

## Philosophy of Theatre / Craig Joseph

As a director, I strive to create art that is animated by the following principles and people:

**ARRIVE AT TRUTH THROUGH ARTIFICE:** While emotional truth is captivating to watch, a mere replication of everyday life is not. I make theater that transcends documentary realism and revels in what is particular to the medium. By tapping into actors' imaginations and encouraging artisans to design expressionistically, I create heightened worlds that are somehow a more authentic representation of reality. This fire was kindled in me by Tennessee Williams' essay "On Plastic Theatre," and has been stoked by my Michael Chekhov training.

**MAKE INVISIBLES VISIBLE:** I'm drawn to stories that pose big questions and invite viewers to reflect upon multiple answers. To encourage this dialogue, I stage theatrical "object lessons" - magical moments when lights, sounds, built environments, and bodies work together to concretize an idea, emotion, or atmosphere, catalyzing an "aha moment" in an audience, while also taking its breath away. Toward this, I've found inspiration in Peter Brook's "holy theatre," Julie Taymor's stage and film spectacles, and the incarnational theology of St. Athanasius.

**DIRECT, NOT DICTATE:** I enlist colleagues who act, design, and stage manage better than me. My job, then, is to articulate a point-of-view on a text, empowering everyone to riff off and play around that central thread. Through pointed questions, robust debate, play, and experimentation, I guide collaborators to make discoveries that surprise us all and are richer than individual insights. Conversely, I find my own ideas changed and enhanced. I've modeled my collaborations on the work of Harold Clurman, Robert Altman, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov.

**AMUSE AND AFFECT:** I want viewers to enjoy themselves, escape stress, and witness stories that capture their imaginations. But I'm hoping for more than simple entertainment. I want to provoke a response - to challenge minds, move hearts, mobilize bodies. I want what happens *inside* the theater to transform the world *outside*, inspiring audiences to reconcile with friends, take political action, or change careers. I affect this through a paradoxical marriage of Patsy Rodenburg's ideas on "presence" with Bertolt Brecht's tools for "alienation."

**CULTIVATE CHARACTER ALONGSIDE COMPETENCE:** My *expectation* is that an actor, designer, or stage manager will walk away from working with me better at her craft, having learned new skills or having sharpened an aptitude. It's my *hope* that he will *also* come away a better person - having learned lessons about patience, communication, authenticity, self-care, grace, and myriad other traits that make for success onstage and in life. I've set this mandate for myself because of the way that I was nurtured by director James Dodding.

**CREATE THEATRE, NOT DRAMA:** We've all worked on productions tainted by unhealthy conflict, poor stewardship of resources, the corrosive effects of factions, and unchecked egos; unaddressed issues derail the process and compromise the final product. This is unacceptable. As a director, I foster an environment of health: time is respected, ideas are heard, differences are resolved, toxic individuals are removed, and something beautiful is created. I set clear standards of behavior, model them, and invite the team to hold me accountable as well. I have TimeLine and Dobama theatres to thank for teaching me the value of this type of intentionality.