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re: Teaching Observation of Prof. Suzanne Delle

This is a report summarizing my observations of Suzanne Delle's Introduction to Acting class. I visited Suzanne's class on October 22, 2024. To begin: it is very evident that Suzanne enjoys working with undergraduate students. She bantered with them at the beginning of class and is clearly at ease with them. I particularly liked her chiding a student for not convincing his football coach to incorporate Viewpoints work in their practices. Wabash students, who are often involved with athletics, are particularly attuned to the connections between theater and sports. And amiability goes a long way toward making students feel comfortable, particularly those students without a lot of acting experience. Students need to feel comfortable to take risks and make strong choices, and the students were clearly comfortable in Suzanne's classroom. My overall sense of Suzanne as an educator is as someone who believes in balancing high expectations with kindness and laughter. Students were clearly engaged throughout, and showed clear signs of development as performers.

Suzanne started by reminding students of their progression through the semester and made a point of underscoring that their projects on acting styles could come in the form of a "paper, play, or podcast." Not every class allows for a range of modes for student work, and I appreciate how Suzanne is willing to have a variety of options for students. Students (and particularly Wabash students, I think) value having options which allow for different learning styles.

What also became clear is that Suzanne is not a "mage on the stage" type of teacher. The class was largely student-driven with students taking on the role of leading various acting exercises. Suzanne took part in the acting exercises alongside her students, and would also guide and assist the student leading the exercise: ex. turning on/off music during movement work, asking for clarity from the student when his instructions to the others felt vague. This was a class empowered by Suzanne to lead its own learning.

It was also evident that the Suzanne's process was working well. One moment which stood out to me was when a non-theater major student quickly responded "communion" when asked to make a connection between Viewpoints and traditional Stanislavski theory. To me, this was a sign that Suzanne's teaching caught on with students who are not traditional theater students, and that terminology and the understanding of that terminology held fast with them. It is rare to see introduction to acting students become conversant with the differences among acting theories, as well as bringing together highly theoretical concepts in class.

Overall, however, I was very happy to witness Suzanne's good work in class. It was a fun class to observe, just as it was a fun class in which to participate. Suzanne is clearly an experienced, dedicated teacher of undergraduate students.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Cherry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jim Cherry
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