

APPENDIX B. 2. b., Peer Evaluations

SAFFRON HENKE
Acting III
Fall 2019

I sat in the Acting III class on Monday, November 11, 2019.

Saffron Henke was guiding her students through their first foray into Chekhov's *The Seagull*. Saffron stopped her students every few lines of their scenes not to give them direction but to ask them questions ("What if...") to wake them up to their characters' possibilities in the scene.

Although these "what if's..." were specific to the lines they were saying, the questions and the students' answers to those questions would help them fill out their impressions of their characters themselves and lead to their own interpretations.

What I applaud here is Saffron's practice of letting the students solve the puzzle of character themselves, rather than directing them to making to change their performances with her prescriptions.

She asked each of the pairs of students about where they were physically, and what they were after in their scene. She'd carefully disagree without seeming to disagree ("...really...?" or "I had a thought...") to get them to rethink their choices.

She gave them "handles" to help the students physicalize their ideas (like asking Nina and Trigorin to put a mimed elastic band between them, which, once realized, made their movements all about being close together—much better than telling them to "be close." It gave them something visceral they could really play. In this way she could shape their performances gently and really affect a big change with their attack on the scene and characters, leaving them thinking that they thought of it.

Saffron is a wonderful and perceptive acting teacher and coach.



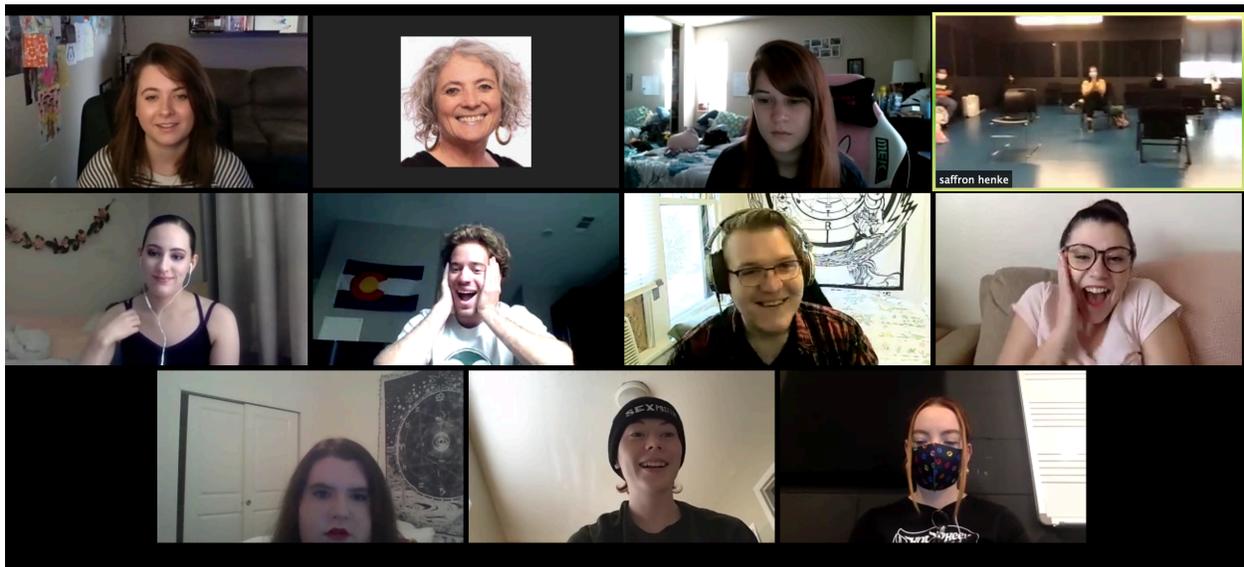
Walt Jones

Saffron Class Observation
September 21, 2020
 Dr. Megan Lewis

I observed Professor Saffron Henke teaching her Acting III class on September 21, 2020 at 10am. The class was hosted via Zoom and in-person using a Hyflex teaching model.

10:05 Prof. Henke begins with a rotating check-in with class. First, she models sharing feeling overwhelmed as well as positive self-care actions for students. Calls on students from the home section of the hyflex class to keep them included in the experience. Student shares then calls on the next student. Great way to engage students.

The students make hearts with their hands, give thumbs up, do gestures to show support for a student who has a family member in Covid ICU.



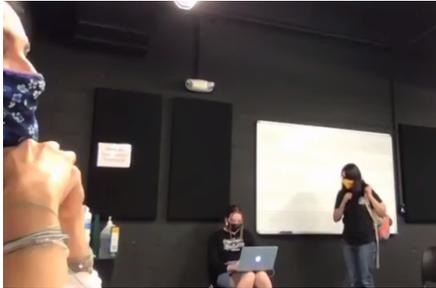
Prof Henke responds to a student who says she is feeling sick and dizzy and offers a backup plan should the student need it.



Students share honestly, a range of emotions and where they are. Prof. Henke responds with kindness, empathy, and names each student by name. She clearly has a positive rapport with her students. The students are very supportive of one another, affirming, witnessing and offering their love and support.

Prof. Henke reminds students of how we need to maintain our stamina and fortitude.

10:18 – sorts students into breakout rooms with help from Kaitlin, her TA. Prof Henke gives students directions for students to work on scenes, how to share information in the Zoom chat = where to work (theatre/her office/online). Charges them to return at 10:50.



Prof Henke gives feedback as students (in groups of 2) perform scenes live in the classroom.

She affirms students' ideas, authorizing them to follow through on their acting and staging choices.



She watches the first scene – between two students doing a scene between Electra and Orestes.

Henke gives students HONEST and CANDID feedback. “This should be further along,” she tells them. “Have you been using the rehearsal time fully?”

Reaffirms key points for students:

- Asks Daphne: who she thinks Orestes is at the top of the scene.
- Asks Caleb: “how do you get her attention when she is not looking at you?”
- She models for them how to change tonality and physicality to get someone’s attention.
- Discusses the build of their mutual coughing in the scene.
- Mourning – how do we show that physically? Where does mourning lie in your body?
- Make the beats clearer, too vague right now
- Gives students choice to either work the scene through and polish it, or end at the reveal of their siblinghood.
- The reveal is a very big deal – how do we show this when we can’t touch? How do we show this on camera?
- Touch without touching
- Emphasizes the topic of the course: SIZE. “Realism matches Greek size,” she affirms.

- “Does this give you stuff to work on?” she asks them. And they affirm with strong “yes.”
- Student asks for guidance on choices – indoors versus outdoors. Prof Henke affirms the student’s choice.
- Practice the activities, practice the size and practice the changes in the relationship in each beat, she changes them as they head out to work the scene further.



10:40 Scene 2 - Kelby and Adam
Scene between Antigone and Creon



Prof. Henke gives feedback:

Adam -- Work on different tactics rather than one note. How do you get her to do what you want – try different tactics. Move beyond just brow beating her.

She contextualizes the scene in the larger context of the play.

Kelby – your stage business is fueling your action.

Prof. Henke models various vocal tactics – shouting, luring, flirting etc so students see the options.

[[I had to leave to teach my own class]]

Overall assessment

Prof Henke is a beloved and engaging teacher. She combines rigor and holding students to high expectations with empathy, humanity and kindness. She models options for students and asks probing questions to draw out performances from young actors. I was so impressed with how she handled the hyflex dynamics of a group of students in class as well as students online. This takes true skill as a teacher and I commend her for that. The way the students were engaged –

in caring for each other and in the scene work I witnessed – is testament to Prof. Henke's pedagogical skill and the rapport she has built with her students.