

Reflections on Teaching Everyone Else's Students

Joe Deer, Wright State University - Main Campus

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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:06,020

Joe is Professor of Musical Theater in the Department of Theater, Dance, and Motion Pictures,

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00:00:06,020 --> 00:00:12,719

head of the Musical Theater Initiative and winner of the 2013 Wright State

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00:00:12,719 --> 00:00:18,550

Trustees Award for Faculty Excellence. His accomplishments include creating and

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00:00:18,550 --> 00:00:23,990

managing the celebrated musical theater program, involvement with students and

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00:00:24,000 --> 00:00:29,390

audiences of all ages through the Muse Machine, Human Race, and Victoria Theater,

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00:00:29,390 --> 00:00:34,900

serving as founding president of the National Musical Theater Educators

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00:00:34,920 --> 00:00:40,399

Alliance, writing books and articles on teaching and performing musical theater,

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00:00:40,399 --> 00:00:45,590

serving as a guest director, choreographer, and master teacher, and

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00:00:45,590 --> 00:00:54,520

performing on Broadway. His talk is called reactions on teaching everyone else's students. Joe.

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00:00:54,520 --> 00:00:58,200

Alright great so thank you so much for having me here.

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00:00:58,200 --> 00:01:04,500

Thanks to my colleagues for coming. So yes, I was lucky to be the recipient of two semesters of

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00:01:04,500 --> 00:01:12,010

Professional Development Leave in the 2013-14 academic year and that's a pretty rare

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00:01:12,010 --> 00:01:16,790

gift and I have to say I looked at it as though it was probably the last

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00:01:16,790 --> 00:01:20,580

professional development leave I'll ever have in my career until I retire.

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00:01:20,580 --> 00:01:31,440

So I thought I should make the most of it. I wanted to.. So I'll talk a lot.. the Dean has asked me to sort of share a little about what I did during that time.

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00:01:31,440 --> 00:01:36,280

So I'll talk about that, but I'll say that I looked at it as an

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00:01:36,290 --> 00:01:41,680

opportunity to do things I haven't done otherwise or to put myself in

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00:01:41,680 --> 00:01:44,450

circumstance that's different than the one that I have here at Wright State

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00:01:44,450 --> 00:01:49,810

University. As an eighteen-year veteran of this of this university and in my

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00:01:49,810 --> 00:01:54,909

department and I know for all of you who are longstanding teachers as well. We're

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00:01:54,909 --> 00:02:01,149

used to being in a fairly stable environment. We have fairly steady

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00:02:01,149 --> 00:02:05,700

teaching schedule frequently. Often we'll go year after year teaching many of

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00:02:05,700 --> 00:02:07,170

the same courses if not exactly

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00:02:07,170 --> 00:02:12,330

the same courses. Certainly to new students and for those of us who work in

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00:02:12,330 --> 00:02:16,260

the performing arts of course there's new material always coming in. But we're

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00:02:16,260 --> 00:02:22,209

often in a very stable situation and I thought I wanted to put myself in a much

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00:02:22,209 --> 00:02:27,610

less stable circumstance or at least put myself outside of my comfort zone. So

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00:02:27,610 --> 00:02:32,660

that's a big part of what I did. My work during that year off really fell into

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00:02:32,660 --> 00:02:37,160

five areas. One is created scholarship which for me is directing and

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00:02:37,160 --> 00:02:42,670

choreographing. The other is in publication, meaning writing books and

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00:02:42,670 --> 00:02:46,360

articles and all the attendant stuff that goes with that.

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00:02:46,360 --> 00:02:51,750

Doing workshops and working as a consultant with organizations all over,

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00:02:51,750 --> 00:02:57,560

outside of Wright State University and
around the world lately. I was lucky

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00:02:57,560 --> 00:03:01,489

enough to be invited to London to the
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

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00:03:01,489 --> 00:03:06,810

to direct and choreograph the capstone
production for the Master of Arts in

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00:03:06,810 --> 00:03:13,489

musical theater program there and then
also I became the director of the

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00:03:13,489 --> 00:03:17,680

Musical Theater Initiative right at the
time where that really became a reality,

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00:03:17,680 --> 00:03:24,720

right at the time that my sabbatical
began or professional development leave. Let me use the right term.

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00:03:24,720 --> 00:03:27,859

So I worked on those five things during
that time and I'll talk a little bit

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00:03:27,859 --> 00:03:33,209

about what was involved in that. I
directed I'm just gonna... I want to skip

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00:03:33,209 --> 00:03:38,450

through some of the minutiae of this and
kind of get to the heart of it.

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00:03:38,450 --> 00:03:42,920

I directed six productions during
that year:

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00:03:42,920 --> 00:03:47,870

Avenue Q for the Human Race Theatre
Company, Seussical for the Muse Machine

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00:03:47,870 --> 00:03:53,430
-and I'll talk a bit about Muse machine in a
moment, It's a Wonderful Life, the live radio

45
00:03:53,430 --> 00:03:56,470
show, which was an incredible amount of
fun for the Victory Theater

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00:03:56,470 --> 00:04:02,359
Association's Broadway series. Then I went
to London and directed and choreographed

47
00:04:02,359 --> 00:04:08,459
the Baker's Wife, went to West Virginia
and did the Fantastics and finally ended

48
00:04:08,459 --> 00:04:14,470
up coming back to Dayton to be in for
the first time, to end up on stage as

49
00:04:14,470 --> 00:04:15,770
an actor in

50
00:04:15,770 --> 00:04:22,550
a workshop of a new musical called
Molly Sweeney, which was... if you want to

51
00:04:22,550 --> 00:04:26,320
talk about stepping out of your comfort
zone, that was pretty much terrifying to

52
00:04:26,320 --> 00:04:31,820
go back on stage again after about
twenty years. So I'm glad I did that.

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00:04:31,820 --> 00:04:41,480
I choreograph three of those productions. I
went out and did 77 workshops master

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00:04:41,490 --> 00:04:46,560
classes or presentations for twenty
different groups. So I'll tell you

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00:04:46,560 --> 00:04:49,140

sitting and doing the math on that this weekend

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00:04:49,140 --> 00:04:53,360

made me tired to look at that schedule. So I'm glad that part of the year is over

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00:04:53,360 --> 00:05:00,000

and I published a book, Directing in Musical Theater: An Essential Guide and

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00:05:00,000 --> 00:05:04,070

created the website content that goes with that. For any of you who are

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00:05:04,070 --> 00:05:11,270

publishers of textbooks or considering writing textbooks, I invite you to really good at

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00:05:11,270 --> 00:05:17,750

creating web content, because that's become as big a part of the job as

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00:05:17,750 --> 00:05:24,600

writing the book in essence and I have another book in Press a revision of or a

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00:05:24,600 --> 00:05:28,520

second edition of my first book, Acting and Musical Theater that I wrote with

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00:05:28,520 --> 00:05:33,990

Rocco Dal Vara. So that's in the process of being... We're revising it now and

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00:05:33,990 --> 00:05:39,430

expanding it and so forth and I am now published in Korea and Portugal, so.

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00:05:39,430 --> 00:05:44,810

That book has been translated into other... I

have seen the cover of the Portuguese

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00:05:44,810 --> 00:05:50,750

edition and it looks lovely. I don't speak Portuguese, so I have yet to get a copy

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00:05:50,750 --> 00:05:54,370

of that and I have no idea what the Korean edition looks like that I want to

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00:05:54,370 --> 00:06:01,530

copy of that as well. But the title of this is reflections on teaching everyone else

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00:06:01,530 --> 00:06:06,160

students and that really is the heart of what I did for the year. I loved the

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00:06:06,160 --> 00:06:09,470

experience of working with the Human Race Theater Company which is an

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00:06:09,470 --> 00:06:12,910

artistic home for me and a place that I get to work with some terrific people,

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00:06:12,910 --> 00:06:18,640

often graduates of our programs and occasionally current students and that

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00:06:18,640 --> 00:06:22,529

was the case with both Avenue Q and It's A Wonderful Life.

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00:06:22,529 --> 00:06:30,219

I had former students, several former students in Avenue Q and a handful of both

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00:06:30,219 --> 00:06:33,799

former and current students in It's A Wonderful Life. So that was that was a

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00:06:33,799 --> 00:06:39,589

great pleasure. But for the majority of the time I was away from here. I worked

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00:06:39,589 --> 00:06:45,109

with everyone else's students and everyone else's students means this. So I

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00:06:45,109 --> 00:06:48,589

said I did 77 workshops and masterclasses and so forth,

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00:06:48,589 --> 00:06:54,409

21 of those were in Dayton here working for - the Muse Machine contracted

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00:06:54,409 --> 00:06:58,959

me to do a series of workshops called So You Think You Can't Dance, which is not a

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00:06:58,959 --> 00:07:02,689

title unnecessarily chosen, but that's what they thought was gonna help book

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00:07:02,689 --> 00:07:08,079

the workshop, so we did it and I did that with Lula Elsey, who was the

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00:07:08,079 --> 00:07:11,469

choreographer for a lot of the Muse Machine shows she's an award-winning

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00:07:11,469 --> 00:07:16,219

modern and modern dance choreographer, but primarily an educator from New Orleans.

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00:07:16,219 --> 00:07:21,929

And we went to 21 different schools throughout Dayton. Everything - these were

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00:07:21,929 --> 00:07:27,669

middle and high schools and this was everything from the most inner city

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00:07:27,669 --> 00:07:32,479

school like Ponitz Career Center
to schools that are pretty much

88
00:07:32,479 --> 00:07:38,459
rural to suburban schools to private
schools and parochial schools, every kind

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00:07:38,459 --> 00:07:42,769
of school in the Dayton area and thought
that there was really only one school I

90
00:07:42,769 --> 00:07:48,509
went to where the students were, had
professed an interest in doing theater

91
00:07:48,509 --> 00:07:54,849
or dance or music as their primary goal
in college. That's at Stivers School for

92
00:07:54,849 --> 00:07:58,669
the Arts. Every other student was there
exclusively for the enrichment

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00:07:58,669 --> 00:08:04,449
experience and it's an interesting thing
to walk into a... that's the opposite of our students.

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00:08:04,449 --> 00:08:08,919
The students that we teach at Wright
State, that I teach dominantly are students who've

95
00:08:08,919 --> 00:08:14,139
come here, often fought very hard to get
into the program from all over the

96
00:08:14,139 --> 00:08:19,760
country. We will have seen about
500 students this year audition

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00:08:19,760 --> 00:08:25,600
for about 24 positions in the acting and
musical theater BFAs. I worked with the

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00:08:25,600 --> 00:08:30,270
other kind of student, the kind of
student who is either not been exposed

99
00:08:30,270 --> 00:08:33,770
to the Performing Arts, never been
exposed to dance,

100
00:08:33,770 --> 00:08:39,890
probably has been encumbered by a lot of
insecurities and peer pressure and all

101
00:08:39,890 --> 00:08:43,370
the garbage that are high school
students get heaped on them and middle

102
00:08:43,370 --> 00:08:47,120
school, although the middle school students tend to be a little bit freer, but the

103
00:08:47,120 --> 00:08:51,930
big thing I had to do was walk into a,
sometimes a gymnasium full of 400

104
00:08:51,930 --> 00:08:59,140
students and get them - yeah it was.. we would do two a day. So in the morning I might have

105
00:08:59,140 --> 00:09:04,250
twenty-five students, very lovely well
behaved little Catholic school, middle

106
00:09:04,250 --> 00:09:08,910
school students and then in the
afternoon walk into a gymnasium where

107
00:09:08,910 --> 00:09:14,730
there were 400 students and that
takes a little bit of work to get them

108
00:09:14,730 --> 00:09:19,260
focused on on your side. But the thing
that I discovered about those students

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00:09:19,260 --> 00:09:24,570

is two factors profoundly impacted what kind of experience they had in the

110
00:09:24,570 --> 00:09:28,610
workshop. It was a fun workshop, there was nothing formal about it. The whole

111
00:09:28,610 --> 00:09:33,350
intention was to get up, get dancing, express yourself, learn a small piece of

112
00:09:33,350 --> 00:09:36,530
choreography. So they had a lot of freedom and then they had some

113
00:09:36,530 --> 00:09:43,990
choreography they needed to master and the two things are profoundly influenced

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00:09:43,990 --> 00:09:50,080
that were, really that the most important thing was what was the culture

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00:09:50,080 --> 00:09:56,350
of the school as defined by the principal and the teachers. And I got so

116
00:09:56,350 --> 00:10:01,140
that I could walk into a school and by meeting the people in the office, we knew

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00:10:01,140 --> 00:10:05,180
what the experience was gonna be like. Not that we were, we want biased toward

118
00:10:05,180 --> 00:10:10,190
presuming one thing or another, but we could see very clearly that was there a

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00:10:10,190 --> 00:10:13,520
lightness about the experience of education, was there a kind of the

120
00:10:13,520 --> 00:10:18,480
joyous atmosphere in the school or

was it a beleaguered, burdened

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00:10:18,480 --> 00:10:23,260

experience. And I can tell you that students
pick up on that culture immediately

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00:10:23,260 --> 00:10:27,200

and when we walked into the schools
where there was a sense of play involved,

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00:10:27,200 --> 00:10:34,720

the principal, the teachers, the security
guard on campus would come in and do the

124

00:10:34,720 --> 00:10:41,190

workshop with the students and when that
was the case, those students went, I mean

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00:10:41,190 --> 00:10:45,810

they were just so free and so engaged
and in other schools, we would go in the

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00:10:45,810 --> 00:10:49,360

teachers would drop off the students and
leave them like they were leaving them

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00:10:49,360 --> 00:10:53,110

at a daycare center and then they would
go off and probably do things they

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00:10:53,110 --> 00:10:57,290

absolutely needed to do and needed the time to do, but there

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00:10:57,290 --> 00:11:00,700

was a profound difference in the schools
and it was not tied to the economic

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00:11:00,700 --> 00:11:05,890

support that the school had. Not
necessarily, on some occasions was, but it

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00:11:05,890 --> 00:11:11,440

was not necessarily at all that case. So

that was an interesting experience, a very

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00:11:11,440 --> 00:11:16,820

interesting experience. What I discovered
in that process was not only

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00:11:16,820 --> 00:11:21,340

does that impact how the students get
their education or experience the arts,

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00:11:21,340 --> 00:11:30,110

but that all of those students wanted an
invitation to be free in their work, to

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00:11:30,110 --> 00:11:35,900

have some outside the box free
expression. What we think of as kids

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00:11:35,900 --> 00:11:40,540

wanting to do, is often the
last thing that they get to do in an

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00:11:40,540 --> 00:11:44,530

educational environment. They're often... I
could see the burden of the

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00:11:44,530 --> 00:11:49,340

testing, I could see the burden of not
having free time. I'll tell you, we went to a

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00:11:49,340 --> 00:11:54,810

school up in Huber Heights. It was a brand
new middle school and an absolutely - well

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00:11:54,810 --> 00:11:55,970

middle and high school -

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00:11:55,970 --> 00:12:01,760

gorgeous facility and they had about a
third of the class rooms locked, because

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00:12:01,760 --> 00:12:07,360

though the school was built, they had not passed a levy to pay for teachers. So we had

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00:12:07,360 --> 00:12:11,520

students - we are working in a gymnasium
and we had students who were only in PE

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00:12:11,520 --> 00:12:16,460

one semester a year, because they
couldn't afford teachers to put them in

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00:12:16,460 --> 00:12:21,190

there. So they had facilities, they had
the students, but they didn't have the

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00:12:21,190 --> 00:12:25,540

teacher to do it. So this is what our students are encountering.

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00:12:25,540 --> 00:12:31,580

So the last thing that they had room for,
that they had financial support for was arts education

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00:12:31,580 --> 00:12:35,420

and that was the thing that was siphoned
away and that was very disappointing to

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00:12:35,430 --> 00:12:41,010

experience. I did a lot of workshops
around the country at performing arts

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00:12:41,010 --> 00:12:44,280

high schools. A lot of that was
recruitment efforts try to bring

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00:12:44,280 --> 00:12:50,330

students to our program, so the acting
and musical theater programs and those

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00:12:50,330 --> 00:12:53,530

students tend to be very focused and
they're more like the kind of students

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00:12:53,530 --> 00:12:58,690

that I encountered, these things very
focused conservatory oriented students

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00:12:58,690 --> 00:13:03,090

and that was a lot of fun and a great pleasure to work with them and

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00:13:03,090 --> 00:13:08,100

like some of my colleagues in the summer, I go and do extended teaching

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00:13:08,100 --> 00:13:14,250

residencies. I work down at CCM, at University of Cincinnati CCM in their summer

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00:13:14,250 --> 00:13:18,520

intensive as one of their resident faculty members. I do a week of intensive

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00:13:18,520 --> 00:13:24,960

workshops for them. They're bowling upstairs I think. And those students are

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00:13:24,960 --> 00:13:30,850

exactly the students that I encounter. But the other major teaching experience

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00:13:30,850 --> 00:13:35,490

than I had was going to England. I went to London for five weeks and that was

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00:13:35,490 --> 00:13:42,010

thanks to the support of the Dean's Office and the Office of Research and

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00:13:42,010 --> 00:13:46,240

Sponsored Programs here on campus. I was able to go to London for five weeks and

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00:13:46,240 --> 00:13:49,230

work at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, which is one of the

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00:13:49,230 --> 00:13:54,280

great theater programs of the world. I was invited to, as I said to direct and

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00:13:54,280 --> 00:13:58,950

choreograph the capstone production for
the Master of Arts and Music Theatre and

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00:13:58,950 --> 00:14:02,190

I expected and I would encounter
students very much like the kind of

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00:14:02,190 --> 00:14:06,570

people that I teach here, but it turned
out to be quite different actually.

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00:14:06,570 --> 00:14:13,420

I worked with students from nine different
countries: China, Argentina, Chile, Trinidad.

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00:14:13,430 --> 00:14:21,690

the US, Ireland all through the UK, and
Australia. So I think that's nine from

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00:14:21,690 --> 00:14:23,460

all across the country,

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00:14:23,460 --> 00:14:28,300

all over the world rather, ages about
twenty to thirty eight and those

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00:14:28,300 --> 00:14:31,960

students, some of them did come from
conservatory programs very similar to

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00:14:31,960 --> 00:14:35,640

what we have here at Wright State
University and some of those students

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00:14:35,640 --> 00:14:37,490

came from very different

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00:14:37,490 --> 00:14:40,250

backgrounds. Some of them were vocal
performance majors, some of them were

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00:14:40,250 --> 00:14:45,529
instrumentalists, some of them, one of
them had designs on being a journalist

177
00:14:45,529 --> 00:14:49,279
in the arts, another came from a
background in religious studies and they

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00:14:49,279 --> 00:14:52,800
all seem to pass the proficiencies that
were required to get into this program.

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00:14:52,800 --> 00:15:02,070
So if one of my goals was to put myself
in unfamiliar situations, this absolutely

180
00:15:02,070 --> 00:15:07,779
met the mark for that. There's nothing
like walking into a rehearsal room in a

181
00:15:07,779 --> 00:15:09,100
foreign country

182
00:15:09,100 --> 00:15:14,779
knowing no one. Not the stage manager, not the music director, not a single actor in

183
00:15:14,779 --> 00:15:18,640
the room and I was slightly familiar
with the person who was the head of the

184
00:15:18,640 --> 00:15:22,440
program. So I walked in and and that
really becomes a test for you in many

185
00:15:22,440 --> 00:15:29,320
ways of what you as a teacher and as a
as an artist, what you know and how do

186
00:15:29,320 --> 00:15:34,160
you find common ground among nine
cultures. Well, what I decided was I was

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00:15:34,160 --> 00:15:37,990

going to treat it very much like any
production that I would do at any theater,

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00:15:37,990 --> 00:15:43,610

whether it's a professional and academic
theater and and really because there was a

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00:15:43,610 --> 00:15:47,970

degree of time pressure which
always helps. Too much time allows you to

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00:15:47,970 --> 00:15:52,790

waste time and there I had really
four weeks to get this pulled all together

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00:15:52,790 --> 00:15:56,899

with a group I knew nothing about. So we
just began right off working. They had

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00:15:56,899 --> 00:16:01,930

learned the music prior my arrival we
began right in staging and pretty

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00:16:01,930 --> 00:16:05,589

quickly I think they realized oh this is
what we're doing, this is the way this

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00:16:05,589 --> 00:16:10,810

works and while none of them shared much
of a common background prior to arrival

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00:16:10,810 --> 00:16:16,670

at that time, they had been together for
about eight months when I arrived. So I

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00:16:16,670 --> 00:16:21,029

found that really diving in and just
pushing forward with the work that we needed

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00:16:21,029 --> 00:16:25,520

to get done, they very quickly got on
the same page with me and I did discover

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00:16:25,520 --> 00:16:29,600
that I was asking different things of
them. I don't know that it was harder

199
00:16:29,600 --> 00:16:33,290
than that what they were used to, but I
did ask different things of them and I

200
00:16:33,290 --> 00:16:35,230
treated it much more like a

201
00:16:35,230 --> 00:16:40,290
commercial production in which we really
had to work to a deadline and had to get

202
00:16:40,290 --> 00:16:46,260
a product on the stage that was gonna be,
in a sense commercially viable, because

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00:16:46,260 --> 00:16:50,130
for many of them that was the goal. It's
an interesting thing to have students -

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00:16:50,130 --> 00:16:54,380
there was a young lady in that production
from Ireland who came to me and said

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00:16:54,380 --> 00:17:00,060
"Joe, my agent's after having me go to an audition for the Phantom of the Opera".

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00:17:00,060 --> 00:17:04,580
And I said "oh the Phantom of the
Opera?" She goes Yeah you know, the show on the west end here".

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00:17:04,580 --> 00:17:08,240
So she was asking to
get out of rehearsal to go and audition for

208
00:17:08,240 --> 00:17:13,500
the lead for... Christine, the main
woman in Phantom of the Opera. So that

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00:17:13,500 --> 00:17:18,220

was a little different than I have here.
And that would be a great story if she

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00:17:18,220 --> 00:17:23,930

had gotten it, but she's a very talented gal.
But for the most part these are kids

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00:17:23,930 --> 00:17:28,830

who are not yet used to working toward
commercial expectations, professional

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00:17:28,830 --> 00:17:34,890

expectations and I think they grew a lot
out of that process and what I gathered

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00:17:34,890 --> 00:17:39,210

from them is that and this is an interesting
observation, is that our students

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00:17:39,210 --> 00:17:44,360

generally, regardless of their background,
will rise to meet whatever the highest

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00:17:44,360 --> 00:17:51,640

challenge you place before them and that
we may or I'll say that I know that I have in the past,

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00:17:51,650 --> 00:17:55,570

assumed limitations that just don't
exist or that we can at least work

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00:17:55,570 --> 00:18:02,310

toward and passed. So there was a great
deal of pleasure to be had from that experience.

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00:18:02,310 --> 00:18:07,680

While I was there, because I had a
number of students in that project who

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00:18:07,680 --> 00:18:12,810

really were an ensemble roles and did not
get to work one-on-one with me on sort of

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00:18:12,810 --> 00:18:17,160
their own development artistically, I did
a series of workshops there for the

221
00:18:17,160 --> 00:18:21,010
students not in the principal roles,
really focusing on the kind of work that

222
00:18:21,010 --> 00:18:24,920
I do here and the book that I told you
about, Acting and Musical Theater, they

223
00:18:24,920 --> 00:18:29,440
use that as their standard text there. So
that the fellow who played them the

224
00:18:29,440 --> 00:18:32,560
Baker in the Baker's wife, he came up to
me one day and he goes

225
00:18:32,560 --> 00:18:39,840
"Joe, in this chapter you said such and such and such" and i said that sounds good, that sounds right".

226
00:18:39,840 --> 00:18:43,820
I didn't remember writing it. He
quoted something very specifically, had

227
00:18:43,820 --> 00:18:48,429
a kind of a tenant that he was attached
to very strongly and I thought I

228
00:18:48,429 --> 00:18:53,549
haven't read that chapter for a few
years. Maybe a better back to it.

229
00:18:53,549 --> 00:18:58,760
But I did work closely with those, with the other students in that and ended up also going to

230
00:18:58,760 --> 00:19:03,000
Birmingham to the Birmingham School of
Acting and did a day-long intensive with

231
00:19:03,000 --> 00:19:06,539

those students, again an international group and I discovered in England that

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00:19:06,539 --> 00:19:10,470

very often the universities and conservatories have students from all

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00:19:10,470 --> 00:19:16,289

over the world. We don't, I mean I'll say at Wright State, we don't tend to be as international in my program, we tend

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00:19:16,289 --> 00:19:22,179

to be more national or even Midwestern. But that was a great experience.

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00:19:22,179 --> 00:19:28,740

The other significant thing that I worked on while I was on leave was

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00:19:28,740 --> 00:19:36,179

developing the Musical Theater Initiative at the Dean's suggestion and it was a good one. To develop the Musical Theater

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00:19:36,179 --> 00:19:40,419

Initiative and try to create some kind of a structure for this thing that

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00:19:40,419 --> 00:19:47,270

was really an idea that I happily was green lighted, but it was essentially an idea

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00:19:47,270 --> 00:19:52,220

and so what I did was to set about a handful of things. First to develop a

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00:19:52,220 --> 00:19:56,580

clear mission for the Musical Theater Initiative, which is to explore and

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00:19:56,580 --> 00:20:02,110

celebrate the culture, craft, and history of the musical theater, which means we'll

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00:20:02,110 --> 00:20:05,700

do everything except produce new

musicals, because the Human Race Theater

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00:20:05,700 --> 00:20:09,740

Company here in Dayton already does that extremely well and I don't think Dayton

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00:20:09,740 --> 00:20:15,880

needs two new musical development centers. But to develop that mission and I think

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00:20:15,880 --> 00:20:20,529

it's clear and I think its guided us thus far in it. I recruited a

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00:20:20,529 --> 00:20:26,130

professional and academic Advisory Board of about, I think it's about 20 people

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00:20:26,130 --> 00:20:32,220

now, everything from Broadway producers to very well-known directors and

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00:20:32,220 --> 00:20:36,490

choreographers and music directors, to people who are my colleagues who I teach

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00:20:36,490 --> 00:20:41,620

with here, to the heads of arts organizations in this area and even

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00:20:41,620 --> 00:20:46,510

people like there's a fellow called Thomas Z. Sheppard for those you who collect

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00:20:46,510 --> 00:20:47,440

Broadway casts

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00:20:47,440 --> 00:20:53,759

albums you know his name as the producer of every one of Stephen Sondheim's cast albums and

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00:20:53,759 --> 00:20:57,600

really so many of your albums from the 70's and 80's are produced by

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00:20:57,600 --> 00:21:03,500
this guy and so he's on our advisory board also. And then I created a series

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00:21:03,500 --> 00:21:07,590
of community partnerships with
organizations like the human race

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00:21:07,590 --> 00:21:13,840
theater company, the Muse Machine, Dayton
Art Institute, ThinkTV, Cultural Works,

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00:21:13,840 --> 00:21:18,009
and handful of other organizations here
where we've agreed that if there's an

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00:21:18,009 --> 00:21:23,299
opportunity for some sort of
collaboration, that we will definitely

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00:21:23,299 --> 00:21:26,600
look for that and what I told all of
them and the people on the advisory

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00:21:26,600 --> 00:21:32,269
board is A) I promise I'll never ask you
for money and B) I will only call you when I

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00:21:32,269 --> 00:21:38,409
have something I need, as apposed to burdening you with a lot of obligation to other things. And I'll tell you

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00:21:38,409 --> 00:21:42,330
if your ever trying to put an advisory board
together, those are the two magic things

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00:21:42,330 --> 00:21:48,559
to say, because almost everybody says yes.
And then another part of getting the musical

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00:21:48,559 --> 00:21:53,690
Theater Initiative on its feet was to
create an identity and logos and

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00:21:53,690 --> 00:21:56,690
stationery and all the stuff that goes
with that and I had a very good experience

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00:21:56,690 --> 00:22:02,039
working with our marketing folks here on
campus. And then creating a strategy for our

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00:22:02,039 --> 00:22:06,809
first year and some of you were at the
Victoria Theater couple of weeks ago

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00:22:06,809 --> 00:22:11,610
when we had Leslie Uggams here in
concert doing her concert, doing a day

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00:22:11,610 --> 00:22:16,529
of workshops with our students, doing
interviews - all of which was taped for

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00:22:16,529 --> 00:22:20,940
think TV - and then presenting some of our
students that she had coached on stage

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00:22:20,940 --> 00:22:24,870
with her. It was a pretty great launch
for the Musical Theater Initiative and I

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00:22:24,870 --> 00:22:29,840
look forward to what that'll hold for us
as we go forward and the plan right now

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00:22:29,840 --> 00:22:37,430
is for next year to be a kind of a celebration of Kander and Ebb, John Kander and Fred Ebb,

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00:22:37,430 --> 00:22:41,920
who are the people who wrote Chicago and
Cabaret and New York New York, and lots of

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00:22:41,920 --> 00:22:46,840
those things. And John Kander is still
very much alive and at it. Mr. Ebb has

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00:22:46,840 --> 00:22:52,590

passed away unfortunately, but Mr. Kander is very very much still at it and going strong

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00:22:52,590 --> 00:22:58,000

and employing some of our alumni doing his work, so we want him to keep doing

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00:22:58,000 --> 00:23:03,290

that and hopefully he'll be able to here to campus and work with our students and be

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00:23:03,290 --> 00:23:12,410

able to sort of share what he does. So that's what I did on my professional development leave. Thank you.

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00:23:12,410 --> 00:23:17,340

[Applause]

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00:23:17,340 --> 00:23:20,540

I don't know if there are any questions or anything..? Yeah.

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00:23:20,540 --> 00:23:24,720

So can you tell us about, what's the mission for the Musical Theater Initiative?

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00:23:24,720 --> 00:23:34,980

Well so the mission is to explore and celebrate the craft, culture, and history of the musical theater in every way that really presents

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00:23:34,980 --> 00:23:38,480

opportunities for our students here and the community at large.

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00:23:38,480 --> 00:23:41,680

Is that like for [inaudible] education?

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00:23:41,690 --> 00:23:46,960

Yeah well so for instance, one of the things we have in the pipeline for the future

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00:23:46,970 --> 00:23:51,840

is to do an international conference, focus on the idea of revivals since most

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00:23:51,840 --> 00:23:56,720

of the musicals that we all see, both
here on campus and regionally and even

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00:23:56,720 --> 00:24:01,630

in New Yorker tours are revivals. What
goes into the idea of re-conceiving a

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00:24:01,630 --> 00:24:06,880

musical or not re-conceiving it, but really
remounting it and so hopefully we'll be

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00:24:06,880 --> 00:24:10,980

able to bring a lot of folks in from
all over the world who deal with that idea and

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00:24:10,990 --> 00:24:21,410

have our students and faculty and artists and educators from all over the country engage in that. Yeah it will be fun I
hope. Yes.

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00:24:21,410 --> 00:24:30,530

So you've had experience all around the world and of course what's happening in Dayton right now is not dissimilar to
nationwide

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00:24:30,530 --> 00:24:36,120

and that is the kind of lack of funding or a de-funding of culture.

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00:24:36,130 --> 00:24:36,690

Yeah.

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00:24:36,690 --> 00:24:45,080

What would you suggest for the Dayton Region? What's the most thing that we can do moving forward to [inaudible]
so many people as possible?

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00:24:45,080 --> 00:24:53,520

Okay, that's a great question and I think this goes well beyond the idea of musical theater. It goes to our conception of
what education is

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00:24:53,520 --> 00:24:58,260

and I think that we have for reasons of observing what...

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00:24:58,260 --> 00:25:04,600

there's a received wisdom that I disagree with, that following pure business skills or

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00:25:04,609 --> 00:25:09,299

skills that are technological skills and
I'm a fan of STEM education, a big

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00:25:09,299 --> 00:25:13,799

fan of it, but I think it's a bit like
trying to make a cake by only using

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00:25:13,799 --> 00:25:20,869

flour and sugar and leavening, but not
putting eggs or milk or butter in it. If we're

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00:25:20,869 --> 00:25:25,249

trying to make a really wonderful cake,
we have to embed in the education,

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00:25:25,249 --> 00:25:30,429

creativity, because otherwise I'm a
carpenter who knows how to use all the

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00:25:30,429 --> 00:25:35,320

saws and all the chisels and everything
in my workshop, but I can't imagine what

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00:25:35,320 --> 00:25:41,059

kind of cabinet I want to build. And so
for me the most important part of

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00:25:41,059 --> 00:25:48,889

expanding... So we believe that education
is gonna be the pathway to innovation

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00:25:48,889 --> 00:25:53,769

and opportunity, but innovation requires
us to be able to be creative and to

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00:25:53,769 --> 00:25:59,429

imagine the new thing. If our students
aren't trained in imagination; in

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00:25:59,429 --> 00:26:03,720

imagining themselves and other given
circumstances and imagining what it is

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00:26:03,720 --> 00:26:09,509

like to be in the mind of the person who
wrote you know, Beethoven's mind or in the

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00:26:09,509 --> 00:26:15,279

mind of a person who created that
exquisite painting or to be able to leap as we do,

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00:26:15,279 --> 00:26:19,549

into the world of a movie or a play or a
novel. If our students had not been

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00:26:19,549 --> 00:26:24,200

trained in that, at least as much as they
have in technical skills, we will have

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00:26:24,200 --> 00:26:29,929

no innovation, because we will not have imaginers and I think the critical thing we need to do is

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00:26:29,929 --> 00:26:35,989

reintegrate education. And I think that will lead us to I don't

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00:26:35,989 --> 00:26:40,280

know what, but I will say I think that
the idea that we had a

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00:26:40,280 --> 00:26:46,500

broken education system was overstated and I think people were hyper reactionary

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00:26:46,500 --> 00:26:51,130

in it, but you can hear what my point of view on that question is. [laughing]

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00:26:51,130 --> 00:26:54,690

But to me, that's the most important
thing we can do, reintegrate education so that

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00:26:54,690 --> 00:27:05,600

arts, humanities, and imagination are
embedded deeply in it, even in STEM education. So yeah, there you go.

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00:27:05,600 --> 00:27:08,600

Anyway, thank you very much. It's been a
pleasure to be here.

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00:27:08,600 --> 00:27:10,600

[Appluase]