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Capstone Self-Assessment/Flyback

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When beginning this project, my main focus was to fully embody the four brothers of art as a human and as a teacher. BEEF is my favorite tool and making the choice to fully absorb everything it had to offer me, not only created a centeredness that later led to a rewarding experience, but also led me to healing and restoration in moments that I struggled with throughout the process. During my time working on my final capstone intensive, I was also finishing up my senior year at VCU studying Theatre Performance and Dance & Choreography, filming a main stage musical, and working a part-time job. I was also creating, acting, singing, and filming an a cappella music video for ICCA's, which later made it to finals and received many awards. During which time I was putting together a business plan thesis on Chekhov inspired a cappella. I tell you this to emphasize how important BEEF was in my time working on this and many other projects and accomplishments.

There were many obstacles I faced during this time. The Corona virus was a big one, making it difficult to teach in person, so I had to accommodate my classes to teach over zoom. I could teach as many zoom classes as I wanted but my in-person time was limited to three, day long classes, so I had to perfectly curate my classes to make sure I could teach everything I needed to. There were many times I had to switch around my outline schedule because I ran out of time, but I always seemed to get back on track when fully embracing form artistically. After I

finished my intensive with the students, I was so proud. I was proud of myself, but also the students and how hard they worked. Through awareness and concentration we felt the feeling of entirety. By the end of my time with them, it was clear that they had a great understanding of the tools I had taught them and the inspiration they were able to achieve. I was able to film every moment of inspiration with the help of my good friend and incredible artist, Annie Lacey.

Unfortunately, I was tested with an obstacle I was not sure I could overcome. All of our footage from my capstone intensive, as well as the film we had created for ICCA's had been destroyed. Our hard drive crashed unexpectedly and we were left with nothing. In this moment, I needed lightness and ease more than anything. I made the conscious decision to have that with all of my being. My a cappella group knew how hard we worked on that film, as well as all of the hard work I had put into teaching this capstone intensive. After using Chekhov's tools to teach and choreograph for our group for years, they had a love and respect for the technique as well. My group raised \$4,000 to get the hard drive fixed and for me to get my footage back to finish my NMCA capstone. This moment was the greatest radiating beauty I had ever experienced and for that, I will forever be thankful.

Although I believe I gave my best effort teaching in the most personal and creative ways possible, after assessing myself in the videos, there are many ways I can grow and challenge myself in my future with Chekhov. Teaching over zoom was very challenging for me as a teacher as well as a student. Because of that, I knew I had to work extra hard to make my zoom classes engaging and exciting. After watching through my zoom footage, I found that my energy was lower than what I had intended to give. I had much difficulty with students "checking out" and feeling low energy themselves. Online classes are hard for everyone and I tried to be as

accommodating as I could with my students such as having it optional to speak or to have their camera on, but looking back I wish I had given more energy and excitement so that maybe they would have felt inclined to match my excitement. After watching my video footage, I found that something else I need to work on is trying different approaches to accommodate all learning styles through experience, reflection, and then supporting evidence. I realized that my teaching is very much geared toward the way that I enjoy learning but I learned that really getting to understand how my students personally learn, helps me to help them grow faster and more richly.

After observing where my work could be strengthened, I also took note of my transformational growth throughout the process. Language is something I have always struggled with; how to say something that makes sense to all students or peers. Using welcoming language is something I have been working on since my first intensive at NMCA. I made many mistakes while teaching but I have improved immensely throughout the process, becoming more clear and inviting in my language. I also grew my knowledge of the tools by using the technique to teach the technique, using the laws of composition to construct the class. I learned that the classes I taught in which we “ran out of time” for rituals, lost their balance and feeling of entirety. The moment of realization of how important each ritual, tool, and lesson is to the structure of learning this technique was an incredible jewel in the journey.

After finishing my capstone and reflecting back on my experience, I have learned so much. I have learned to use P.A.S.S. to structure my classes so that I am so well prepared that the action is effortless. There are many challenges in teaching like attendance fluctuations, level of development, level of skill, commitment, and much more. I have found the importance of

“falling in love with the problem”, by allowing myself to be creative in the presentation of the technique with all of the fullness it deserves. I have learned to use the four brothers at all times. Setting an example is the most powerful way to teach. Cultivating the spirit of love gives our artist and personal lives a richness of purpose. After having been taught by me, I hope that my students are able to embody these qualities and live better lives finding ease and beauty in a world full of chaos. Allowing my students to teach ME is one of my favorite takeaways from doing the capstone. Listening to their questions, experiences, self-assessments, and fly-backs was a great learning experience for me. Allowing myself to indulge in their experience using the tools, I could relate and learn more of what the tools can do for others and how differently they work in every mind. Lastly, I have learned to always finish each class, project, and day with a flyback in order to allow myself to continue to flourish and grow with as much beauty and peace as possible.

“My right hand is being held by one who knows less - I am teaching. My left hand is being held by one who knows more - I am learning. It takes both hands being held for me to be me.” -

Charlie Bowles

As I flyback, I evaluate what a wonderful experience that the capstone has provided me. I love the impact I was able to make for my students, and the appreciation for the tools to guide them to their immaculate imaginations. I enjoyed the growth I was able to obtain through the process inspired by the technique, myself, and my students. I loved that we were able to meet in person and create, use our imaginations, play, and have fun together during such a hard time. Looking back, there are a couple of things that I would do differently. I would love to get to a point where I can have my lessons memorized so that I do not have to leave the atmosphere to

read my notes. I wanted to give my students the full embodiment of Chekhov and did not want to miss anything, but pausing to look at my notes could have taken me or students out of the moment. I would also pay more attention to my students' experiences while teaching. Sometimes I want to make sure I am being clear and saying the right things, but I would love to be able to do both. I would also encourage my students to be more prepared with lines and reading the script. I know some of my students had trouble fully using a tool because they were not off book. In the future, I will better prepare them for the intensives. My favorite moment teaching the intensive was when one of my students discovered their first jewel, that beautiful moment froze in time along with all of the other students who witnessed it. The questions that I am left with are; what are ways we can grow the techniques Chekhov has provided us? Can we use these tools extensively in other forms of art? How can we continue to explore Chekhov in different realms of life? To continue to deepen what I have learned, I am continuously exploring Chekhov's tools to answer my previous questions and to ignite inspiration in my highest creative self at all times.

Throughout the three years I have immersed myself in the acting techniques of Michael Chekhov, I have become well versed in the techniques unique to Chekhov and NMCA's brand of pedagogy. From the moment I stepped into the threshold for the first time at NMCA, I felt the spark of passion that would lead me to a world of imagination and creativity I never knew existed. I made it my mission to learn and to teach as much as possible, as well as continue to explore the techniques on my own in different realms of performance. I explored Chekhov's techniques through theatre, music, dance, a cappella, digital art, fine art, and much more. I

wanted to test these tools in every aspect of life so that I could become fully adept with radiating my knowledge and experience to the world. I have found that Chekhov's technique is much more than just an acting technique, but a variety of tools to cultivate healthier and happier human beings. My goals are to: continue to learn, share my knowledge and experience with students as a teacher, mentor, and director. I want to bring my creativity, excitement, and drive to continue to grow and transform the works of Michael Chekhov in alignment with NMCA values. This association alone has yielded inspiration and respect for the art which has taught me to look beyond physical circumstances to realize that there is a larger, psychological world where anything is possible through imagination. "If it isn't fun, it isn't Chekhov."