Towards a Feminist Practice for the Musical Theatre Performer in Conservatoire Training

ABSTRACT
This thesis develops a feminist approach to actor training for musical theatre by examining how feminist practices can critique and intervene in training modes and repertoire that tacitly accept or vigorously reproduce restrictively androcentric, ableist, eurocentric, and heterocentric worldviews. I identify principles and methods from feminist performance scholarship, pedagogies and critiques of musical theatre and acting techniques, and consider how these might work together to create an anti-oppressive framework for training students and making musical theatre. Through case studies of directing musical theatre students at Mountview in *Anne of Green Gables – The Musical* (1965) and *Pippin* (1972), I demonstrate interpretive strategies that offer approaches for performers and director-trainers to negotiate the wide-ranging repertoire of musical theatre and realise its feminist potential.

My research contributes to musical theatre practice and scholarship by demonstrating new, practical applications that build on existing feminist performance theory and criticism. I propose that using musical theatre as a platform for feminist exploration increases students’ critical and artistic facility, and that when approached with intention, musical theatre has productive potential for resisting and subverting the narrow and regressive stereotypes it frequently perpetuates. This thesis articulates how the theoretical and political reframing of musical theatre in conservatoire training contexts can support the development of experiential knowledge that resists the form’s hegemonic and conservative characteristics.

PROFILE
Originally from Canada, I have been living in London since 2000. I am a director and teacher, skilled in a range of acting methodologies and theatre-making techniques. I am Joint Head of the MA in Performance (Musical Theatre and Acting Pathways) at Mountview. I have also taught at Central, Kingston University, University of East London, Rose Bruford, and Arts Educational Schools London. I trained at The Boston Conservatory, where I earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre with an emphasis in directing, and completed a Master of Arts in Actor Training and Coaching from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

PRACTICE
2017, Director, *Pippin*, Bernie Grant Arts Centre
2016, Director, *love and information*, Lyric Hammersmith, (Lyric Young Company)
2016, Director, *Anne of Green Gables*, Unicorn Theatre
2015, Director, *Red the Wolf Slayer!* The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
2014, Director, *The Twee Musketeers*, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
2013, Director, *The Wish!* The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
2012, Creative Producer, *The Hit*, site-specific, Hotel Indigo, Tower Hill
2012, Director, *Sleeping Cutie*, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
2011, Associate Director, *One Snowy Night*, National Tour, Slot Machine and Seabright Productions
2010, Director, *Bittergirl*, King’s Head Theatre
2010, Director, *On Our Street*, promenade and site-specific, Story of London Festival
2009, Director, *Broadsheet Ballads*, promenade and site-specific, Story of London Festival
2009, Director, *Women of Manhattan*, Old Red Lion Theatre

**KEY PUBLICATIONS**

2016 “‘There’s gotta be something better than this”: Challenging the role of big emotion in the transition from speech to song’, *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 10:1, pp. 133-41.

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

2018 ‘Queering Brechtian feminism: Breaking down gender binaries in musical theatre pedagogical performance practices’, Bruce Kirle Memorial Debut Scholar Panel, Music Theatre/Dance Focus Group of The Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), Boston MA.
2017 ‘Referencing as a rehearsal tool for reclaiming a feminist text,’ Intersections – The annual postgraduate conference of The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London
2016 ‘When Stanislavski Encounters the Conventions of Musical Theatre’, The S Word: Stanislavski and the future of Acting, an international symposium, Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

**ACADEMIC EVENTS ORGANISED**


**TEACHING AREAS/EXPERTISE**

A range of Stanislavski-based approaches to acting
Acting through Song
Bogart & Landau’s Viewpoints and Composition
Directing
Methods of Devising Performance
Scene-to-Song
Sight Reading
Solo Performance
Text Analysis
MA Supervision