

gleasonbauer

(720) 289 – 4445
gleaball@gmail.com

www.gleasonbauer.com
www.squareproducttheatre.org

RESEARCH STATEMENT

As a theatre artist and scholar, much of my work focuses on the integration of mindfulness and culturally responsive practices with Viewpoints, Grotowski's psycho-physical research, and Tectonic Theatre Project's Moment Work™. I explore their potential for providing a post-modern embodied foundational training for performers and their application in crafting theatrical work.

My research is driven by two primary goals:

- Exploration of impactful frameworks for the creation and presentation of theatrical events that catalyze transformation within participants and communities
- Creation of a holistic contemporary pedagogy that serves to awaken and empower both the artist and the ensemble as creative changemakers

CREATIVE PRACTICE

My creative practice is grounded by a sustained exploration of the most impactful frameworks for effecting personal, cultural, and political change through both the process and product of theatre-making. I am particularly interested in investigating the correlation between inviting the audience and community into the theatrical process and their likelihood of being transformed and inspired to take positive action. Experiments within this line of inquiry include:

- Porous ensembles that anchor a community of practice with local participants. Zoo District, a company I co-founded in 1997, created a home within the Downtown Arts District. Through multi-disciplinary partnerships based on reciprocal generosity, we welcomed local artists into the ensemble to create shows that highlighted the lives and work of past painters, filmmakers, and creative mavericks. These dynamic collaborations helped revitalize the area, bringing increased awareness and financial opportunities to the local community.
- Ensemble-generated performances that reflect the lived experiences of the communities with whom we collaborate. *Project 125*, one of several devised works created with student ensembles at Marlborough, was presented on the 125th anniversary of the school. Through interviews with students, faculty, and alumnae as well as an examination of archival materials, we invited the community to both celebrate its history as an all-girls school and interrogate its position of wealth and privilege within the larger LA region.
- Theatrical events that actively engage the community through associated programming that fosters civic discourse and inspires actionable steps toward healing, increased belonging, and social justice. As the Associate Artistic Director of **square product theatre** - a professional company based in Colorado dedicated to regional and world premieres of contemporary, interdisciplinary work - I have developed and directed three productions celebrating the voices and stories of the historically marginalized. With a small, but porous ensemble anchoring each production, we seek to facilitate civic discourse and opportunities for direct action after each production.

SCHOLARSHIP

As a theatre scholar, I have been driven by fundamental questions concerning the value and purpose of studio theatre courses in today's educational landscape. With the awareness that only a small fraction of my students will pursue performance careers, I have embarked on a journey to redefine what we teach, why we teach it, and how it can be applicable to all students, including those who will not continue their engagement with theatre.

During my time as a Graduate Teaching Fellow in Naropa University's MFA program in Contemporary Performance, I began developing acting courses that went beyond traditional training methods. By incorporating contemplative, post-modern, psycho-physical pedagogies, I discovered the transformative potential of teaching the art of acting as a means of embodying one's full humanity.

Through mindfulness and somatic exercises, I witnessed learners gain heightened self-awareness, enabling them to make conscious choices about their behavior. This process empowered acting students to delve into character development and enhance scripted relationships, while non-majors benefited from the ability to make aware choices that were reflective of their values. Post-modern praxes such as Viewpoints and Moment Work™ deepened their presence and agency, while psycho-physical training instilled confidence and facilitated a return to the integrated body/mind. These findings were shared in various papers and presentations, highlighting the importance of a contemplative lens and embodied post-modern methods in training the contemporary performer.

From 2008 to 2019, motivated by these same fundamental questions, I developed an embodied theatrical pedagogy for contemporary high school students. Rejecting traditional and culturally biased, corrective models, I advocated for an expansive approach to training grounded in Grotowski's *Via Negativa*, bell hooks' educational theories, cognitive neuroscience, and a secular application of Tibetan Buddhist philosophies. This approach acknowledges the unique individuality, worth, and expressive potential of each student. By fostering intrinsic agency rather than conformity, learners embrace difficulty, take charge of their growth, and expand expressive capacity. In this radical space of acceptance, students deepen self-awareness, interrogate hierarchies, and emerge as empowered physical dramaturgs and meaning-makers. It is a space that welcomes the individual back to their full humanity, awakening intentionality not only in the pre-professional but in the student seeking to live a life of purpose.

Recognizing this pedagogical approach as a potential healing modality, I began integrating it into the social justice sphere in response to the racial reckoning of 2020. Marrying my lived experience as a white, raised working-class, genderqueer artist with my abilities as an arts educator, I began facilitating white, anti-racism learning groups. With guidance from thought leaders of the global majority, I curated a curriculum that first deconstructed the cultural traits of whiteness and then scaffolded radical white identity development, supporting it with skillful facilitation, mindfulness practices, experiential learning, and compassionate and courageous community. Integrating overtly liberatory principles into my post-modern, somatic pedagogy allowed me to create and hold intentional space for personal awareness and transformation, as well as for collaborative and community-based action. To further develop my research, I completed the Certificate in Embodied Social Justice from The Embody Lab in 2021. Collaborating with colleagues, I presented a paper offering a set of embodied practices for the abolition of white supremacy culture and a reclamation of our shared humanity.

My research embraces an embodied pedagogy that empowers contemporary performers and engaged citizens. By bridging the gap between theatre training and personal development, I strive to provide a transformative and applicable educational experience for all students. Integrating somatics post-modern techniques, and a culturally responsive pedagogy, I seek to disrupt the traditional norms of theatre education and cultivate a wider application of somatically-based training programs.

ONGOING AND FUTURE CREATIVE AND SCHOLARLY RESEARCH INCLUDES:

- Integrating a grade-free learning environment into current and future course offerings.
- Collaborating with a global collective of Grotowski-inspired teachers to convene a bi-annual conference, international pedagogy discussions, and regional meetings and psycho-physical workouts.
- Disrupting traditional norms of theatre education by sharing my findings through theatre education programs, professional development workshops, and published works.
- Conducting a large-scale collection of data on ensemble methods to examine which frameworks for the creation and presentation of theatrical events are most impactful as catalysts for transformation within participants and communities. This has the potential to aid arts organizations, funders, and government agencies as they seek to use theatre to enact change, particularly in historically and systemically marginalized communities. I posit that funding sustained, porous ensembles would have a greater impact and return on investment - in terms of civic engagement and community transformation - than continued investment in our current regional theatre model.