

Rick Barbour
On Directing Plays, Teaching, and Administration
Statement submitted for university promotion process, 2018

Introduction

For the period under review (Fall 2008 – Summer 2018), I have directed a total of twenty-two productions: ten professional stage productions and two professional staged readings for five theatre companies (Great River Shakespeare Festival, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities, Newman Center Presents, and The Float Project) and eleven academic stage productions (ten for DU Theatre, one for National Theatre Conservatory at Denver Center for the Performing Arts).

I have regularly taught classes, primarily in Acting, Directing, and First Year Seminar. For nearly the entire period of review, I served as administrative head of our department during a period of significant change and growth, and also participated in a number of university service committees and initiatives.

It has been a busy, challenging, ambitious, rewarding, and exciting span of time for our department and for me. My blessings have far exceeded my trials. I have benefitted mightily from opportunities that the presence, energy, and support of a great number of talented and dedicated colleagues, collaborators, and students have made possible for me. Ours is truly an interdependent discipline, and I am humbled and grateful for the ongoing gifts of those with whom I work.

When I consider our work in the theatre, I think about its many separate facets, each generating multiple lines of inquiry and exploration. There's a lot to survey, a lot to think about, a lot to experience in our discipline. For me, it's often useful to reflect on what theatre's essential purpose is. What's it for? Shakespeare's answer is, theatre exists as a mirror so that we might truly see and know ourselves. I couldn't agree more.

In our culture of distraction, the theatre offers us a place where we may join together in one room to share in the experience of what it means to be human. Through this ancient, real-time, private-yet-communal participation, we seek authentic human connection. We seek release. We seek catharsis. If we are to grasp meaning from our existence, if we are to live our lives truly and well, we must know ourselves. Our souls require it.

My pedagogy and my creative work are thoroughly intertwined and are directed towards this necessary feeding of souls. Mine, my students', my collaborators', my audiences', all of us. That's my work in a nutshell.

Every time I direct a play, I learn something new that becomes part of my pedagogy. Every time I teach a course, I learn something new that informs my creative work. Each is fed by the other. Each depends on the other for inspiration and renewal.

Creative Work: Directing Plays

We go to the theatre to be moved by the truth of human experience, be it through laughter or through heartbreak. It's my job to do everything within my power to make this possible.

As a stage director, I lead actors, designers, and production staff through the collaborative process of bringing a playwright's script to full realization as live, multi-dimensional, integrated performance. Each production requires substantial planning and research, as well as hours spent in design meetings, actor rehearsals, and technical/dress rehearsals before being presented to a paying audience.

I spend much time studying, absorbing, and daydreaming about the play. I pay attention to structural elements that Aristotle outlined for us long ago: plot, characters, themes, language, rhythm, and spectacle. I collaborate with a team of designers: together we define and develop a specific and unified physical manifestation of the play through scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound that we believe will most powerfully reflect its soulful essence to an audience. I collaborate with a company of actors: together we find ways to fearlessly and honestly direct individual talents, craft, temperaments, and energies towards the goal of living truthfully within the imaginary circumstances of the play.

Throughout the collaboration, I listen. I trust the playwright, my intuition, and the instincts of my heart. A successful process will result in a production that not only entertains its audience, but one that generates in its audience a powerful emotional response.

Principles and Priorities

These are the principles and priorities that have framed my work for every production I've done in the past thirty years:

- Prepare well so that you can improvise freely.
- Nurture and sustain mutual respect, trust, interdependence, compassion, honesty, fearlessness, faith, and gratitude throughout the process.
- Celebrate the pleasure, power and dire necessity of the spoken word.
- Defend the primacy of the actor and the text.
- Relentlessly pursue emotional truth.
- Take risks.
- Say yes.
- Rely on active listening and receiving.
- Know that the answer is often in the question.
- Demonstrate willingness to fail, resistance to settling, responsibility to the group.
- Cultivate free, resonant, expressive voices.
- Seek eloquence in physicality, movement, and stillness.
- Build dimensional compositions with compelling visual counterpoints.
- Respect the playwright.
- Be a vessel for something bigger than yourself.
- Create beauty. Inspire awe. Invite catharsis.

Professional Directing Work, 2008 – 2018

Great River Shakespeare Festival: Black Box Studio (2008 – 2015)

The majority of my professional directing work since 2008 continues to take place at Great River Shakespeare Festival in Winona, MN. I was one of the festival's founding members for its inaugural season in 2004, and have contributed to the work of the company for twelve of its fifteen seasons. Our mission is "to create dynamic, clearly spoken productions of Shakespeare's plays, which enrich people's lives."

From the beginning, GRSF has dedicated a significant amount of its institutional focus towards the development of actors (and designers) in the early stages of their careers. These Apprentice actors range in age from 20 to 35, and are selected from among those currently enrolled in BFA/MFA actor training programs across the country as well as those with several years of professional experience already under their belts. GRSF's Apprentice actors develop skills through classes in verse, text analysis, scansion, movement, acting, auditioning, voice and speech. They also understudy the experienced and seasoned company of actors cast in mainstage productions. Moreover, Apprentices apply their skills in rehearsals and performances of their own production, which is presented in an intimate black box studio space as part of GRSF's overall menu of offerings in tandem with the mainstage season of plays.

I enjoyed the great privilege of selecting, editing, casting, and directing eight of the festival's fifteen Apprentice productions between 2007 – 09 (*Julius Caesar, Pericles, Hamlet*) and 2011 – 2015 (*King Lear, All's Well That Ends Well, Macbeth, Troilus & Cressida, King John*). These productions were the offspring of an intensive laboratory approach in which the core aesthetic principles of the festival were passionately embraced and demonstrated, resulting in text-based, clearly spoken, actor-driven, imaginatively-staged, minimally-produced Shakespeare that packs an emotional punch. Our work in the studio continually taught me a great deal about the power and beauty and startling immediacy of Shakespeare, while likewise re-affirming my foundational faith in the transformative power of truthful and courageous acting.

Storytelling conventions and style were developed in response to our basic ingredients: one of Shakespeare's plays, a diverse company of fourteen actors (nearly-evenly split between men and women), an open 20' x 36' playing space set in a deep three-quarter-thrust configuration with no audience member farther than eight feet away (most were within half that distance or less). Scenery: essentially nonexistent (perhaps a chair that might also serve as a throne, a battlement, the cliffs of Dover, a wall, a weapon). Props: few. Costumes and Lighting: simple, evocative. Sound and music: live, developed and generated by the actors. Casting practices: best actor for the role. Bastard and Pandulph in *King John* played by African-American women. *Troilus & Cressida's* warrior generals Agamemnon and Ulysses played by women, as women. Hamlet played by a quartet, two women and two men. Lear a trio, two men, one woman.

I sought to ensure that all eight Apprentice productions shared certain characteristics – clarity of language, emotional immediacy, dynamic group storytelling, and specificity in tone. Our goal was to tell great stories, embracing the complexities and contradictions that define them.

Pouring my energies and talents into these eight distinct-yet-related processes rewarded me profoundly. My confidence, craft, and artistry as a storyteller have never been stronger than they are today, thanks to the unique and comprehensive body of work created through Apprentice productions at GRSF.

Momentary detour: thoughts about Shakespeare

Regularly working on Shakespeare with hungry, talented actors is one of my favorite things in the world. Shakespeare challenges us to look in the mirror with honesty and empathy. He has an innate understanding of the human heart, a precise ear for rich, heightened, vividly imagistic spoken language, and a spectacular gift for dramatic conflict. He consistently engages us through our physical senses, our emotions, our intellect, our spirit and imaginations.

More than any other playwright I know, Shakespeare understands what it means to be human. He offers us an enormous swath of rich and dimensional characters, imperfect beings all. He doesn't pass judgement, he invites us to see people as they are, packed with promise, compromised by failings and shortcomings, different as can be, but ultimately united by their struggles and wishes and dreams and sufferings and glories and ridiculousness as relatable, recognizable human beings. Like us. Shakespeare's characters are chock-full of contradictions, irreconcilable impulses, and conflicting emotions. Like us. His characters are constantly responding to Love – rejoicing in it, mocking it, fighting it, fleeing it, surrendering to it, destroyed by it, reborn by it, divided and made whole by it. Like us. At the end of the day, Shakespeare reminds us that each of us, no matter our differences, is connected to all of us through our shared humanity – that our true, universal commonalities far exceed our differences.

The power of a well-crafted Shakespearean production is impossible to resist and tough to beat. That's why I'm so drawn to Shakespeare, and why so many of the peak experiences I've had as a director and a teacher have been conjured by his presence.

Illinois Shakespeare Festival (2016)

While in dress rehearsals for the 2012 Apprentice production of *All's Well That Ends Well* at GRSF, we were joined by Illinois Shakespeare Festival's newly-appointed Artistic Director, Kevin Rich. That summer, he was travelling across the country, stopping in at multiple summer Shakespeare festivals to see productions, observe working practices, and meet possible future collaborators. Kevin was impressed with what we were creating in the black box, and after viewing a run-through, he and I spent a couple of hours talking about the play, the production, and each other's ideas, values, practices, and passions in directing Shakespeare. Three years later, he invited me to come to ISF to direct *Twelfth Night*. Working with this venerable company for the first time, I had one of the best experiences of my professional life. The talent, dedication, and spirit of ISF's 2016 acting company was simply stunning, and the environment we mutually created during the rehearsal process was a joy to be a part of. We were very successful in creating a production of *Twelfth Night* that dynamically reflected its bittersweet nature, its knife's-edge balance between laughter and tears, desire and loss, joy and grief, darkness and light – in short, its unwaveringly honest embrace of all elements of Love.

Great River Shakespeare Festival: Mainstage (2017)

In 2017, I returned to GRSF to direct Donald Margulies' *Shipwrecked! An Entertainment: The Amazing Adventures of Louis de Rougemont (As Told by Himself)*. This production, offered as part of the mainstage season in the 430-seat Fusillo Theatre, provided the wonderful opportunity to work with three gifted veteran company members and a full slate of professional designers on Margulies' remarkably imaginative and theatrical script. Built as an actor's tour-de-force for its cast of three (two of whom portrayed upwards of 15 characters each), this 90-minute adventure through the mind of 19th-century visionary/madman/mountebank Louis de Rougemont included over three hundred distinct storytelling events, each framed by instant character transformations, live sound effects, scene shifts, and more than a few props and costumes. The hundreds of storytelling cogs that drive this inventively-constructed theatrical machine required copious amounts of actor invention and energy, crisp and precise staging, movement, pacing, and timing to blend seamlessly into the delightful and sublime production we shared with audiences.

The Arvada Center (2018)

In early 2017, I was offered the opportunity to direct a production of Stefanie Zdravec's *The Electric Baby* for the Arvada Center's Black Box Repertory. Under the artistic direction of Lynne Collins, Arvada's inaugural Black Box season enjoyed a strongly successful run in 2016 – 17, and I was humbled and excited to be aboard for season two. The establishment of the Rep signifies a commitment to an ambitious new level of professional production in the Center's non-musical venue. Working as a collaborator to that endeavor was most rewarding. I was blessed with a remarkable cast of six, a talented and accomplished design team, and first-rate artistic and production support throughout. We were gifted by a long rehearsal calendar and were able to explore in depth every facet and detail of Zdravec's beautiful play. The show enjoyed a very successful run over several months in the early part of this year. It was gratifying to direct a professional production of this caliber and quality, especially so close to home.

Great River Shakespeare Festival: Mainstage (2018)

This summer, I returned again to GRSF to direct a mainstage production of one of Shakespeare's lesser-known plays, *All's Well That Ends Well*. The experience I had previously in editing and directing it for the Apprentice company in 2012 taught me much about this alleged "problem play", and informed the choices we made in crafting a successful production for this season. Six years later, getting the opportunity to direct this slippery, ambiguous, challenging work for the mainstage company has proven to be one of the highlights of my career. Outstanding actors, inspired designers, and full company buy-in for the approach we took in interpreting it resulted in a profoundly beautiful and moving production. As of this writing, the show is enjoying strong critical and popular success. I am very proud of the work.

Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company (opens December 2018)

Very recently I was invited to consider directing *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberly* by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon (a sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*) for regionally-respected and award-winning Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company. Pausing only to confirm that all production-related dates were clear of conflicts, I happily accepted the offer and look forward to working with a company whose work I have long admired.

Academic Directing Work, 2008 – 2018

University of Denver Department of Theatre (DU Theatre)

From 2008 – 2017, I directed ten productions for our undergraduate-only department (BA in Theatre), usually one per academic year. Along with teaching classes and managing Chair duties during this time, directing departmental productions has been a major component of my identity here at the university, and an area of endeavor I greatly cherish.

We select titles for production that faculty and guest artists are passionate about, ranging from the Greeks to new plays to devised work, with the overriding goal of challenging our students in ways that expand their awareness and inspire their growth as artists and as human beings. The playwrights that I have enjoyed sharing with students during this period are Shakespeare (*Pericles*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*), Caryl Churchill (*Far Away*), Neil LaBute (*Some Girls*), Lee Blessing (*Two Rooms*), Melanie Marnich (*Quake*), Liz Duffy Adams (*Dog Act*), and John Steinbeck (via Frank Galati's excellent adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath*). Of special joy was the opportunity to work with student Alexis Robbins on the world premiere of her noir/horror chamber piece, *Beth*.

I approach my directing work for the department with same the principles and practices that attend my professional work – our students' growth and potential for excellence are best served by consistently high expectations. For all students – those that may continue on the path to graduate school and/or the profession, and those that may not – it is our responsibility to ensure that they all share in the experiential understanding of what it takes to create professionally-modeled theatrical art. A confident working knowledge of this collaborative and interdependent craft will serve them in ways that will last a lifetime, no matter where the path may lead.

My approach includes a keen awareness of each student's current abilities, work ethic, maturity, and capacity to access and craft emotional truth required by the playwright. For most of our students, acting in a departmental production involves a great deal more vulnerability, stamina, consistency, and single-minded application of will than they have previously experienced. Though expectations are high, we are committed to ensuring that each student be given every opportunity to succeed in emulating professional principles and practices, while supported by generous, ongoing mentorship, patience, encouragement, and compassionate honesty.

One of my greatest possible pleasures in the course of the rehearsal process is the arrival of an Aha! moment – when preparation, inspiration, and bravery come together in an actor's work to release a moment or more of unmistakable character truth that, once tasted, begins to gather momentum and frees the performance to soaring heights while affecting all who witness it. In a professional setting, it is deeply satisfying to have in some way contributed to these epiphanies; in an academic context, the satisfaction is even more profound.

National Theatre Conservatory, Denver Center for the Performing Arts

In 2009, I directed my third production for the National Theatre Conservatory, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (I had directed JM Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* and Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* in previous years). The jewel of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts' education

division for over 25 years, the NTC was one of the top five graduate actor training programs in the country (MFA) before it was terminated in 2010. NTC students received outstanding actor training from an innovative and experienced faculty of accomplished professional artists and mentors. Contributing to the work there as a returning guest artist was an honor and a privilege. Graduates of the NTC continue to work throughout the nation and around the world in stage, film, television, and commercial voice work.

Other Creative Work

Textbook Revision

Fundamentals of Stage Directing by Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra is one of the discipline's seminal textbooks. Its influence on many generations of student and professional directors – including me – has been significant. Originally published in 1949, its status and influence have been on the wane for over twenty years now. In early 2016, I was approached by the current publisher to consider revising and streamlining it for a 21st-century audience. Though surprised and flattered and apprehensive about the idea (my creative energies are directed toward professional practice, not writing for publication), I accepted the opportunity to work outside my comfort zone, possibly fail, or possibly succeed at meeting a new and unfamiliar challenge.

In dedicating my first-ever sabbatical to the project, I discovered that the book's core principles are as necessary and valuable as ever, yet its dense and rigidly academic prose voice presents a real barrier to engagement that can't be simply "streamlined" for successful contemporary consumption and application. What the book needs is to be completely re-written, while retaining the basic principles that it is built upon, in order for it to generate the enthusiasm and appreciation from a contemporary audience that it so richly deserves.

That said, three months of dedicated dissection and attempts at respectful revision were not entirely in vain. It dawned on me that *Fundamentals of Play Directing* no longer wants to be a book. It wants to be an interactive online resource, a software program, an app.

The Dean & Carra textbook is, practically speaking, a "how-to" book. It aims to instruct the reader in the craft of directing, via lengthy written descriptions, diagrams, commentaries, still photographs, and exercises. All of this written information must be read thoroughly (and repeatedly) in order for a given concept to begin to be understood and visualized and, finally, applied. And we all know that application – the actual physical experience of demonstrating concepts or ideas – is when the real learning begins to take place.

We now have unprecedented ability to engage students of craft in immediate, experiential ways. Doing so develops and advances their abilities in a fraction of the time required to read and interpret hundreds of pages of text. With a properly-designed *Fundamentals of Play Directing* app, a student could learn more about stage composition in ten minutes than I did in ninety minutes with the book.

As of this writing, the book's publisher appears genuinely interested in pursuing this idea, and is evaluating the investment of time, money, and labor required to realize it.

Teaching

Anyone working in the theatre knows that getting it right is as elusive as it is addictive. The work is defined by unreasonable expectations. It requires unreasonable dedication and commitment from each and every individual in order to be realized successfully. It requires an ongoing collaboration of sometimes wildly disparate points of view among individual actors, directors, designers and managers, all directed toward a common goal. It can be messy (though not always). It can be frustrating (though not always). It requires creative intelligence, flexibility, bravery, generosity, common sense, humility, discipline, a sense of humor, and faith (always).

Throughout all aspects of its process, from each of its individual contributors, the creation of theatre requires a balance between thorough preparation and true spontaneity. This idea is the basis of my pedagogy in skills classes such as acting and directing.

In **acting** class, striving to balance preparation with spontaneity is what it's all about. An actor's job is to find a way to live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances of the play, and my function as an acting teacher is to pay attention to each student's utterly unique, continually-evolving combination of gifts and deficits in craft in order to help them develop into interdependent, self-reliant, confidently empowered truth-tellers on stage. I emphasize the importance of competent script analysis, outward attention, and relentless pursuit of character wants and needs. Habits that lead to approval-seeking, generalized emotion, and avoidance of engagement are discouraged.

The **directing** student also must be led to embrace reliable habits of working and preparation so that s/he will be free to spontaneously create in collaboration with actors in rehearsal. First and foremost, the director needs to be a vessel for the playwright. A confident, dispassionate understanding of what the playwright wants, based in scrupulous textual analysis, coupled with an understanding of the actor's process, is key to leading the collaboration. Strong emphasis is placed on building effective and dynamic stage pictures through the understanding and application of composition, visual focus, character intent, body language, movement, and spatial relationships.

In skills classes, talent cannot be overlooked, but it also cannot be taught. Craft can, and acting and directing classes focus on craft. For each, I seek to provide learnable skills—a reliable set of tools, if you will—with which my students may competently go about meeting the demands of their craft. The bar is set high, yet a safety net is below. Pressure does play an important role in the development of any artist, but it needs to be applied in ways that spur authentic growth, not in ways that block or undermine it.

Risk, courage, and commitment must all be encouraged and rewarded during the student's journey toward demonstrated proficiency of skills. Since the journey can't happen without mistakes – they are essential parts of every learning process and teach us lasting, necessary lessons – it is of paramount importance that the learning environment be safe, honest, compassionate, composed of mutual trust and respect, geared toward process (not towards immediate product), and based in clear communication of goals and consistently rigorous expectations so that the learning process may thrive.

Junior Seminar is a course we teach each Spring Quarter. The full faculty meet with our juniors to prepare them for their **Senior Capstone** practicum experience a year hence. In Senior Capstone, each student is responsible for producing and directing a short play. They recruit design teams, audition actors, manage a budget, and lead a full production collaboration through the entire design/rehearsal/build process to public performance. In Junior Seminar, students review all aspects of the capstone process (such as play selection, casting, designing, production meetings, scheduling, budget considerations, directing and working with actors) through role-playing as directors, designers, and dramaturgs, specialized faculty mentoring, and a variety of projects intended to send them into senior year properly prepared for capstones.

Another course I teach is a **First Year Seminar** (a.k.a. FSEM, required university-wide for all first-year students) called “What’s Your Story?”. In it, students develop and perform intimately personal stories drawn from their own life experiences. Emphasis is on bravery, honesty, interdependence, empathy, and trust. Students grapple with authentic risks by mining difficult personal experiences in order to (metaphorically) stand naked in their truth before a group.

“What’s Your Story?” grew out of an earlier iteration of FSEM I created called “Original Voices in Performance”, which was focused on developing and performing solo performance pieces for the stage. This is challenging work, especially for students with limited performance experience, and bravery plays no small role in its ultimate success. In “Original Voices”, students often emulated the style or approach of professional solo performers that were researched in class (spoken word artists, stand-up comedians, poets, fictionalized or impersonated characters, etc). They succeeded in fostering the creation of many imaginative and entertaining solo performances of the kind one might encounter in a club or theatre venue, but I felt growing dissatisfaction with the fully or semi-fictive nature of the work. The course as originally conceived wasn’t challenging enough, I thought – too many ways for students to sidestep making courageous choices. Too safe.

I realized that what I most admire, and most seek in the work of students and actors, is bravery. Bravery to do the right thing. Bravery to stand before another person with nowhere to hide. Bravery to speak the truth with your very own words in your very own voice in your very own body. Bravery to not give a damn about seeking approval, or being liked, or conforming to someone else’s expectations.

And I thought maybe it would be a good idea to create a course and a community where eighteen-year-olds starting a new chapter in their lives could be respected and rewarded for being brave. Because maybe the world needs more trust and bravery and human connection and empathy. Maybe having more eighteen-year-olds know it’s OK not to lie about what’s real would be helpful in some small way.

So that’s what I did. I retired “Original Voices” and built “What’s Your Story?” to replace it.

I’m glad I did. Turns out that at least some eighteen-year-olds are fed by the opportunity to take risks, to seek honor, to stand open and unguarded before a diverse group of their peers and speak the unvarnished truth about their lives. It has been an amazing experience to witness and to facilitate the work in this class.

Administration and Service

Department Chair, 2009 – 2018

Our department has undergone much change since my election as Chair. We have sought to become consistently successful at embracing and demonstrating professionally-modeled practices in all areas of endeavor, and have succeeded in doing so. As a result, our visibility and impact as a department is at an all-time high.

In 2009, I supervised the move of our departmental offices and teaching spaces from their home of many decades to well-appointed, renovated spaces in another building. To be sure, this event has had many positive ramifications for the work of our students, faculty, and staff, yet we now find that limitations of space prevent us from broadening the scale and scope of our work.

Simultaneously with our relocation, I initiated the incorporation of new organizational methods across our administrative structure. Improvements were made in planning and budget practices, management techniques, donor cultivation, marketing and advancement efforts, and in all areas of engagement with upper administration and the university community as a whole.

Other pivotal changes I dedicated my energies toward included the expansion of full-time faculty positions from five to seven, the recruitment of dynamic professional teaching artists and highly skilled staff to replace departures, and the increase in enrolled majors from thirty-five to sixty.

The key to our success in enrollments and visibility is not hard to find: the gifted individuals that now make up our current faculty have energized the department's pedagogy and transformed its culture. The vision pursued for the Department of Theatre has been made manifest by their principles, practices, and accomplishments.

Our faculty are working professionals that are passionate about teaching. Each of us maintains ongoing engagement in the field. We share the fruits of professional experience with our students in intentional ways through our course work, departmental production work, and ongoing individual mentoring. Faculty enjoy strong relationships with many professional theatre companies in the region and beyond. We provide bridges to and from the theatre community in a variety of ways, connecting students to experiential opportunities both out in the world and with guest artists on campus, which allow them to engage with a range of experiences that have been crafted with more care, quality, rigor, and reward than ever before.

I'm incredibly proud of what our department has achieved in the past nine years, and of my role in generating change, mentoring faculty, and shepherding the many processes that have led to our current state of strength. It is deeply satisfying to step down as Chair knowing that we're in great shape, confident that incoming leadership will help us attain greater heights of excellence in the years to come.

Service

In the broader realm of university service, I have contributed to the work of a number of departmental, divisional, and university committees, planning groups, and initiatives during this

time. Participating in shared governance is an important part of faculty engagement at DU, and I am pleased to be a member of a community that values it.

Looking Ahead

I intend to keep making theatrical art, and to keep helping others do the same. I'm excited by the idea of continuing to work with companies I respect and admire. I'm excited about continuing to create powerful learning experiences for my students. I'm excited about continuing to work with university colleagues on issues and initiatives that matter.

I'm excited about continuing. Here at DU, and out in the world.

To keep on keepin' on, as Curtis Mayfield so wisely counseled us *.

One more thing. A life in the theatre is hugely dependent on the mentorship one receives, not just in youth, but over the span of time. I have been able to enjoy a successful career as a theatre artist, educator, and administrator because many talented people in the profession and here at the university gifted me with their example and cared enough to take an interest in my development as a potential peer and collaborator. Because of the support that the university has so consistently afforded me, I have had the freedom to explore, expand, deepen, and refine all facets of my professional and academic identity. Thanks to DU, my work has never been stronger.

For forty years and counting, the theatre – that existential mirror that invites us to truly see and know ourselves – has given me much. I'm proud to say that the privilege of sharing it in the classroom and rehearsal studio continues to give me the greatest rewards of my professional life.

** If you've made it this far with me, please consider rewarding yourself by going here:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-191O9VxN0>