Title
Artist as Educator

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2788b0nx

Author
Delgado, Natalia Clarissa

Publication Date
2018

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

The Artist as Educator

Empathy desperately needed for Social Change

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

THEATER ARTS

By

Natalia Clarissa Delgado

June 2018

The Thesis of Natalia Clarissa Delgado is
Approved:

________________________
Professor Patty Gallagher

________________________
Professor Danny Scheie

________________________
Professor Cindy Cruz

________________________
Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................ iii
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ iv
ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... v
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................... 1
SYNTHESIZING EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE ......................... 2
WHY THEATRE: EMPATHY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE ...................................................... 7
SHAKESPEARE TO GO ....................................................................................................... 9
DOUBLE THE CAST, DOUBLE THE LEARNING ............................................................ 14
PERFORMING MERCUTIO ................................................................................................. 16
WHY SHAKESPEARE NOW? ............................................................................................ 18
WHY ROMEO AND JULIET? ............................................................................................. 22
CLOSING STATEMENTS ................................................................................................... 24
APPENDIX A: FIGURES ...................................................................................................... 25
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS .............................................................................................. 27
APPENDIX C: Actor’s Journal ........................................................................................... 29
APPENDIX D: Production Images of Romeo and Juliet .................................................... 33
   B) THE SET-UP .............................................................................................................. 38
   C) TOURING ROMEO AND JULIET ............................................................................ 41
   D) TALKBACKS ............................................................................................................ 45
BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................. 48

iii
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE A: Presentation slide on ‘Theory and Practice’ ......................................................... 25
FIGURE B: ‘Rehearsal and Blocking’ ...................................................................................... 26
FIGURE C: Epilogue.................................................................................................................. 33
FIGURE D: Actors as Mercutio. ............................................................................................... 34
FIGURE E: Romeo and Tybalt fight choreography ................................................................. 35
FIGURE F: Student-led Directing ............................................................................................ 36
FIGURE G: Raising the Stakes.................................................................................................. 37
FIGURE H: The Set-Up ............................................................................................................. 38
FIGURE I: Set Preparation ....................................................................................................... 39
FIGURE J: Finalizing Outdoor Blocking .................................................................................. 40
FIGURE K: Romeo and Juliet’s final scene .............................................................................. 41
FIGURE L: Mercutio and Tybalt fight choreography .............................................................. 42
FIGURE M: Mercutio and Tybalt in action .............................................................................. 43
FIGURE N: Behind the scenes ............................................................................................... 44
FIGURE O: Happy Valley Talk Back ..................................................................................... 45
FIGURE P: Actors during talkback .......................................................................................... 46
FIGURE Q: Post Performance at Happy Valley Elementary ................................................... 47
ABSTRACT

The Artist as Educator:

Empathy Desperately Needed for Social Change

By:

Natalia Delgado

My background in performance and educational outreach motivates me to advocate for arts in education. My purpose here is to serve students, communities, and artists alike. I aim to use Theatre as a vibrant teaching tool for youth in hopes of returning the love and support I have for the arts in education- underlining the necessity to bring theatre to the people.

My Thesis will be investigating how educational outreach programs like UCSC’s Shakespeare to Go serve as a tool for social justice, inspiring empathy for young audiences. This outreach program investigates a two-fold process- observing the rehearsal process and the performance itself as the actor on tour. Throughout the course of six months, the creative team of Shakespeare to Go work toward building a story together for the sake of storytelling.

This project will be a collection of moments framing arts educational outreach as the stepping stone in encouraging empathy to students where we see the creation and performance relationship between the consumer and the maker, sharing the same breath and space.
DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take the time to recognize those who were there for me giving me endless support, attention, and love. Listed below in no order of importance have been a part of this writing journey in one way or another. I am beyond grateful to have these incredible people in my life. Thank you a thousand times and a thousand times more!

Me gustaría tomarme el tiempo para reconocer a aquellos que estaban allí para mí dándome apoyo sin fin, atención y amor. Enumerados a continuación, en ningún orden particular de importancia han sido parte de este viaje de escritura de una manera u otra. Estoy más que agradecida de tener a estas personas increíbles en mi vida. ¡Gracias por todo!:

UCSC Theatre Graduate Cohort
El Teatro Campesino
De Boiz Theatre Company
Shakespeare to Go Cast & Crew
Professor Patty Gallagher
Professor Cindy Cruz
Professor Danny Scheie
Professor Amanda Lashaw
Nayeli Jauregi
Leslie Magana
Jesse Lopez
Noah Luce
Claire Ganem
Francis Carolina Gonzalez-Riano
Peerada Meemalayath
Ciera Eis
Amanda Ceballos
Jared (Groovy Ripple) Lencioni.

Mi mama y papa, Aida & Jorge Delgado, Cristina and Jorge Delgado
INTRODUCTION

The Artist as Educator:

Shakespeare to go: Performance for Educational Outreach

Since 1984, the University of California, Santa Cruz Theater Arts department has co-produced Shakespeare to Go. Shakespeare to Go is an outreach program with a mission to connect with local youth and give back to the community by providing access to live theatre. Each year, Shakespeare to Go creates a fifty-minute adaptation of a Shakespeare play led by a UCSC faculty member who guides an ensemble of twenty traveling student actors going to schools across the Santa Cruz, Monterey, and Santa Clara Counties.

In spring 2018, Shakespeare to Go began performing the classic tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, adapted and directed by Theater Arts faculty member Patty Gallagher. Shakespeare to Go is an excellent example of educational theory meeting artistic practice. This intersection creates an opportunity to instill empathy and use art as a tool for social justice.

In this thesis, I will be discussing my experience in two outreach programs: Shakespeare to Go and El Teatro Campesino Migrant Education Summer Academy (MESA). Both programs have inspired me to pursue arts in education. I will focus mainly on the performance aspect of Shakespeare to Go, and later reflect on how this outreach program follows a similar model created by two educational theorists, Paulo Freire and Michele Hensley. Freire is an educationalist and Hensley is a theatre director, but both recognize empathy as a tool for empowerment and liberation.
My role as an actor challenges me to be both observant and ready to adapt to a variety of audiences, maintaining enthusiastic energy and love for performance. Artists strive to provide genuine storytelling that gives the community a way to connect and grow to become compassionate human beings. My thesis will discuss how the combination of performance and outreach can create a sense of empowerment, empathy, and hopefully, collective transformation.

SYNTHESIZING EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE

In the Spring of 2016, Amanda Lashaw, Ph.D. Lecturer at the University of California, Santa Cruz first introduced me to the work of Brazilian educator and activist, Paulo Freire. It was in the Education 173, “Critical Pedagogy” the work of Freire ignited, then transformed my perception as an educator. Freire writes:

“Dialogue further requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in the power to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (which is a privileged of an elite, but the birthright of all)” (Freire, 2000)

Immediately, I became inspired by Freire’s intriguing ideas about critical consciousness. His writings about the roles of educators in communities began to develop my philosophy. My educational philosophy foundation begins with this principal theory of critical consciousness in oppressive societies. Known for his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire discussed the power of literacy, open dialogue, and liberation in education. His work inspires me to demand more of myself as an educator. According to Freire, to achieve critical consciousness, the student needs to focus on "achieving an in-depth understanding of the world" (Freire, 2002). Freire explains critical consciousness as a sociopolitical educative tool that engages learners
in questioning the nature of their historical and social situation, a process Freire describes as “reading the world around us.”

I continued to seek for connections to Freire’s educational framework. I then spoke to Professor Patty Gallagher about my love for community and theatre. She instantly recommended Michelle Hensley’s book, *All the Lights On*. Hensley cross analyzes the impact of storytelling by using her performance model, Ten Thousand Things (TTT). Hensley oversees a group of theatre artists who want nothing other than to go out into underserved communities and share the beauty of truth-telling.

Michelle Hensley is both the founding and artistic director of Ten Thousand Things, a theatre company bringing professional performances to non-traditional audiences such as homeless shelters, prisons, recreational centers, and more. Hensley’s well-regarded book *All the Lights On* attempts to break down barriers and use the idea of “radiance” as her essential theatre making device. Radiance is "more than just a connection, which suggests energy flowing just two ways, back and forth, from actor to audience and back again" (Hensley, Chp.1). Theatre is a great avenue to elicit radiance, because of its collective liveness, meeting in one space, and imagining new worlds together in a moment. Hensley best explains her TTT performance model by insisting, "We do not use a stage; rather we perform on the floor with the lights on so everyone can see each other. Through this dynamic exchange, artists and audiences breathe new life into theatre together reminding us that theatre is essential to everyone" (Hensley, 2015).
When building a character together, both actors need to keep clear communication and honesty. Hensley focuses on moments like this and works hard to include a talented and diverse group of individuals who advocate for kindness and truth, above all. In an online TED talk, ‘All the Lights on Reimagining Theater’, she addresses her audience on how “the importance of art in education reigns in this constantly evolving idea that what matters in this world is being aware that you have the power to learn, grow, and teach one another, that we as a collective can make this world a better place.” Perfection, as she would be quick to acknowledge, does not exist in the world of theatre any more than it does in life. (TED x, Minneapolis)

Hensley later stresses the importance about how every piece of theatre is reliant on collaboration and communication. Theatre influences the way we think, feel, and act, forcing us to examine ourselves, values, and behavior. It reflects the needs and desires of our communities while contributing to education and literacy.

By combining Freire's theory of critical thinking and Hensley's idea of radiance, I created a performance pedagogy that directs particular attention to the art of performing and impact of performance for youth. By integrating Freire and Hensley's theories, I can imagine a curriculum that uses theatre to foster reflection, initiative, and critical thinking. Both theatre and education require the time, space, and mutual energy to have a successful learning experience where both the student and teacher continue to learn authentically.

Outreach programs like El Teatro Campesino’s MESA and UCSC’s Shakespeare to Go, (as mentioned in the introduction), both advocate for empathy and
social justice. This past summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to work with MESA as a teaching artist to encourage arts enrichment and promote the importance of arts in education to youth. MESA is a one-month summer outreach program that serves around two hundred and fifty migrant students, grades four through eight, around Monterey County. MESA strives to provide students a learning experience their regular education does not provide. As published on El Teatro Campesino (ETC) website, their mission for the educational program is "to preserve the legacy and history of ETC and promote social and environmental justice by exposing young audiences to various current and historical social issues.” ETC is dedicated to the use of art as a tool for social change and aims to inspire community involvement, social consciousness, and political action through theatrical performances and workshops. They aim to inspire community involvement, returning to its roots as an ensemble theater company committed to generating social change through the arts. A new enthusiastic generation began training in the classic ETC style and creating new works to explore the changing multicultural face of the Americas.

My role as a teaching artist required that I, along with the rest of the teaching artist team, supplement students with creative and academic learning, giving them two hours of arts enrichment. The day would start out with quick check-in, all the students circle up, and they say a word or a phrase that matches how they are feeling that day. Most students responded honestly, and from my observations, I could tell going around the room to check-in boosted student’s mood and motivation for the rest of the day.
Since the program stems from ETC principles, we dove in with lots of dialogue and physical warm-ups such as unlocking the tension in our bodies. We would transition from chairs in a circle to our students clearing the space to stretch and activate the four spiritual elements. Starting with the Serpent representing the chest, followed by the Eagle representing the arms, leading into the Jaguar activating the legs, and lastly, the Hurricane representing our hips. This particular warm-up gave students a lot of freedom to play and tune into their individual experience. As a teaching artist, I made sure to be model fearless behavior encouraging students to unlock their courageous selves. One week later, students voluntarily demonstrated their ability to lead the physical warm up with enthusiastic and confident steps.

Towards the end of MESA, both the students and teaching artists connected and collaborated with one another to create a final performance piece to show fellow students. The team of teaching artists tackled the big debate around STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) and how arts can undoubtedly achieve the ability to change students’ lives. We approached the theme of STEAM by beginning a conversation with students. I came up with the idea to split up the students into groups with five posters breaking down the words in STEAM. As the students presented their work, I tuned in to their results. I saw a huge demand for knowledge in the arts; however, they needed the push to dive right in.

My group of students created a performance and discussed amongst one another what art means to them. Most of these students come from working class backgrounds where they migrate from place to place due to their parent’s necessities
to maintain a stable living. Their overall exposure to art would be through watching television, coloring, and imitating super hero movies. After much discussion, (and some disagreements), the students all reached a consensus: art matters just as much as the sciences. By inserting Art into STEM, education expands. STEAM produces well-rounded students willing to think critically and confidently express their ideas. To create, people need innovative thinking, and must learn the skill of collaboration and conflict resolution.

Programs like MESA, utilize the students existing knowledge and curiosities to help cultivate their future expectantly enduring academic, rigorous, and awe-inspiring groundwork in the art. With the help of teaching artists, we prepare our students for future academic success through performance and active social engagement.

WHY THEATRE: EMPATHY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

I believe empathy is the heart of theatre. Empathy involves, in part, the ability to replicate the core states of others. It is generally used to imply not only appreciating someone else's beliefs, and values, but also the significance of their dilemma or situation has for them and the feelings they experienced. The ability to empathize requires an effort of the informed imagination. Though my focus is on the actor concerning empathy. Also, I am considering the actor-audience relationship. In a recent interview with actor, playwright, and educator, Anna Deavere Smith, and Greg Archer, a writer for the Huffington Post asks, "Now, more than ever before,
creative souls need to be uniting more, but I wonder what you think of the times we are living in?" In response, Smith replies:

"Well, what that means in terms of what art often does, which is to help us understand and make sense of the world around us, is that it gives a time when artists can be of great use around that—to help create more meaning. The kind of meaning that maybe people sought in churches, but they have a very secular society now, so I see some arts enterprises as a kind of secular religion or a kind of continuous education, which is like "hey, this is what's happening, this is the world around you." Moreover, of course, what my work has always been dedicated to is trying to use art to impact the world around me; to cause people to think about things a little bit differently…"

I have never been more touched than reading a response like that. Smith is fully aware that we, as artists, need to tune into what is happening in the world around us. She articulates how art is in a way particularly educational, it can start as a conversation that may or may not spark a solution to the problem at hand. I agree with Smith. Her ability to imitate people with attentiveness and esteem takes the audience on a journey with each character she decides to depict on stage. She encapsulates individuals and recites their stories truthfully. In doing so, she emphasizes the importance of activism through storytelling. Beyond the challenging subjects she confronts, Smith ultimately provides herself a platform to recreate, react, and reflect how real stories with real people can create a real connection.

Empathy is the catalyst for my work in the theatre. I believe empathy is the ability to understand what another person is going through viscerally. Lauren Gunderson, a playwright whose works center on women's stories, she argues, "Not to sound overly
grand (too late), but so much of the toxicity in this world comes from a collective draining of empathy. We do not understand each other, and we do not want to.

However, theater invites us — no, forces us — to empathize." This is entirely true-toxicity continues to immortalize individuals who believe going through life uninterested and unaware of the world around us will reduce the problems we face daily. Gunderson references her friend, Director and Actor, Bill English who says "theater is like a gym for empathy. It is where we can go to build up the muscles of compassion, to practice listening and understanding and to engage with people that are not just like ourselves.” We practice sitting down, paying attention and learning from other people's actions. We practice this thing called empathy, but are we really improving if we do not do it this time with feeling?

I see theatre and education as places to dig deep into questioning ourselves and the world around us. It is the gift to reveal and rediscover what it means to put yourself in someone else's shoes and hear them out. There is a need in all human beings to ease this loneliness by creating bonds with other people, by sharing our life experiences and beliefs. We need to realize that, despite physical appearances, we are all -fundamentally the same in our desires to be loved, understood and accepted. Theatre does this through their performance.

**SHAKESPEARE TO GO**

In over the course of six months, the creative team of Shakespeare to Go transformed the classic tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* into a fifty-minute performance. We rehearsed nine hours a week in a total of ten weeks to produce a fifty- minute
play. From the page to the stage, the creative team focused on simply telling the story as authentically as possible.

The purpose of the Shakes to Go program aims to inspire a new generation of students to take interest in the world of theatre. Whether they are theatre practitioners or theatre advocates, this program is an example of where educational theory and artistic practice meet. That meeting creates an opportunity to inspire empathy in youth. This year's group of collaborators is made up of a total of twenty actors, six assistant directors, two dramaturgs, a stage manager and our director Patty Gallagher all of whom share the creative and collaborative process of William Shakespeare’s, *Romeo and Juliet*.

As actors, we use rehearsals to build, frame, and explore our craft. My role in Shakespeare to Go was not only an actor for the stage but also an arts advocate for the tour. Whilst going through the rehearsal process, I cultivated four principles to stick to. These four principles gave me room to be more present in the rehearsal room and prepared me to stay grounded. From the rehearsal process, these four principles include but are not limited to:

- Listen
- Observe
- Value
- Enthrall
Our director, Patty relieved our doubts and always encouraged us during every rehearsal that we as actor’s act as agents in our communities. We come together in a space and rehearse our parts, go on stage, and tell a story of the utmost importance. To LOVE for the lack of love only brings toxicity to the world. Mr. Rogers, from the classic children’s television show, ‘Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood’, advocates "The greatest thing we can do is to help somebody know that he or she are loved and capable of loving." Each principle encouraged me as an actor to practice the technique to LOVE. I used these four principles to guide me and as served as a reminder why I am doing this program. I noticed a lot of positive feedback and continued to LOVE and appreciate the Shakespeare to Go journey.

As a cast, we are responsible for each other and always expected to work together and retain a good reputation. We all relied on collaboration, active listening, and staying aware of our surroundings to ensure each performance leaves students with the idea that theatre can do so much for personal growth and understanding the world around us.

Spring quarter had begun, and the touring commenced. A team of twenty actors split into two casts and embarked on the start of something new. All the challenging work during rehearsal has paid off and continues to serve as the most important part of Shakespeare to Go. Both casts were scheduled to wake-up as early as six in the morning and sometimes even performed back to back shows. For every performance, we checked in with our stage manager, and prepared to always make a
good impression. We then pack up the van (including costumes, minimal set, and props) and drive out to the destination.

I could not contain the excitement I had for every performance. Going out into schools made me realize how much I love working with students and sharing my love for performance and outreach. I looked forward to every talk back and every talk back taught me how much students appreciated Shakespeare to Go. This program has inspired me to advocate for the arts and that pursuing the thing I love is never the wrong answer. Leading up to our final performances, I spoke to one of the two Juliets, Kali Kecskemeti,

I asked her about her thoughts on Shakespeare to Go and as she reflected, she then said:

“Often, people overlook children and believe they can’t understand complex things that adults take the time to learn. However, watching the students understand the struggles of some of Shakespeare’s most tragic characters put that myth to rest. They laughed at jokes I spent weeks trying to understand, they understood the stakes for many characters, and they understood the tragedy and loss due to frivolous fighting. Kids know more than we give them credit for. They have experienced more than we know. Their lives are more valid than some believe. What’s wonderful about Shakespeare to Go is we are able to give kids a chance to show how much they know. They can engage with text that is supposedly more complicated. Also, theater is an outlet. Who doesn’t need a little escape every now and then”

Theatre is truly an escape, but as Kali mentioned above, theatre is also an outlet, a tool instilling deeper thought and raising social change. We use performance as a means to investigate the human conditions and dive into the many interpretations and discoveries. If one student sees something in someone on that stage that they identify with, it could truly change their life. Many students existing knowledge of
Shakespeare are limited mainly to his works, so we as a team made sure to showcase his work with respect and adoration. Shakespeare to Go is a program and will continue to be a program where we can take a piece of Shakespeare’s work and perform with all the lights on, it is an opportunity for University students to demonstrate the importance of connection through live performance. As performers, we are always trying to get a message across. It is a place where divisive times like this, we invite the audience for someone to connect with- get close.

The cast quickly concluded and confirmed: we do not need a lot of space, wealth, or design to do theatre. With three colored curtain fabrics, a box of props, and a twelve-foot ladder, the cast performs Romeo and Juliet beautifully. We can do theatre simply using the text provided and the clothes we wear on our backs. Like Hensley’s TTT performance model, Shakespeare to Go provides individuals an opportunity to appreciate the importance of outreach through performance. We bring theatre to the people withdrawing the idea that theatre is only reserved for the wealthy and educated because theatre is for everyone. Sometimes it is the action of opening door for students.

What excites me about theatre is that it makes use of the things we do not want to confront. It makes use of the things we dismiss. It finds interest in the discarded. I think we all feel discarded at times, so an art form that is interested in what is discarded and making that of use to a people is a good form to dedicate one’s life to. In this way I feel theater is useful and I am of use as a theatre artist. Theatre changes the heart and then it changes the mind, and that creates individuals to
communicate- not with an aim to find answers, but to enjoy thinking out loud about how different relation with theatre might transform the way people relate to their local community, or wider societies because cultivating lively dialogue is necessary in theatre and in life.

Our director, Patty Gallagher made sure to articulate her words as clearly as she could, then checking in with her students to make sure there is a consensus in the room. She has taught me so much as a performer, and more importantly how to be a better human being. From observations, I learned that it is about recognizing student’s contributions with infectious enthusiasm and having genuine love for our compañeros. The importance of art and education reigns into new possibilities. The evolving idea is the discovery and rediscovery of the educator's awareness. The awareness comes first, and then change begins. There is space to be more aware, learn, change, and grow how to become a critically conscious individual. With the help of this reflective process, we as a collective can make the world of education a better place.

**DOUBLE THE CAST, DOUBLE THE LEARNING**

For the past couple of years, our director Patty Gallagher has double cast Shakespeare to Go productions. In this case, there are two actors who seek to learn and teach. Sharing a role is not always easy. However, I had the pleasure to work side by side with Joseph Neves, a UC Santa Cruz fourth year majoring in Film and Theatre. I prompted Joseph with: How did the experience of being a part of a double
cast change once we settled into our individual casts. What was the process of creating a role together? In which, he so kindly responded:

“I think the double cast experience worked because we had the opportunity to see someone else experiment with the role and then choose which actions and mannerisms we wanted to incorporate into our performance! Double casting helped bring up innovative ideas and understand Mercutio in new and diverse ways to try things. The process was gratifying because it showed how important a collaborative experience is. We will never have all the answers because we will never have everyone else’s life experience.”

I agree with Joseph, wholeheartedly. When I first started rehearsing, I knew working with Joseph would help me move forward as a performer. Sharing a role during rehearsal made me more observant and patient. Sharing a role altered the way I approached every rehearsal. I was hyper-aware and paid close attention to Joseph’s gestures and mannerisms. I observed him taking extensive notes and in return I listened for notes given by the director, so I can relay that back to him. The double cast experience encouraged me to be more flexible with character choices. There were moments in rehearsal where Joseph would observe me in a scene and cheered me on from the sidelines. Having a partner in crime during rehearsal made this much more satisfying. Prior to this production, I did not have the experience as a performer who shared a role. I took this new opportunity and I allowed myself to trust the collaborative process. My partner and kept in constant communication. When one of us felt unclear or unmotivated during rehearsal, nothing like having someone to be there and reassure one another we are doing just fine. As performers, there is always doubt and fear hiding in the background, a lot of that fear and doubt disappeared because I had someone to confide in. It was the love and trust we built throughout
rehearsal and post rehearsal creating a much more pleasant experience from beginning to the end.

**PERFORMING MERCUTIO**

I had the pleasure getting cast as the fiery Mercutio in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. From the very beginning I knew this role would bring challenges and triumphs. Challenges such as taking on the role of Mercutio who is highly known for portraying such infectious, high energy full of wisdom and charming actions. I took initiative and full advantage of the McHenry library at UCSC. To play the part, I rehearsed its body of works. I began looking up the meaning and correlation of the name Mercutio. According to Merriam’s dictionary, Mercutio's name translates as ‘Mercurial,’ meaning ‘unpredictable and fast-changing,’ an accurate description of Mercutio's role in the world of the play.

The character of Mercutio is a vital part of why the plot of Romeo and Juliet thickens takes a chaotic turn. The role of Mercutio is portrayed as Romeo’s best friend and remains as the neutral party in the Capulet /Montague feud. Any time Mercutio is present. On stage, something vital happens. Although Mercutio is knowns as a secondary character, they make an impression nonetheless. Through exploring Mercutio and finding myself in the character, the role of Mercutio instilled passion, play, and persistence. I focused on the language and physicality of Mercutio.

When first diving into the language of Mercutio, I noticed her humorous nature and charming responses. The command of language itself is also compelling.
Mercutio uses the power of language as a tool to persuade the many fools in the play. Through Mercutio's use of persuasion, the characters they interact with, and the circumstances fluctuate. She acts with their words and is not afraid to bark back. She also promotes loyalty, and while it is not displayed the most ideally- moves forward as one of the most memorable characters in the play. In Act one, scene four Mercutio playfully says, “If love be rough with you, be rough with love” displaying his lighthearted nature and playful demeanor, Mercutio’s character can achieve more through words making his actions more purposeful. In Act three, scene one, Mercutio shouts the furious Tybalt, a villain to the Montagues, "And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something. Make it a word and a blow.” I tuned into the language and quickly used his words as a weapon. Mercutio represents both the symbol of loyalty and fearlessness. Through this experience I gained so much knowledge. I had been acting prior to this experience, but I feel like this production is the first time where I felt like I really listened to my character and the other characters around me. I began with the idea that Mercutio only serves as the character who moves the plot forward. However, there is more to Mercutio than being the driving force of action. I fell in love with Mercutio and their loyalty to Romeo. But this process taught me to realize more about the reality of the character’s feelings and situations. I did much more text work and listening than I ever had before, and because of that I feel like I understood Mercutio and the characters surrounding so much more.
WHY SHAKESPEARE NOW?

Shakespeare gets introduced as early as elementary school to students who have no clue what they are learning. Now, there is no issue introducing and studying Shakespeare's work, the issue at hand is only allowing students to read the text as opposed to using this opportunity to speak the speech and play the part. Shakespeare is known as one of the most challenging pieces of literature to analyze, and yet, we continue only to read his text. Even if we do not know his work all that well, we can immediately flashback to a moment where we first were exposed to his work.

I first wrestled with Shakespeare and his text in a high school drama class. When I started learning about Shakespeare, I was under the impression that those who know his work are the individuals who can perform Shakespeare. That is not the case at all. The language immediately shouts laborious or challenging to understand, and can potentially instill resistance; however, Shakespeare was not meant to be read sitting down in classrooms but standing up with a group of people who are willing to paint pictures while speaking out loud to a crowd. I went to a Performing Arts High School where acting teacher, Amanda Swann, explained to the class how important it is for artists to ask questions. So many of us in her class never encountered Shakespeare, but she was determined to break down our predetermined thoughts on the Bard of Avon, and we as a class slowly realized Shakespeare requires patience, active imagination and the willingness to tell a story.
Shakespeare's influence is just as pronounced today as it was centuries ago. He is the most celebrated dramatist in Western Literature history. No dramatist before has had a more profound influence on language, literature, theater, and other elements of culture. His plays are often imbued with universal truths of human existence filled with colorful language, rich storytelling, and gives the audience freedom to transform his work. His words were chosen to be spoken or heard, not to be read and deadened behind a desk – they wither when performance is removed. He skews away from the singular narratives giving artists opportunities to experiment and explore his interpretation of life through play.

Oskar Eustis, the Artistic Director for Public Theatre, agrees and remarks, “Shakespeare created what it meant to be English," Eustis told his audience. Because Shakespeare's audience was the broadest and most diverse the world had seen since the Greeks, his plays had to appeal to a diverse group. Eustis continues, "[Shakespeare is] great because he had to write to please all of those different people." Eustis' work in the interconnectedness of theatre and community is reflected. As a Shakespearean scholar and director, Eustis finds the sociopolitical and communal aspects of Bard's work to be poetically significant. Due to his rich language, complex characters and essential themes, his favorite themes of treachery, honor, bravery, love and political intrigue are still themes we deal with today. I, then ask the question, "Why are we, as educators and artists continuing the legacy of teaching and producing the works of William Shakespeare? Why don't we just cast away the classical text and move forward with a more modern playwright?
While his rich language captures our minds and hearts, he uses the power of words and vivid storytelling to speak the speech with rhythm and purpose. Shakespeare knows how to explain how it is to be a human, but it takes much time to understand the language. He goes into the complexities of humanity and transfers truth to characters. Ben Johnson, a poet, and lover of Shakespeare’s work noted that Shakespeare was not of an age, but for all time.” Many would argue Shakespeare is not relevant; however, I believe Shakespeare goes beyond relevancy - it is the art of storytelling.

If the mark of a great writer is that they are still read, then maybe the mark of a genius is that they are still spoken, too. John Steinbeck, American author popularly known for his realistic and imaginative stories once said, “We are solitary animals. We spend all our life trying to be less lonesome. One of our ancient methods is to tell a story begging the listener to say — and to feel — Yes, that is the way it is, or at least that is the way I feel it. You’re not as alone as you thought.” We are in fact animals - social animals in search of connection and purpose. We find the connection through storytelling and purpose through learned actions.

Shakespeare’s relevance was further reinforced by the talkbacks we had with children from elementary to high school ages. There were also some incredibly deep, attentive, and intellectual questions asked. Often, people overlook students as individuals who are not capable of absorbing critical thinking skills and believe they can’t understand complex things that adults take the time to learn. However, watching the students understand the struggles of some of Shakespeare’s most tragic characters
put that myth to rest. Students laughed at jokes I spent weeks trying to understand, they understood the stakes for many characters, and they comprehended the tragedy and loss due to spirited feuding between families. Students know more than we give them credit for. They have experienced more than we know. Their lives are more valid than some believe.

William Shakespeare is a part of our cultural matrix whether we like it or not. Characters like Romeo, Hamlet, Lady Macbeth have become instantly recognizable. Their characters names invoke because they have turned into archetypal roles in live performance, film, literature, etcetera. Shakespeare remains an icon for English-speaking peoples throughout the world. From the beginning, he was always pitching his work on the biggest stage imaginable. The motto of the Globe, his theatre, “Totus mundus agit histrionem,” which translates to the entire world is a playhouse. Shakespeare's works reflect on emotionality, hilarity, and crisp writing. However, above all, he was masterful at diffusing his stories and his characters with qualities that audiences identify with — Hamlet's anguish, the hilarious naivete of Bottom, and the enduring love between Romeo and Juliet. Examples from his character and the universality of his works bring us back to the point that Shakespeare is part of our cultural matrix, his work's accessibility and ability to connect with all kinds of audiences, his humanistic approach when writing has and will continue to make a cosmic impact.
WHY ROMEO AND JULIET?

The timeless Shakespearean tragedy tells the story of the young lovers Romeo and Juliet whose respective families are locked in a perpetual feud. Their love goes through multiple trials until they finally find peace in committing suicide in each other’s arms. Just about everyone has heard this story. *Romeo & Juliet* is a tough play to do because just about everyone knows how it is going to end (Shakespeare even lays it all out in the opening prologue). For the performance to have any resonance for the audience, the story needs to peak the students' interest in a new and exciting way that they have not seen before. The story of *Romeo & Juliet* perfectly embraces what it is like to be young and in love, and that is a feeling that anyone can somehow relate to in a story as tragic as this one.

Rather than placing us into Shakespearean time, our production’s setting is now. The team of Shakespeare to Go are certainly not the first company to place Shakespeare into a new time. Even if one were to only examine productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, it is easy to see other modern productions of the show. Baz Luhrmann’s movie, *Romeo + Juliet*, takes the play to modern day Las Vegas, where swords are traded with guns and Romeo is played by a young Leonardo DiCaprio. Though the dialogue remains the same, the change in setting transforms the story for viewers.

Shakespeare to Go takes the language of the play and compiles the most vital moments into a piece of challenging work. The process included our director, Patty Gallagher going through multiple cuts of the script, having open discussions with the
cast, and ultimately having the story of *Romeo and Juliet* track in under an hour. A play such as this, written during the Elizabethan era can still pack a punch and be relevant today. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare teaches that families can divide a relationship. It took both families the deaths of their children to realize the toxicity of the family feud and the infectious love. The play storms in with violence, opening the scene with a sword fight, setting up the stage and raising the stakes. We begin to learn how young the characters of Romeo and Juliet are; both young and naïve. They both chose to follow their hearts instead of exercising their mind.

As a cast and collaborative team, our purpose was to share this story of *Romeo and Juliet* as truthfully as we can. Our cast of Shakespeare to Go were able to bring a timeless feel of the play to light through the simplicity of the production. *Romeo and Juliet* is a play that will continue to be performed for years to come. Shakespeare to Go will continue to tour productions of Shakespeare’s work exposing students to the power of theatre.

The weight of what Romeo and Juliet face due to their unmarked love. It is a real-time interaction, with real people saying those words, with breath and resonance in real space. Shakespeare’s play pits our common sense against our emotional sense and our individual humanity against societal law. Perhaps we can view Romeo and Juliet’s relationship, then, as a tragic but necessary sacrifice for the families to be able see the senselessness of their hatred. The only hope that the play gives is for a bittersweet future, in which innocent and well-meaning lovers need to die for meaningful change to happen
CLOSING STATEMENTS

As an artist and aspiring educator, from performing to teaching, I realize how vital theatre is to my career path as I proceed forward in life. Programs like Shakespeare to Go and Migrant Education Summer Academy give me hope. For me, making great art and connecting with youth brings rich fulfillment and I only wish to inspire other artists, alike, to remain passionate and confident about the importance of the arts. I have no desire for fame. Instead, I strive for continual learning as an everlasting student reflecting on what the world has taught me.

Theatre is an art form that brings people together to observe, confront, and incite through storytelling and creation of transformative moments. Theatre has the power to be scholarly, rigorous, and inspiring all at the same time. We need the arts as much as we need STEM education to create well-balanced individuals.

My hopes for the future of the arts is to challenge communities to imagine, feel, and think differently. Education in the arts helps bridge, unite, and create deeper connections between people and their experiences. I believe that theatre is necessary, and we must provide spaces to share experiences amongst individuals who want to challenge their mind and heart. Let us tell stories! Let us invest in art and let creativity prevail!
FIGURE A: Presentation slide on ‘Theory and Practice’ with Freire and Hensley. Original image created by Natalia Delgado
FIGURE B: ‘Rehearsal and Blocking’ Photograph by Gill Foreman,
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR ASSISTANT DIRECTORS:

I asked a few of my assistant directors to comment and reflect on their processes in Shakes to Go Romeo and Juliet. Everyone I interviewed worked directly on this production.

PROMPT:

_During the process of Romeo and Juliet's, Shakes2Go, as an Assistant Director/Creative Team member, what was your overall goal or message you wanted to accomplish? How did your role as a student leader enrich or change your vision. Do you feel like you accomplished or articulated your message to the cast and crew of Romeo and Juliet?

1.) Name: Marissa Moorhead  
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers  
Role in Production: Assistant Director  
Affiliation: Undergraduate student at UCSC  
Major: Theatre and Feminist Studies

“As an Assistant Director of Shakes to Go’s _Romeo and Juliet_, I wanted _to create a performance that was both entertaining and precise_. Condensing a piece of Shakespeare into a 50 minute performance is challenging and tests those involved to break the play down into only the _bare necessities_. I was interested in generating a clear divide between the Montagues and the Capulets through physical and vocal differences incorporated throughout the performance. Physicality is especially important in a piece such as this one because we have actors playing various characters. I hope I was able to fully convey this through my directing and work with the actors.”

2.) Name: Anonymous Entry  
Pronouns: N/A  
Role in Production: Assistant Director  
Major: Theatre  
Affiliation: Student at UCSC

“Going into the process, I wasn't quite sure what my goal was for Shakes To Go. I knew I wanted an experience directing a touring show because I have never done that before, particularly a _touring show that matched my social justice/educational values_ in how it makes art more _accessible to the community_. Over time, I realized there was more of a need for me to _build community within the cast itself_. Sometimes, I felt we got caught up in the
technicalities of the work that we forgot the bigger picture of what we were doing. This work has the potential to be magical in the way that it can change people lives if they feel particularly moved by a performance. My goal as an AD was to bring some of that positivity and encouragement back into the process.”

3.) Name: Armando Rey Cordova

Pronouns: He/Him/His
Affiliation: Undergraduate student at UCSC
Major: Theatre

“My main goal was to tell the story of Romeo and Juliet. I honestly did not come in the rehearsal space with any other goal, besides making the story of Romeo and Juliet as clear as possible. I wanted to do something that was both exciting and intriguing. The main thing I brought into the rehearsal room was my passion, and I do hope that would rub off to the actor’s. It was up to the energy in the room.”
APPENDIX C: Actor’s Journal

a) HAPPY VALLEY ELEMENTARY

As soon as we arrived at the campus, my cast mates and I saw a group of kids running towards us eagerly shouting questions from across the way. We stepped out of the van and a bunch of kids gathered asking us questions like, ‘are you here to do *Romeo and Juliet*?’ or ‘Are you guy’s going to perform for us?’ Their immediate enthusiasm and curiosity set the tone for the day. I could not contain the excitement; their love and energy was contagious. After our performance, students asked us more questions. One student asked, ‘um so what’s your favorite thing to do at home?’ while another student giggled then politely asked us ‘Is Juliet okay? I saw her hurt her knee during the play.’ Their engagement struck a chord. The rest of the cast kept smiling from ear to ear. Performing at Happy Valley Elementary made me realize how badly I want to be a grade school teacher. One take away I observed while the cast and group of students were seated to start the talk back, I was joyous to see the students patiently waiting whilst the teachers gave students freedom to connect with us and trust their role as a student.

b) SANTA CRUZ JUVENILE HALL

The Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall was our very first Shakes to go performance and honestly the most challenging performance. When we first arrived at the Juvenile Hall, we waited patiently and quietly for someone to open the secured doors for us. Once we got inside the complex, we started to set up and prepare for the performance. Some cast mates commented on how uncomfortable they felt being in a space like this, and others expressed pity. I felt the urge to have a dialogue with my fellow cast mates. I reminded my cast mates that this performance is not about us, we are here to share a story; this is for them. Like Hensley, I believe everyone has a right to make art, to be creative beings. We, as artists, are
responsible for sharing relevant stories. We are responsible to be honest. We are finally responsible for extending our love and passion for the arts, allowing space for others to see that theatre is more than just a rehearsed performance, theatre is a cultural space where society examines itself in a mirror. Most importantly, theatre teaches us about ourselves. It helps us to see how the environments in which we live affect who we are and who we will become.

All I wanted at the end of this performance was for one person to be inspired enough to make a difference for themselves, and by themselves. After our performance, there was silence. Despite the youth who appeared to be dozed off and having their eyes wander, one individual raised his hand and thanked us for taking the time to come out and share some truth through storytelling. We, unfortunately, did not have much time to talk to them after our performance due to our long run of the show, but we managed to have some questions asked by the staff at the Juvenile Hall and one other individual asked us a simple, yet heartwarming question: ‘So where are you guy's from, you seem cool.’ Not only did we have a time constraint for the talk back, there were also moments where we as a cast got carried away spewing out Shakespeare facts and dismissing the fact that talk backs are done to give individuals opportunity to get to know us beyond the performance.

These young individuals are living in the circumstances where every day is routinely based. There is a huge education gap in places like Juvenile Hall in which learning may affect individuals' motivation to learn. The overall goal of a juvenile detention center is to educate and provide a safe space where teenagers can take a timeout to understand their behavior and make positive changes for the rest of their lives. Programs like Shakes to go continue to visit youth with the help and interest of staff in the Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall, I am humbled and certain we are here to make a difference each year.
As I was leaving the Juvenile Detention Hall, I thought about the lack of time, and I thought about a solution. If I had more time, I would have incorporated Freire's pedagogy of the ‘culture circle’. This method could have given the cast more time to come together and collectively attempt to start a dialogue with them and unveil new ideas. After performing at The Juvenile Detention Hall, my goals shifted. I only aimed to be present and genuine for the remainder of the tour.

e) HARBOR HIGH SCHOOL

When we first arrived to campus, we were introduced to the front office staff. A student in the theatre department led us to the multi-purpose room. I faced some challenges, such as getting poison oak and having to take allergy medicine right before our performances. Since we had a double performance, the cast had the opportunity to tighten any mishaps, and shed time off of our second performance. Our stage manager, Gigi made sure to check in before and after each performance. Her attention to my health eased my anxieties and motivated me to keep moving forward. With the support of the cast and crew, the love and patience remained.

After our performance at Harbor High school, we had a bunch of hands shoots up in the air. We were asked questions like ‘what's your favorite Shakespeare play?’, ‘is that a real dagger?’, ‘how long you have been working on this play?’. Their engagement and curiosity boosted our spirits and the cast understood at that moment how special it felt to connect with the students. After the talkback, I had the unique opportunity to speak to some of the students in between our performances and walked away with the notion that it only takes one person to inspire change and influence purpose.

The students' infectious love and desire to do theatre overwhelms me with joy and confidence. Even as one student mentioned, " I didn't think I'd like theatre so much, but after
watching you all perform, my mind changed." Programs like Shakes to go help shape positive experiences and talking to the students gave the cast and myself a sense of direction; a sense of purpose. Although there are a lot more experiences to share, the three locations reflected upon are only a sheer example of what Shakes to go promotes, presents, and preserves: arts in education matters.
APPENDIX D: Production Images of Romeo and Juliet

a) THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

FIGURE C: Epilogue. Photographed, Patty Gallagher, far right, and the company of Shakes to Go.
FIGURE D: Actors as Mercutio. Natalia Delgado and Joseph Neves.
FIGURE E: Romeo and Tybalt fight choreography. Photographed from left to right: Liam Gawf as Tybalt, Noah Luce, our fight choreographer, and Keegan Vernon-Clay as Romeo
FIGURE F: Student-led Directing. One of the assistant directors, Armando Rey Cordova, sharing his ideas for Romeo and Juliet’s death scene while our other assistant director, Marissa Moorhead, gives feedback.
FIGURE G: Raising the Stakes. Professor and Director, Patty Gallagher (photographed on the left) giving Liam Gawf and Joseph Neves notes on how to raise the stakes for their first scene.
B) THE SET-UP

FIGURE H: The Set-Up. The Cast of Romeo and Juliet at Happy Valley Elementary.
FIGURE I: Set Preparation. Setting up the curtains with the lovely help of Nikki Reyo, Giselle Audero, Jacqueline McLaughlin, and Natalia Delgado
FIGURE J: Finalizing Outdoor Blocking. The ‘Stars’ Cast finalizing the stage and rehearsing their modified blocking in this new space
FIGURE K: Romeo and Juliet’s final scene. Keegan Vernon-Clay as Romeo and Jazmine Logan as Juliet practice their final scene before they die in each other’s arms.
FIGURE L: Mercutio and Tybalt fight choreography. Natalia Delgado as the Charming Mercutio and Liam Gawf as the Fiery Tybalt.
FIGURE M: Mercutio and Tybalt in action. Jacqueline McLaughlin as Benvolio, Natalia Delgado as Mercutio and Liam Gawf as Tybalt. Brian Carmack as Lord Capulet and Nikki Reyo as Lady Capulet entering the scene.
FIGURE N: Behind the scenes. Jacqueline Mclaughlin as Benvolio, Jazmine Logan as Juliet, and Brian Carmack as Lord Capulet prepping for the Balcony Scene. Safety first!
D) TALKBACKS

FIGURE O: Happy Valley Talk Back. Photographed here are the students, teachers and actors engaged in the talkbacks at Happy Valley Elementary School
FIGURE P: Actor’s during talkback. Photographed from right to left: Jacqueline Mclaughlin, Ally McDaniel, Nikki Reyo, Jazmine Logan, Keegan Vernon-Clay, Brian Carmack, Nicholas W, Rebecca Thompson, Liam Gawf and Giselle Audero.
FIGURE Q: Post Performance at Happy Valley Elementary. Students came rushing into asking more questions about the show.

“Cultivating Empathy and Internal Awareness for Social Change.” Hila Mehr, 30 July 2014


