

**PEER COURSE REVIEWS**

*Click on any review title to automatically scroll to that review.*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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<a href="#">Walt Jones, TH 151 &amp; TH 150 (4/9/2019)</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Laura Jones, TH 150 (3/4/2020)</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Megan Lewis, TH 151 (4/21/21)</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Megan Lewis, TH 450 (10/26/21)</a> .....	11
<a href="#">Megan Lewis, TH 392 (11/3/21)</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Debbie Swann, <i>Spring Awakening</i>, TH 400 (Fall 2023)</a> .....	20

April 9, 2019

NOAH RACEY Spring 2019

TH151 Acting I

TH150 Intro to Performance

Noah's classes were very calming, focusing on meditation and movement warmups. He has a gentle approach to acting and Intro to Performance. The actors are very responsive and I can see how much they respect, trust and admire Noah. He is gentle but firm. His directing has the same qualities and the same results. He is super inclusive and perceptive and actually teaches confidence. I would love to have had Noah as a teacher in my college program. I spoke with him about the only issue: time. He should assign someone in the class to keep track of how long he spends with actors so he doesn't run out of time. I also explained shadowing technique that would keep other students engaged as opposed to witnessing.

Noah is a gold mine. We are lucky to have him.



Walt Jones  
Professor of Directing & Playwriting

March 4, 2020

To: Tenured Theatre Faculty

From: Laura J. Jones, Professor Emerita

RE: Peer Evaluation of Noah Racey

I observed TH 150 Introduction to Performance taught by Professor Racey on Tuesday, March 3 from 3:00-4:40 pm in the Large Acting Lab. I arrived ten minutes early and noted that the students were seated in chairs they had arranged in a tight circle in the center of the room. I introduced myself, took an empty seat, and explained the purpose of my visit. I also took the opportunity to ask them what they liked best about Noah's teaching. Without hesitation, the student seated next to me replied: "His passion for teaching us. He clearly wants each of us to do our best work." Another immediately agreed: "And he's great at recognizing what each of us needs! His feedback is very specific." A third qualified his criticism: "He doesn't sugarcoat."

These essential comments set the tone for the entire session to follow. The only other question I asked of the twelve students concerned their emphases in the program. Ten of the twelve do not consider themselves "performers," yet all were clearly committed to learning the acting process. When Noah arrived, he was very personable, asking the students about their weekend adventures, allowing them to share their individual experiences, from fishing mishaps on the Poudre to purchasing fireworks in Wyoming. As for current events, one student had a new hashtag for the corona virus, but no one mentioned that it was Super Tuesday or whether they had voted. The friendly banter served the purpose of evoking laughter and making everyone comfortable in one another's company.

Then it was down to the business at hand. I learned that each class begins with breathing exercises and meditation. The students knew the drill, sitting up tall with their spines aligned and able to respond to Noah's verbal cues with their eyes closed. They were focused on moving the breath in and out and understood both the physiological and psychological vocabulary used. These exercises were followed by ten minutes of writing in their journals in response to a prompt regarding the differences between action and emotion. Then a discussion of whether actions are controlled by feelings or are feelings evoked by actions taken to confront obstacles to a character's desires. Half of the students raised varying points of view on which comes first, the chicken or the egg. Noah entertained all points of view by comparing and contrasting this familiar question, emphasizing that whereas daily actions in "real life" may be provoked by feelings, the clarity of what an actor does comes from creating characters who take actions to achieve their goals and desires.

The focus of the class then shifted to their monologue works-in-progress. I knew from the syllabus that monologues would be presented and critiqued. I was curious how Noah would handle the challenge of keeping everyone engaged. In my experience, it is difficult in an acting class when one individual is singled out and the rest are asked to passively observe from an auditor's perspective. It is not uncommon for those unchosen to perform on a given day to check out, even nodding off late in the afternoon. I was very impressed that Noah took the following approaches to ensure that all remained involved in the process throughout.

First, the chairs were pushed back and there were routine physical and vocal group warmups. Then the students all began moving in the space while running their monologues. Noah changed up the pace and the pattern, as well as the amount of tension in the body. It became apparent which students were "off book" and which were still struggling to remember the words. Noah continued to walk with them as he side-coached: "Get the words back in your mouth as you're walking tall, open, and lined up... walk around faster, fly through your monologue... when you get to the end of it, stop."

I was particularly fascinated by the next exercise in which the student actors paired off and clasped hands, facing their partner. Noah demonstrated with one student, reciting a Shakespearean monologue as he activated the words by playing "push me/pull you" – connecting each tug-of-war motion to an aggressive vs a regressive action. The students discovered their ability to color the words by alternating active and passive interpretations within their monologues. The partners then switched, and the only drawbacks occurred with those who were not fully memorized, as they were instructed to physicalize either/or but not to come to neutral. Yet, their concentration would be lost when they lost the words. Noah reminded them of the importance of doing their homework in order to get off book asap, because that's when the real work and fun begins.

At this point, Noah began asking for their feedback, noting when a student was able to connect and reincorporate the earlier "chicken or the egg" discussion points. He emphasized that acting is a full-bodied sport, and the purpose of the exercise is that the actor starts to become accountable for the energy they evoke. He stated that he has always been interested in connecting the physicality to the cerebral to get the push and pull, ebb and flow, attack and retreat, pointing out that there is nothing more boring than monochromatic, single, repetitive action in performance. It was only at this point in the class that Noah began to single out pairings to try the exercise again while the others observed and he responded by asking them questions that elicited specific examples of the empowerment they felt by being able to control status and their partner's response.

And finally, the last 40 minutes of the class was devoted to individual monologue showings of the work of four different students. Reflecting the students' comments in response to what they liked best about his teaching, Noah tailored the critiques to the needs of each of the four remarkably spot-on without sugarcoating. For example, the first to volunteer is working on the "erasing all evidence that their son was even there" monologue from *Rabbit Hole*. On the first pass, Noah precisely described the threat of physical violence that filled the



room as a "huge flood" of emotion. Then he began asking the key questions: How do you feel for your wife in general? How are you going to get her to do what you want her to do? Are you going to hit her? The actor, and as importantly, the other student auditors, realized that his explosive "volcano" was overriding the compassion he claimed to feel for the other character. Noah then had the actor try again, coaching him to make a tiny adjustment that made a huge difference. The class was able to see why the second attempt was more effective. A light bulb went off and for the third time, Noah gave him a female partner and instructed him to slow down and focus on the simplicity of the opening lines.

The other performers likewise were guided to zero in on their idiosyncratic behaviors, including the impediment of using an accent and being wary of misplaced emphasis, and the importance of engaging the audience for the top, from "the launch." Noah's earnest, enthusiastic, palatable excitement was infectious with his students' both on and offstage. True, he did not sugarcoat ("I can't make you stop apologizing and breaking...") but he raised awareness that the same energy can be used to connect and share with the audience ("Stay dedicated. Stay into it. Even when calling for line! You have to care!")

And as a teacher Noah does care. The students trust him; and they actively listen. Because they can see, hear, and yes, feel the results of the answers he provides via the questions he asks: What did you come here to do? Who are you talking to? Why are you telling her this? Etc.

Last, but not least, the class had a shape to it. From the stillness of the meditation and breathing that began the period to the use of that simplicity of focus to bring the audience into the character's conflicting emotions in a single monologue from the first word of text...  
I appreciated watching a master teacher in action and feeling.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Laura J. Jones*

**Noah Racey Teaching Observation**

**4/21/21 10am**

TH151 Acting I

Via Zoom

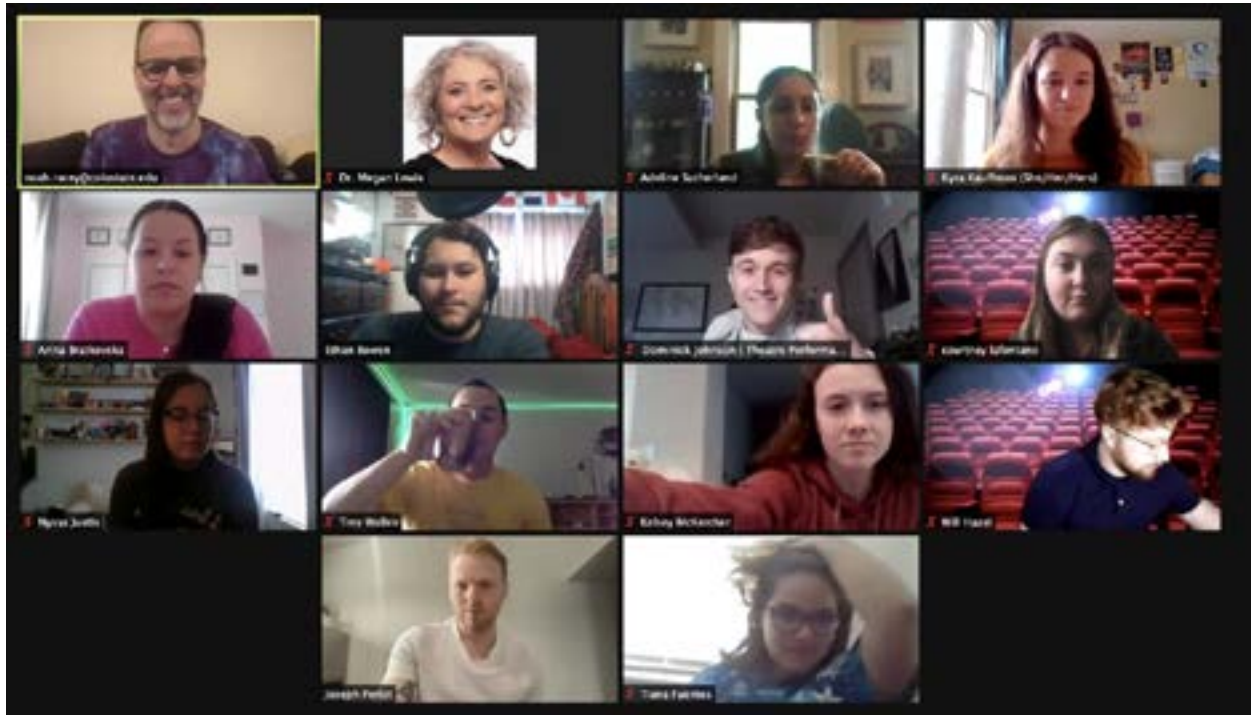
By Dr. Megan Lewis



9:58am

Prof Racey joins Zoom and welcomes students by name as they arrive. Connects with students about the HOPE Project and asks about their summer plans. Discusses how much we miss human connection under this pandemic. He has great rapport with them. Takes attendance as they arrive.

10:03am



Checks in: how is everyone doing? No responses from students.

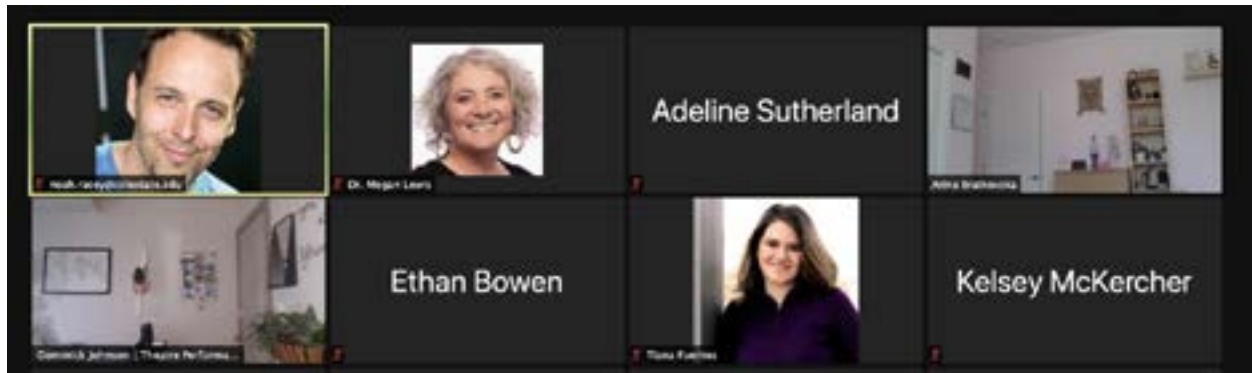
[[Suggestion: ask students to put a comment in the chat – makes it active for them]]

NR discusses voice acting and voiceover as a career.

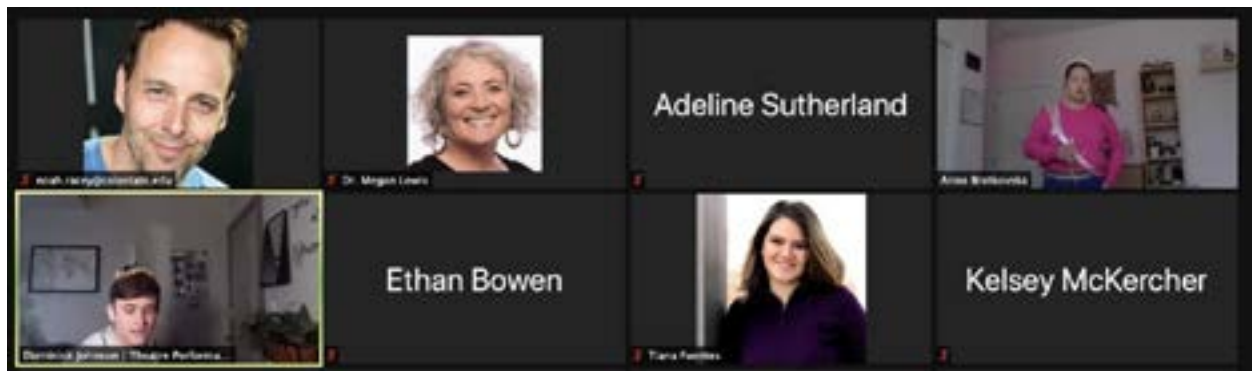
10:06am

[[Suggestion: As you start, set the goals for the day or this for exercise – what are observers looking for? What are performers aiming for?]]

NR asks students to turn off their video except for the two actors doing their scene:



“We begin”



Two students, Dominick and Arina, perform their scene.

10:20 “We End”

NR invites the class back. “Nice work. Way to show up and deliver”

Calls on random students to discuss what is working:

Asks Tiana: “What are they doing right?”

- Actions are clear, energy is good

Ethan, what do you get?

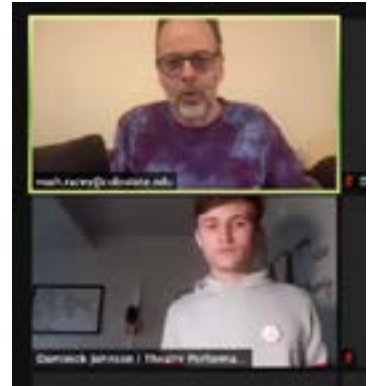
- Diction and articulation are good

Kelsey?

- Volume, energy, clear actions and objectives

Next, NR also discusses ways to improve:

- You have solid building blocks
- Interruptions are still a bit stiff. It will get easier when it's memorized and you own it in the body.
- Look for author's cues (dash = interruption) and )ellipses = your thoughts taper off).
- Offers "tough love" for Dominick: there needs to be a bleeding human need in the room. You have great rhythms and have sardonic humor. But need to find the bleeding need – what is the danger?
- Without it, you leave Arina, your scene partner, hanging.
- Big question for the scene a friend asking his friend who is getting married is "why have you changed?"
- We need the flight and flight, caged animal in the scene, not being in control.



Asks students if they understand the feedback.

Then NR asks students to try the top of the scene one more time.

10:28am

"We begin" again from the top

Gives guidance to students as they start: Enter the room as if you are afraid of what you will say in the other room.

Much stronger performance the second time.

NR: "Awesome! We are cooking with more grease."

Try again: asks D to hold it even closer to the chest.

One more time from the top.

NR: "Let the words puncture her; hold back, make her come to you."  
Student agrees.

NR discusses the "element of winning" that humans in pain have.

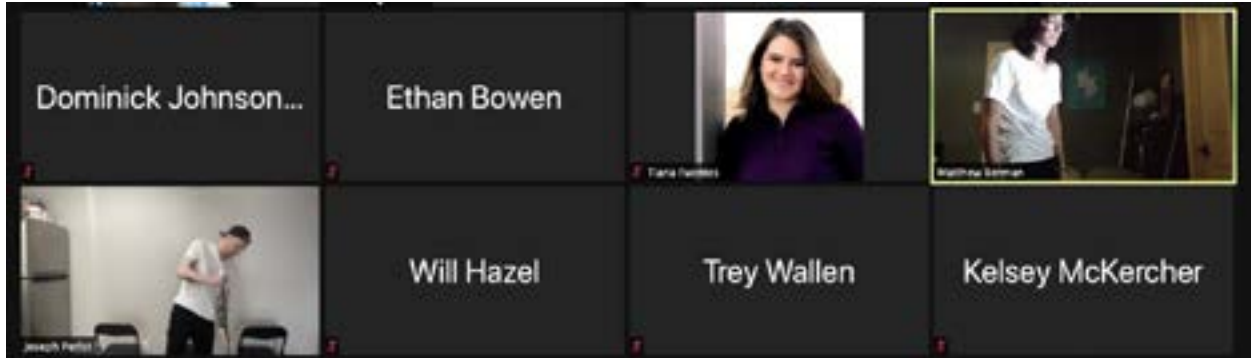
Asks student what the ideal response for his character would be?

[[The focus is on one scene partner, Dominick, with very little feedback for Arina. Be sure to give equal attention to students]]



NR asks class: questions on this?  
Allows no time for students to respond.  
[[Suggestion: count to 10 to give students time to respond]]

10:37  
Next scene: Matthew and Joseph



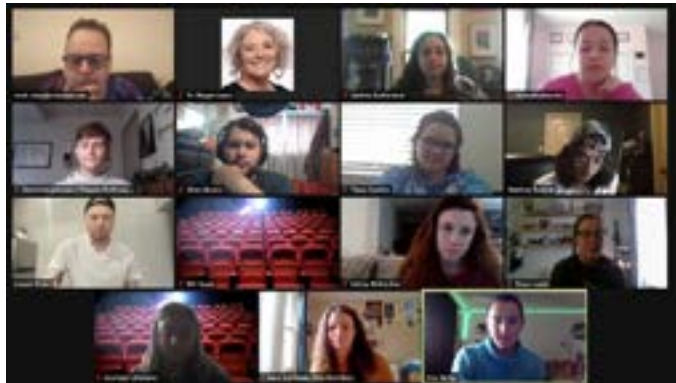
10:44 “We end”

NR: “Excellent, come on back. Nicely done.”

Calls on Patty – what are seeing that’s right?

- Not rushing the awkward silence

NR explains the context of the play – discusses the “Pinter pause” – letting the conflict between people it in silence



Trey?

- Their back stories are clear

NR: Joseph, there are moments when your action could lean forward. What is your objective?  
What do you need?

J: I am asserting authority in a job I hate.

NR: Play the moments when you are in charge. Show M. that you are in charge.

Asks M, what is your objective?

M: Make amends, make up for my mistake of being late.

NR: Are you equals in this relationship? Watch becoming buddies. He is your boss – how do you placate your boss?

Student is struggling with objectives and admits that.

NR affirms that making general choices are weak. Make stronger choices.

NR reminds students to use the Zoom format best: How can you use the distance from the camera for your scene? Looking at or away from the camera? What about letting the pauses last longer?

10:55 Start scene again from the top.

Students demonstrate stronger choices the second time around.

11:01

NR: “Dig it” – it shows some good colors when you show needing something from each other.

Think about pauses: actors want to bring so much to their characters. What we need to do is play the truth and then the audience experiences the emotions.

Overall, Prof. Racey has a great rapport with his students. His feedback is positive, even when he is suggesting improvement for students. He has a clear protocol in place for scene work and feedback, empowering peers to offer review of the scene performers in addition to his comments as their teacher.

See my suggestions in brackets above for small teaching improvements.

**Noah Racey Teaching Observation**

Dr. Megan Lewis

**10/26/21**

Large Acting Lab

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The class is TH450 Professional Actor Preparation, for 7 upper level Performance majors.

2:50pm Prof. Noah Racey has arrived early and is setting up camera equipment. 5 students are there, chatting happily with each other and helping with tech set up. NR has moved two rows of chairs facing a large monitor screen – good way to adapt the space to work for the pedagogy. There is a camera on tripod ready to film.



3:01pm Technical difficulties with camera. Student (Adam) gets up to help.

While we wait, NR asks students to rehearse the paired scenes from last class.

First, asks students to share their actor books – looks over and makes affirming comments about the sides/monologues and scenes they have chosen.

NR tells a story of his Broadway experience – when we went blank on stage. You never know, he reminds students, so always be prepared and have your lines and lyrics handy in your book.

NR gives student (Caleb) comments of resume format – just list show, role, details; without a table; make it 1 page.

3:08pm Camera works!

NR reviews James' book next. Offers clear, practical, direct advice on how to improve. Also advises James on URTA auditions and grad school vs gap year. Reminds students to work with Prof. Patty Goble on music.

Tre asks why we include monologues in the book. NR says it's a great idea to always have the text on hand.

Next, looks at Fantasia's resume. Addresses the font that is distracting.



Points to next student's "really smart idea" – a table of contents! Amplifies the student's good idea. Advises student to have 1 or 2 minutes cut of a scene for cattle call auditions. Also advises student to have two separate resumes for performance and technical work – for different jobs.

Students are engaged and take NR's professional-experience feedback well. They asks very specific questions and he answers each one carefully.

While NR reviews books, other students work in pairs on their scenes.

3:21pm Shifts to on-camera work.

Reminds students working in hallways to "keep it mellow." They affirm verbally.

NR explains framing for self-taping; how to balance the screen in thirds.

NR discusses slating: "Hi my name is X. I'm reading the role of X."

Less is more. Just enter and be yourself. Look at top of camera, not directly in the lens.

Do several takes with different energy.

NR follows Covid mask protocols – as soon as student is done filming, they put masks back on. Everyone else in the room wears masks.

NR shows Tre how to stand behind camera to be in the scene with James. The human relationship will be captured this way.



James and Tre do beautiful scene from *Second Coming*, about two gay men flirting.

NR: "Nice! Really nice vulnerability, James!"

3:29pm NR replays the scene for the class to watch.



NR uses the term “folks” to refer to students instead of “guys” – good inclusive language.

3:38pm Camera not connecting to monitor so NR pivots, and James comes to watch himself on the camera replay.

NR debriefs with James:

Tells him: the 3<sup>rd</sup> slate was upbeat and makes you stand out to me as a casting director who has seen a million auditions today.

They watch the scene. NR: wrap it up with a little more of a bow. Affirms the moment of adjustment in the scene.

NR asks James to reflect on his performance: moments that I can take more of a pause.

NR affirms that distance James has come, “since you were the freshman I met.” James acknowledges how he is “trying” less and just being. NR reminds him of the note he gives regularly: stop acting. Just be.

3:45pm NR thanks Adam for helping with technology.



They set up and do a 2<sup>nd</sup> take of the scene and try to show more of these moments of adjustment and pauses and just being.

NR stops James and directs him to have a much more specific choice to start the scene. J. does it again and it is more specific.

NR: Asks J how it felt?

J: I overthink in places but overall better.

They watch the scene again on the camera.

[[I had to leave after 1 hour – the class continued with other students doing their on-camera scenes]].

Prof. Racey clearly has great rapport with the students. He not only knows them by name, but by their talents and skills and since they have been freshman. He acknowledges how they have grown over time and gives very specific, actionable feedback and direction. He brings a wealth of professional experience to the classroom and shares anecdotes to teach lessons. Thought he did not design this class, he has made it his own and the students seem to appreciate his energy, feedback, and rapport with them very much.

A few pedagogical suggestions:

- Keep developing as a teacher by taking full advantage of the classes offered by TILT. I recommend a universal design/syllabus construction class – and perhaps also a course on active learning.
- Keep getting feedback on teaching through peer reviews and by reviewing syllabi your design with colleagues and the Director of Theatre. We all grow as teachers by learning from each other's best practices.

## Noah Racey Teaching Observation

Dr. Megan Lewis

11/3/21

Room 240

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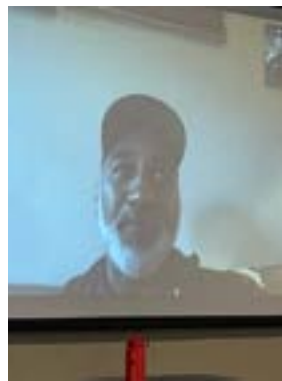
The class is TH392 (TH381 in future) Musical Theatre History I, for 10 Theatre majors in Design and Performance.



2:50pm Prof. Noah Racey has arrived early and has the video feed set up for a guest artist, Norman Lewis, to Zoom in. He is talking animatedly with students, joking about the silly questions they should not ask their guest, telling great stories about his life on Broadway, etc. Great rapport with students.

3:00pm Guest Lewis zooms in. Jokes that he is about to make a grand entrance. Students laugh.

NR tells Lewis: “You are here today because you have first-hand knowledge on *Porgy & Bess*. As a class we watched the interview with Diane Paulus and Suzan-Lori Parks. This is Musical Theatre History. It’s a whole new ballgame. We are looking at this discipline through the lens of how oppression, hypersexualization, and otherizing are part of the discipline. We are asking is *Showboat* still viable? *Porgy & Bess* was written by a couple of white Jewish guys? How do we look at our history and move forward?”



Asks students to ask questions of Norman Lewis--  
The students ask excellent questions, demonstrating how prepared they are to meet Mr. Lewis.

**Adam:** Is a play like *Porgy & Bess* is still relevant? Should we continue doing plays like

that – is it better for progress or not?

**Lewis:** If you don’t remember your history, you will repeat it.

Now is time to write our own stories as people of color.

We have a voice, influence, input.

You can’t erase history – but should also honor the Gershwin brothers for even writing it! Al Jolson wanted to play *Porgy* and they said no – this is about black folk.

**Tre:** How do you play a range: from a god to a poor black man?

**Lewis:** You pull from many references, find the subtext to develop your character. Always find the truth in the character you play, whether a beggar or a god.

**Marin:** We watched the interview with Paulus & Parks, and they said they made the play more intimate. Was it? Any moments stand out for you?

**Lewis:** We tried to make a 3.5 hour long opera more accessible. Suzan-Lori made the recitatives into dialogue so it was more intimate than long opera. We only used what was needed; got it down to 2.5 hours.

**Lauren:** How would you define yourself as an artist? How are you unique from others?

**Lewis:** I love bringing truth to my characters – I’m not unique. It’s the hardest thing to do. Being human. Example: *Captain’s Courageous* Off-Broadway. Learn Gloucester, MA accent. Felt wrong in my spirit. Researched: cooks hired from Caribbean. Used a Trinidadian accent – it brought truth. I’m not unique, just trying to get a job.

**Daphne:** Problematic musicals exist in history, and we acknowledge them and move on. How do we get jobs and handle outdated pieces?

**Lewis:** Find the integrity in yourself. Whatever you can stand for. In *Music Man*, we changed lines b/c of “Me Too” moment. But also left in the line “We will tar and feather you” because it was already a stretch to cast me, a black man, as Music man in Iowa!

**James:** What is the future of theatre: escapism/entertainment or thought/social justice?

**Lewis:** Change is moving towards social justice. There are currently 7 black shows on Broadway! It’s also about allyship – learn more about POC. Make better world of understanding.

**Noah:** Do we always need universality? To grab hearts?

**Lewis:** *Chicken & Biscuits* has been compared to Tyler Perry in reviews. Stereotypes exist in it, but there is also more, true human stories. Neil Simon as family stories but they are relatable.

**Caleb:** What was it like being first African American to play Javier in *Les Miserables* and the lead in *Phantom of the Opera*?

**Lewis:** I got really lucky! I was just trying to get a job. But now as “the first” – people feel like they can too. I opened the door. People see themselves represented and can dream bigger than they used to.

**Kelby:** What was your most vocally challenging role? Acting challenge?

**Lewis:** Ya’ll are smart people. Ask great questions!

Vocally: *Phantom* b/c it is usually sung by a tenor and I’m a baritone. Music is lush – my voice was very exposed. Had to care for my voice – practiced vocal silence all week to be able to do it. Acting challenge: *Porgy* b/c I was up against “the Meryl Street of Broadway, Audra McDonald!” But it was fun!

**Kyle:** As actor, how do you take care of your health, physical and mental?

**Lewis:** Mental and spiritual health. Strong spirituality – I can always rely on myself and my voice. Whatever you believe in, just find it. I try and eat well – 80% vegetarian. Need to exercise more, but I walk a lot living in NYC. Keep your mind fit – crossword puzzles.



I take neurotropics for memory.

**Noah:** Thank you for 20 of your very precious minutes, Norm. Noah sings his friend's praises and thanks him with love for coming to class.

**Lewis:** [Tells students] You are being taught by one of the best ever. I don't know if you've ever seen him perform, but he is a-maz-ing!

After the Zoom call ends, students joke about all the other famous people they'd like Noah to bring in as guests 😊

Noah returns to discussion of *Porgy & Bess* – asks for student responses.

**Lauren:** Audra's voice is vocally incredible.

**Noah:** Norm and Audra are at the top of their game.

**Eric:** Underscoring and vocals, you could feel the passion and the meaning.

Prof. Racey educates students about who all these people are, what their artistry is about.

Brings his expertise into the room.

Musical Theatre is powerful because it is the vocality, the action, the performance. It's not just singing a "standard."

**Tre:** We have to hold multiple truths – truth of African American experience. And it was written by two Jewish guys.

**Noah:** Yes, it's a deep dive into culture.

**Adam:** But it was written with a respectful eye. Making visible culture that was otherwise invisible.

**Megan:** Remember these two white men came from a marginalized group themselves. Remember how Jews have been marginalized in history. There's a long history of black and Jewish collaboration. And whiteness is not a monolith. The Gershwins wrote as men who understood being erased or derided in culture.

Prof. Racey discusses who and how we have otherized people across history. Once we told stories using extreme binaries--with a goodie and a baddie. Today that rings flat. We cannot dehumanize to tell a story anymore. Addresses the tricky, sticky subjects of race and racism. Move beyond skin color as marker of meaning. Gershwins humanized Crown, bringing humanity to the villain.

**Caleb:** {very impassioned} Think about the different approaches of Al Jolson vs the Gershwins. We have to question history!

**James:** Shares example of StarKid's *Twisted – Aladdin* from Jafar's POV

Prof. Racey discusses deconstruction of old, outdated texts. Gives example of *Wicked*, which takes an old myth and radically changes the narrative. Also gives example of “Over There” by George M. Cohan – there is no “over there” anymore. So far away that we just bomb it. We can’t act out unilaterally and not impact ourselves. Our art needs to be “Yes, me too” and “I understand you,” not dehumanizing to tell the story.

Noah ends with gratitude to his students: “Thank you for helping me through this. Learning how to talk about race and racism and the problematic legacies of our art form. What have we been locked in, protected, out of fear of not having any words to talk about it.”

Students are so passionate! They use expletives to emphasize how much they enjoy this class – this topic, discussing these vital, relevant topics.

Marin passionately talks about the trend of dusting off old “classics.” Gives example of *Phantom*, that changed blocking to give Christine more agency. Change IS possible!

“Money does weird stuff to people,” says Racey. If it’s a huge hit, producers want to keep it fixed, down to exact finger movements, in order to guarantee profits. “Nothing moves money, and hype, and popularity like Broadway does. It’s where things go to explode!” Musical Theatre has a bad rep for bad high school musical theatre productions and inexperienced young performers. But at the professional level, with Audra and Norm, it is a stellar, hardcore art form!

Racey reflects very honestly about his own privileged position as a white artist. “In 30 years in NYC and on Broadway,” he says, “I knew the image producers had in their head was me. I floated on it. Until my brothers of color taught me differently.”

**Megan:** Prof Racey, we are nurturing a generation of mover-and-shaker, dissenting students. We are doing our job!

**Racey:** Because of survival mentality – for a job, instead of starving, we would make fun of anyone and everyone. Audience response is addictive – encourages the othering by applause and laughter. It is flawed. We must acknowledge it.

Prof. Racey is so passionate about this topic, which he lives and breathes as an artist! He not only shares his expertise with students, who take up the knowledge with gusto, but he also brings in stellar guest artists (and artists of color!) to share their wisdom with our majors. He has excellent rapport with the students, gives them ample time to discuss, ask questions, and reflect. He is doing vital Justice/Equity/Diversity/Inclusion work in his classroom, using his own privilege to expand the canon and ask important questions about our art form. This makes him



a valuable asset to CSU's future, as we engage in JEDI work as a campus. Our majors are so lucky to have such a passionate, experienced, well-connected, smart, and empathetic teacher as Prof. Racey.

A few pedagogical suggestions:

- Your passion sometimes runs a bit hot and fast. Consider slowing down your delivery just a bit so each concept gets fully explored.
- Try some Active Learning strategies for Discussions such as 1 minute paper, think/pair/share etc. These techniques help focus students' responses and gives slower processors the time to formulate their questions.

## Assessment of Noah Racey – Fall 2023

*Spring Awakening*

Last fall I had the unique opportunity to perform as Adult Woman in the CSU fall musical production of *Spring Awakening*. Acting alongside my students was such a pleasure, but more valuable was being able to work and create art with my colleague, Noah Racey.

Coming from the professional theatre world in NYC and other national LORT theaters, Noah has always been a breath of fresh air in our department. His lived experience that he readily shares with all of us is invaluable, and he provides a crucial perspective to our students that they cannot get anywhere else. Understandably, this shift has not been easy. Switching from the demands of professional acting to teaching at a university has been intense for Noah. He has worked very hard in the past few years to adjust to the unique demands of academia and collegiate theatre. What is the most striking about Noah, though, is how open he is to learning and growing in this new field, how attentive he is as a director, and how he genuinely wants to do right by his students. I was honored to be able to observe this first-hand in the rehearsal room last fall.

Noah is an incredibly attentive director. He shows up early and stays late, making sure that everyone is on the same page before moving on. He has an intense focus in the rehearsal room that might seem intimidating to novice student-actors. I must admit I have experienced this firsthand. Noah will ask you a question and not let you get away with “I don’t know” or any other wishy-washy answer. He will demand that you figure it out, in the moment, with him probing and coaching if necessary. He will make you try it again and again and again, adjusting fine details.

For example, I had previously played the role of Adult Woman in another local theatre company several years ago. In that production, my character served as comedic relief and often times was exaggerated to encourage laughter. Noah’s vision for the character was in direct opposition to that. Honestly, it was a difficult adjustment for me and required a lot of effort and coaching on his part. He was patient but blunt when I fell back into old habits. I so appreciated his attentiveness to detail and clarity in vision. His focus demands your focus, and rehearsals are intensely productive as a result. If I resisted, he held fast, sure of his vision. What I realized through the rehearsal process was that his interpretation more clearly aligned with the themes of the play and better served the story we were telling. He challenged me to trust him, and in the end, I think the show was more moving and powerful because of it.

The stress of an 8-week rehearsal period leading up to two weekends of performances can take its toll on anyone. As students, crew members, directors and designers get worn down, tempers and emotions can flare. One thing I have always appreciated about Noah is his willingness to apologize and acknowledge mistakes. I heard him ask for leniency and forgiveness several times throughout the rehearsal period, even when I thought apologies were not necessary. But Noah errs on the side of kindness, acknowledging his flaws, his short-comings, and his best intentions openly and honestly, making it easier for everyone on the team to do the same. Noah manages to balance high standards and professionalism with vulnerability and humility, making him a truly special director that I enjoyed working with immensely.



One of my favorite things about Noah's directing style with students was how he celebrates their accomplishments, no matter how small. There was a cast member who was the only first-year CSU student in the ensemble. Throughout rehearsals, this person struggled with confidence, frequently mumbling or swallowing lines rather than delivering them with the energy and volume required for the character. Noah was so patient and continued encouraging him. I heard him say things like, "Believe that you deserve the audience's focus and attention, because *you do!* Speak up! Go for it!" I would bet it was frustrating watching this student struggle and continuously not take the direction. Then, weeks later during a dress rehearsal, that same student delivered his line, loudly and with confidence. Cheers and applause erupted from the audience. It was Noah, cheering his student on, acknowledging his accomplishment, and celebrating the victory over self-doubt. I watched that student come offstage beaming. It was a beautiful moment and only one example of many.

Ultimately the work speaks for itself. The cast, crew, and department were exceptionally proud of the production of *Spring Awakening*. Students frequently told me how proud they were to be a part of the production and how they believed that the hard work they had put in was truly paying off. Noah had presented everyone with a clear vision, that also came with unique challenges, and it was inspiring to see the young people in our department rise to meet them. The level of quality in our musicals has so drastically improved in Noah's time at CSU, and I know it can only continue on that trajectory now that the musical theatre concentration has officially launched.