there were flashes of life. Now evidently we have gone through all the paths of direct, immediate, intuitive approach to Shakespeare's work. What else can we do to produce new patches of light in the places that have no life in them; how can you be brought forcibly closer to the inner world of the characters shown on the stage? For this we need the process analysis." (Stanislavski, 1936).

This quote by Stanislavski encompasses moments of illumination while also segueing nicely into the final stage of verification. What he describes are moments where his performers got it, really got it, and were capable of giving "flashes of life" which is what he's been advocating. The process of analysis which he asks us to look at can be applied to the verification of legitimacy in a performance (emotionally), the moments of weakness in a performance, the moments of improvement in a play and of course analysis on a more economical (box office) and artistic (critical) level.

Analysis in the context that Stanislavski uses it is the process which he uses to try and cover the distance between falsity in a performance and a genuine performance quality filled with emotion that is realistically felt and not manufactured. Analysis (verification) is such an important thing to instill in gifted

students so that they can understand how to use it and why we need it. Gifted students need to be able to understand constructive criticism as well as how to analyze their own creative output to make it even better.

Theatrical productions are an excellent place to teach constructive criticism and self-analysis of one's work. Actors, directors, designers, musicians and everyone else that is involved in the process must be able to analyze their own work and process how effective it was and what they can do to make it better. It's important to analyze every part of it, the parts that worked and of course the parts that didn't. It's equally important to analyze and understand the rejection that can come with a life in the theatrical industry.

"They don't hate your picture. They don't think you're a terrible actor. It's just that you're not precisely what they're looking for at this particular moment. You haven't lost ground, just postage. It's a lesson you're going to have to teach yourself over and over in the months and years to come - so start now." (Cohen, 1972). What Cohen describes is a process we can begin teaching our students in the theatre arts and gifted programs. Rejection will happen and it's up to them to figure out how to handle it and analyze it and what they need or want to do with it.

We teach our students how to analyze and deal with constructive criticism. With all of this comes a necessity to create students with a strong will. Creativity comes with its fair share of vulnerability and it is also our responsibility to instill the ability to deal with what will happen to them to the best of our ability. "The military energy should be your norm. A soldier is willing to die for his profession. You have to understand that kind of commitment. That's the norm for acting." (Adler, 2000).

Stella Adler describes something very close to what Stanislavski described when he said "The actor no less than the soldier must be subject to iron discipline". (Stanislavski, 1936). Both teachers are saying that discipline and hard work comes with the territory of acting and theatre in general, which is something important to instill in students involved in the creative arts. The hard work that comes with mounting a theatrical production, the level of involvement and cooperation, the teamwork and problem solving skill necessary are all things that help gifted students both in the classroom and the world outside it. Artistic expression in all its forms give students, gifted and non gifted alike, a chance to express their creativity and grow as human beings by looking at different cultures and ideals.

The act of artistic creation is one that demands its students to approach their abilities with an open mind. A student of Meisner's who would go on to be very successful as a teacher in his own right opened his lectures every year with the story of the Zen Master.

"Once there was a student who desperately wanted to learn about Zen. So he approached the house of a great Zen master. The master, in a moment of uncharacteristic graciousness, invited the student inside. They sat down to tea and the master asked the student, 'Why have you come?' The student opened his mouth and started to babble. A torrent of words poured forth: testaments to his immense curiosity, his passion, his understanding and confusion regarding Zen. On and on the student talked. The master blinked, then set to work making the tea. He set out cups, ground the tea leaves, and boiled water while the student kept

talking. The young man only shut his mouth when the master started to pour the tea. The old man filled the student's cup until the tea reached the brim and overflowed, running all over the table, scalding hot. 'My God!' cried the student. 'What have you done?' The old man stopped pouring and said, 'Your mind is like this cup of tea. How can I put anything in it when it's already full? If you wish to learn Zen, you must bring me an empty cup.'" (Esper and DiMarco, 2008).

Gifted students should be given a chance to express themselves and educators should give them that chance. Theatrical productions offer those chances to them in a safe and exciting environment that teaches discipline and creativity. If a student comes to us with a full cup it should also be our responsibility to find a way to empty that cup and start anew. The theatre arts afford them opportunities other outlets of expression don't and they should always be given the chance to engage in them. It instills creativity, empathy and decency, three things that are vital to the growth of any student, gifted and non-gifted.

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