

MATTHEW SHAFFER

mattjshaffer1@gmail.com [LinkedIn Profile](#)

TEACHING STATEMENT

Without a doubt, my career as an artist was possible because of the educators and mentors who took a chance on me. What I may have lacked in my natural ability or facility, was nurtured and cultivated through education and application. Those teachers quickly witnessed my determination and passion--and had the experience, knowledge, and dedication to foster my journey--through pragmatic lessons and innovative studio projects. As an educator, I believe it's essential to recognize that each of our students is unique and to quickly ascertain what method of communication is best for each.

A product of an interdisciplinary MFA program, I am an advocate for higher education and the power of diversity in information. I am also a product of an apprenticeship with *Giordano Dance Chicago* when I was nineteen years old. During that time, I studied alongside Gus Giordano and observed the practical application of his syllabus through studio workshops and community performances; reinforcing the value of experiential learning. I have incorporated these lessons into the eighteen years that I've worked as a facilitator in afterschool enrichment programs in under-serviced communities; regional dance studios; professional schools like Broadway Dance Center, NYC and Giordano Dance Center, Chicago; residencies in England, Germany, and the US; on conventions like Fluid Dance; and in higher education.

Regardless of who I'm teaching, I draw on the tools, insight, and devotion of my mentors with a classroom approach that is fluid and constantly evolving. Every artist - every human - is a work in progress and our students are no exception. This philosophy offers the opportunity for me to learn alongside (and often from) the students. I excel at creating fresh new ways to incorporate the past with the present, exchanging a firm foundation from those artists and educators who developed or refined the techniques, genres, and vocabularies for dance and theater. As such, I am a collaborative educator. I don't think I know everything; in fact, I know I don't. I, therefore, call upon the twenty-five years I've spent as a performer, choreographer, and educator to assess where my strengths are and have established a solid method of igniting the passion in a room while communicating--and challenging--the history of the work and the power of sharing a story through dance and theater.