Zachary Campion
Teaching Philosophy

        A well prepared voice, speech, and dialect coach's toolbox includes an International Phonetic Alphabet chart, a yoga mat, a complete works of William Shakespeare, a recording device, a model of the larynx, and stretchy pants (so as not to restrict breathing). A great coach and teacher must also possess a healthy supply of patience, a razor-sharp ear for sound, an attuned sympathetic nervous system, and an uncanny ability to draw, coax, and invite their student's authentic voices into the room both literally and figuratively. Over the last six plus years of teaching actors in both university and conservatory settings, I have developed several theories and practices that I feel are necessary to meet the demands of the modern vocal performer.

        Safe(r) Space, as defined by me, is one where the student has complete autonomy over their experience including the option to not participate at all. How could I possibly support a student's personal development by forcing them to do what I say- how would that student ever develop the skills to own their experience if it is being imposed upon them? Instead, I focus on creating space that is physically safe, yet challenges students to discover and breathe through discomfort as the vehicle for growth. It is necessary to earnestly embrace my student's plurality of experiences both in the classroom and beyond. This is especially important when investigating the ethnographies of language and culture through dialect work with a diverse group or adapting the physical elements of vocal work to students with different abilities.

        Skepticism is healthy! I put a great deal of effort into presenting students with theories and techniques of voice and speech that have basis in fact or observable phenomenon. It is not enough to use terms like "breath support" or "grounding" if we don't establish the muscles involved and develop a vocabulary to describe it. Students are encouraged to respectfully question what they are being taught, and can abandon ineffective strategies after a thorough examination — including strategies that I teach.

        Technology is the language of this generation. Our ability to digitally record and analyze sound as well as visualize the muscular system through interactive 3D models helps to bridge the gap between imagination and experience. By the same token, the internet of everything puts an infinite amount of information at our fingertips and part of my role is to assist students in developing processes for curating that information into useable data as vocal performers or dialect users.

        Technique is critical to discovery. Fitzmaurice Voicework® and Knight-Thompson Speechwork are the pedagogical foundation of my teaching though classes frequently explore exercises and ideas from Patsy Rodenberg, Kristin Linklater, Arthur Lessac, and Janet Rodgers. As I pursue my own training goals, a great deal of effort is put into integrating these new perspectives into my classroom. By cultivating daily practices and repeatable exercises, students develop greater physical awareness and become sensitized to the subtleties of their vocal and articulatory instruments. The methods I have mentioned provide a clear path for students to master the skills they will need to thrive as performers and voice users alike.

        Performance is secondary to process, until it isn't. There must come a time in any voice student's process when they step up and apply the skills they have learned to the stresses and exultations of performance. I am deeply interested in the relationship between performer and audience, and how the

voice, breath, and presence of a performer impact an audience and vice versa. A student who is never called upon to apply their learning in performance is a student who never lives the context for which virtually every voice methodology was developed. To this end, every class includes an element of performance either as a culmination of the class, or built into the fabric of the exercises they practice.

Even with all the tools of the trade, unlocking a student's full vocal and physical potential can be a challenging process.   I demand a great deal of my students and in return they earn a fierce supporter and advocate for their development as artists. I am no guru or gatekeeper and pay close attention to training actors who are self-sufficient and empowered to take the risks that are necessary to grow. My aim in all of this is to create a more empathetic and connected community of artists that can express themselves and support one another.