

# Jonathan Wentz, (BFA, MFA, Member IATSE USA Local 829)

## Education:

University of North Carolina Greensboro, CVPA, MFA in Drama; Design & Production/Scenography  
Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, Graduate Studies in Theatre Design & Production  
Rochester Institute of Technology, CFFA, BFA in Graphic Design

## Teaching Experience:

UNC Greensboro, CVPA, Teacher of Record (Scene Design, 1 semester)  
UNC Greensboro, CVPA, Graduate TA (Weddings and Ritual Ceremony Design, 2 semesters)  
New Jersey City University, Guest lecturer in Stagecraft (1/2 semester, during production visit)  
Shakespeare Theatre of NJ, Summer Professional Training Program (3 Master classes, 2 summers)  
NJ STAGES guest artist series at NJPAC (2 mask-making/character/performance workshops)  
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Guest lecturer in Scenic Design (during production visit)  
Mt. Saint Dominic Academy, Director of Theatre Arts Program (5 productions, 4 years)  
Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts, Graduate TA (Intro to Theatre Design, 1 semester)  
Caldwell University, Adjunct Instructor in Graphic Design (5 design courses, 2 each/5 semesters)

## Teaching Philosophy

---

*“Art is an experimental station in which we try out living.” —John Cage*

Over the course of my professional career I have pursued a variety of vocations, each evolving through experiences, opportunities and directions of exploration. I believe that our working lives are an extension of what and how we have learned. Our ability to create, expand, adapt and succeed are the direct result of several core principles, and each trajectory is unique.

My earliest teaching approach to student learning was to lead by example as it related to my own experience through project-based design work. As my career has grown to encompass a variety of disciplines, my emphasis has expanded to a “360-degree learning” pedagogy that considers the “whole artist.”

As a teacher, I will help students build a strong “toolbox” of practical and conceptual skills that will make them working artists of the highest caliber with the greatest potential to impact their community. I will utilize the following building blocks and learning strategies for both academic- and studio-based courses:

- Present Curriculum-Based Instruction. In order to identify, understand and recall subject matter, my role as an instructor is to create syllabi that students can easily follow and refer to throughout the course. Session outlines aid in the structure of coursework and the summarization of material, while allowing the flexibility of the group to explore. Successful student learning relies on the solid understanding of facts (content), the determination of methodology (approach), and the identification of ideas (concept). In order to clarify material and assessment expectations, I will provide a grading rubric that deconstructs the components of evaluation, eliminating the mystery of the student outcome.
- Impart Diversity in Content, Approach and Styles. Sharing knowledge and facilitating understanding requires a teacher to accommodate varied learning styles. I understand my students come with broad cultural and experiential histories and a range of skills sets. I will help students tap into their prior knowledge, test it against what is presented in class, and use that knowledge as a foundation to create and expand their thinking. “360-degree learning” includes reading, writing, individual and collaborative learning opportunities, oral/visual presentation skills, and practical, hands-on project work. I value the diversity of each student’s unique perspectives—both individual and cultural. I will create an environment that is inclusive, tolerant and open to new ideas, seeking to give each student a voice in the classroom.

- Give Accessibility and Demonstrate Empathy in Learning. My “360-degree learning” pedagogy has been strongly influenced by my own mentors, and my own responses to successful teaching practices. Learning requires deep understanding that can only come when students internalize and actively apply knowledge in creative and meaningful ways. I seek to add value to every teaching moment, so that students will be able to apply the course material in their own lives and in what they experience in their everyday world. Ultimately, knowledge is only useful if it empowers students to articulate ideas and process concepts in ways that are meaningful to them. My own successful communication is dependent upon my concern and compassion for my students.
- Spark and Encourage Creative Experimentation. “360-degree learning” begins with a teacher who can inspire, but students need to be actively engaged in the learning process to be successful. In an effort to give students greater ownership of the knowledge they encounter, I use cooperative and active learning strategies. Students will critique their own work as well as that of their peers. We will use all our resources and senses to become creative and thoughtful artists.
- To Provide a Strong Foundation for Lifelong Learning. Each semester, I will assess my own teaching methods to give students practical opportunities to excel. Structured learning should not and cannot be about processing data just to regurgitate it back and move on to the next task or course. To achieve what Joseph Campbell called, “Finding your bliss,” takes time, care and hard work. Students must ultimately understand that the most important outcome of learning is what is retained and can be accessed to reflect upon in the future. It would be arrogant to think that each course concept could be equally valued, understood and applied, but there is value in the application of kernels of knowledge. If students have a greater understanding of ideas, materials and styles, and can effectively and intelligently communicate their life’s work while actively engaged in a creative process, then I have succeeded in “360-degree learning.”

Finally, as a teacher I can create a million beginnings. The impact of creativity in my work has made my life richer and more beautiful. It has also been a constant source of opportunities to meet people, devise art, share ideas and help others. Teaching students helps me to savor the endless possibilities of creation, and to inspire a new generation of creators to have a diverse and confident voice in the world.