

Letter to Class from Bryna

Dear Ben Bolden and class,

Thank you for your participation and feedback! I immensely enjoyed visiting your classroom and working with all of you! The opera you created was filled with exceptional ideas, humor, intrigue, and I was very impressed with your comments and insights. I especially enjoyed all of your ideas pertaining to your teaching practice, and using opera as a cross-curricular tool. Thank you for your bravery and I look forward to following your careers in the upcoming years. Please feel free to contact me at brynab@coc.ca or [416-306-2307](tel:416-306-2307) with any questions or request for resources.

I wanted to reiterate my message at the beginning of the class and share my philosophy on teaching!

I strategically choose to provide a “lack of structure” at points in my teaching practice. Structure permeates every aspect of musical education, and provides a necessary vehicle for fostering technique, general skills and concrete knowledge. I would argue that if you hold too tightly to these methods the very spark of creation is not being cultivated. Think of nurturing creativity like you would a flower. A seed cannot be forced to grow or taught to bloom, it just needs to be cultivated. You need to allow growth, and ebb and flow with the needs of your students and trust that they will be brave and brilliant if you allow them to be. Unbridled improvisation and play will likely make up only a small portion of your curriculum, but this inventive spark is at the core of all great art and learning. Also, I believe that students learn “life skills” in the areas of communication, complex thought, self-reflection, confidence, authenticity and more. These skills help us with auditions, interviews, and public speaking to name a few.

That being said, a balance of structure and creative space is ideal. After an initial improvisation class I would take the time to compose an outline of the opera, and add/suggest aspects to enhance the story. I’ve attached an example of *The Cat* for your perusal. Remember that creating an opera can be done over the course of an entire year and allow for cross-curricular collaboration.

Please let me know if you have any further questions, comments, or require more opera materials.

Happy Teaching!

Bryna Berezowska

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