

INTRODUCTION

As a young artist, I started out composing and performing in New York City, a recent arrival from the mid-west. To make ends meet, I taught music (guitar orchestra, song-based ESL) at an alternative high school for high-risk dropouts and Chinese immigrants on the Lower East Side. After two years of full-time work, I swore off teaching. I did not feel like an artist while teaching, and did not have any real teaching technique. I was burned out. But a few years later when Lincoln Center Institute invited me to become a music Teaching Artist, I discovered a constructivist approach to teaching (a la Dewey, Greene, and Vygotsky) that made sense. Over thirteen part-time years, I designed and taught my own curriculum, and encountered master teachers and Teaching Artists. Through this work I awoke to a sense of service and social justice, and came to see teaching artistry as social activism. Obsessed with being truly *effective*, I wanted to reach and empower students as deeply and dependably as possible, within all the given constraints on time and resources. After Lincoln Center, 92Y hired me to write curriculum for their K-3 music teaching artists, as did Carnegie Hall, where I re-wrote all of the High School and K-5 curriculum. I kept experimenting, tweaking and road-testing various models of engagement and activity in classrooms, concert halls, homeless shelters and correctional programs. I went from being the burnt-out guy who was never going to teach again to the guy who loves to teach.

I'm drawn to Teaching Artist work again and again by a sense of *possibilities*. It's strongest at the beginning of a workshop, when I'm making eye contact with students for the first time. An intense awareness of the wonderful potential of each human being there to create, grow, question, challenge, feel and connect. Freedom and possibility are in the air. *What will these students make and do during our time together? What surprising insights or questions will they have? What do they already know, and what do they wonder? What discoveries will they make? What paradoxes will they uncover, metaphors invent, ideas and energies release?* And right alongside that energized sense of possibility comes a sense of responsibility. *I may be able to be of benefit to the people gathered here.* During those first moments of eye contact, a relationship is already forming, living and immediate. Maybe

you've been there, too: an artist-educator face to face with new students, their amazing potential, and your desire to make the most of every moment you'll share with them.

What Teaching Artists Do

Where you find art, artists, and the potential for teaching and learning — in after-school workshops, ateliers, YMCAs, educational outreach programs, community centers, libraries, homeless shelters, health care and correctional facilities, K-12 and all types and levels of schools (including undergraduate and graduate-level Universities) — you will find Teaching Artists and their students at work.

Teaching Artists are professional arts practitioners (poets, dancers, musicians, actors, painters, writers, composers, theater directors...) who sometimes teach. The Association of Teaching Artists defines a Teaching Artist as *a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator, who engages people in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts*. In this book, the term *Teaching Artist* broadly refers to artists who guide a group's creation of or engagement with works of art, in any setting. Any group that Teaching Artists serve will be called *students* (who, in other contexts, might be considered learners, co-learners, or artists, to name but a few roles that workshop participants play).

Artists become Teaching Artists when they leave their art-making space and enter a community in order to educate (from the Latin *educare* "to draw out") or teach (from the Ancient Greek root *δείκνυμι* (*deíknymi*) meaning "to show or point out"). Teaching Artists *draw out* and *point out* aspects of their students' experiences as they make and explore works of art together. Our students form communities of learners who make and do, reflect and revise, express their ideas and bring beauty into the world. The resulting enhancement of students' ability to listen, engage, imagine, and problem solve can change their lives, and our shared world, for the better.

History shows us that artists have always taught, either to pass on a craft (Medieval guilds, Renaissance ateliers) or to support their own art-making (from dance, music, and drawing masters to university professors). Beginning with Chicago's Hull House (1889), through Louis Armstrong's transformative experience at the Colored Waifs' Home for Boys (1914), Young Audiences (1952), right up to the present moment's Arts-In-Education movement, the Teaching Artist lineage has been inspired by a sense of service.

A Teaching Artist's Craft

During the forty years since the term was invented at Lincoln Center, *Teaching Artist* has become a recognized vocation. During the second half of the 20th century, a number of factors made the invention of Teaching Artists necessary. In very broad strokes: large arts presenters were looking to build future audiences, while smaller companies and studios established educational outreach programs that helped identify them as robust and community-minded. At the same time, many schools faced funding cuts in the 1970s, and urban schools often trimmed their dance, visual art, theatre and music programs, or relegated them to after-school status. By the 1980s, arts organizations were providing services directly to schools, and artists were delivering the services. The relationship grew through (and was shaped by) the implementation of national and local academic standards in the 1990s, the arts integration movement in the 2000s, and the current social justice movement.

Today, Teaching Artists have become integral to education and arts-in-education. Hundreds of state and local arts-in-education organizations, a growing number of Teaching Artist organizations (The Chicago Teaching Artist Collaborative, the San Francisco-based Teaching Artists Guild, the Association of Teaching Artists), and at least one national association (the National Guild for Community Arts Education) are serving the needs of arts program administrators and Teaching Artists. The training programs available to Teaching Artists are still mostly organization-based (arts presenters professionally developing their own Teaching Artists) and discipline-based (art schools training and certifying visual art Teaching Artists). But more generalized and career-oriented programs are also becoming available (Community Word Project's *Teaching Artist Training and Internship Program*, University of the Arts' *Teaching Artist Certificate*, the New York City Arts-In-Education Roundtable's annual *Face To Face* conference, the Teaching Artist Fellowship at Montalvo Arts Center). The United Federation of Teachers recognizes, supports and represents Teaching Artists (in New York City), although the national Teachers Union, the American Federation of Teachers, does not. Higher education programs are embracing the field (Columbia College Chicago, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Sebastian Ruth's Music and Social Action course at Yale and Corsera). A quarterly professional journal, *The Teaching Artist Journal*, began publication in 2009. The bi-annual International Teaching Artist Conference began meeting in 2012. This loose association of individuals and organizations forms a foundation for the expanding range of opportunities available to Teaching Artists.

Despite such developments, the Teaching Artist field remains a do-it-yourself, work-in-progress affair. As we progressed past the early invent-and-innovate stage of practice, a specific craft of Teaching Artistry took shape – but that craft has yet to be defined or, rather, the current definition of a Teaching Artist's craft is remarkably diffuse, a collection of lists and anecdotes. We are dependent on an artist-to-artist oral tradition for technique, clarification, and insight. On one level, the ambiguity serves us in positive ways. It is healthy and appropriately responsive to keep inventing our individual practice. Artists see teaching as a creative act, the making of a thing not seen before; the more it is so, the more we can wholeheartedly engage as artist-educators. Tolerance for ambiguity is one of the capacities we hope to embody; because learning outcomes are often hard to track, there is ambiguity built into what we do. Our undefined craft does reflect some of the reality of our experience.

But as workaday Teaching Artists in the classroom, we have to decide which practices to emphasize and which to avoid. For that, ambiguity does not serve us well. We're doing our best to be *crafty* without having had our craft defined. Conscientious practitioners in the 21st century are still asking each other the same vital questions we were asking forty years ago, even though the challenges of the work have remained unchanged.

Those same vital questions are at the heart of *A Teaching Artist's Companion*:

How is a Teaching Artist's craft defined?

What approaches or practices allow us to improve our craft?

Our institutional partners and Teaching Artist colleagues generously offer workshops and publications to help us define and improve our craft. In these shared spaces, we get a sense of common purpose. But in the end we are still self-defining and self-improving. We reflect on our successes and struggles, and we cultivate insight based on that observed experience. Our honest self-evaluation is key to establishing and maintaining high standards for our work. To the extent that we can match our aspirations to our actions, our practice improves, and we evolve. Happily, a willingness to self-reflect is something that comes naturally to artists and therefore to Teaching Artists. This dynamic is likely already ingrained in your teaching practice: invent and innovate, then observe and reflect, and improve over time by applying the lessons you learn. In my own classroom practice, I've experienced many moments when I've failed to serve my students with a skillful response, or failed to design well. The moments in which my work with students appeared to be falling apart were ultimately

important “teachers of craft”, invaluable opportunities to re-connect with students and re-define my teaching practice. Such reflection allows a failing or weakness to become an insight or strength. Reflection also makes it possible for successful approaches and experiments to develop into skillful means and positive habits. Given the important place self-reflection holds in our process, *A Teaching Artist's Companion* also asks these questions:

How effective is our self-reflection?

What structures might serve to make it more effective?

To invent our craft, we invent or borrow the structures we need: warm-ups, activities, lesson and unit plans. We rarely walk into a class and wing it; if we are to serve our students, we know we can do better than that. Instead, we shape our workshops on paper in advance, structure our use of time and materials: we plan. We know that projects and events rarely go according to plan. We can't be sure how the plan will play out in real time, especially in an atmosphere that encourages creative freedom, risk-taking, and improvisation, but we plan nonetheless. *How much of what happens in your workshops is planned, and how much is spontaneous? What kind of planning is needed to build spontaneity and responsiveness into the process?* Mastering the planning aspect of your craft means being able to design structures that engender maximum engagement, growth and joy for everyone in the community you serve. Finally, your planning and preparation are grounded in your belief system, so to round out the *Teaching Artist's Companion* inquiry:

What are your values and beliefs as an artist/educator?

How clear is the connection between your beliefs, plans, and actions in the classroom?

I've been asking myself these questions since 1993, when I began working for Lincoln Center as a Music Teaching Artist. Since then I've taught hundreds of music-making workshops and pre-concert classes. As detailed in Chapter XX, *The Evolution of A Teaching Artist*, I was inclined by nature as well as nurture to view the work as an ongoing experiment. Each classroom session was a chance to explore and pursue the perfection of the practice. I documented my process, reflected a lot, and gathered evidence to support my craft. Over time, and in collaboration with accomplished artists and teachers, my students and I came to experience less *trial and error* and more *trial and success*. Observing other Teaching Artists at

work, I saw that we were all grappling with the same basic questions, regardless of specific arts discipline. I started wondering how we could access each others' expertise and share knowledge. In partnerships with the 92nd Street Y, the Little Orchestra Society, and Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, I created new programs, as well as written curricula and professional development workshops for other artists. This process made me even more aware of the challenges facing curriculum designers. In 2003, I resolved to try to be of service to other Teaching Artists and began drafting what would become *The Teaching Artist's Companion*.

View, Design, Respond

Teaching Artist work falls into three parts or phases: View, Design, and Respond. A *Teaching Artist's Companion* makes use of this framework throughout the book. *View* is your personal take on how teaching and learning happen. It includes your overall point of view (such as your definition of your roles as a Teaching Artist and the overlapping communities where these roles play out) as well as your ideas about how to apply what you believe. *Design* and *Respond* are the phases of Teaching Artist work where *View* manifests in real time and space. To *Design* is to plan a teaching and learning experience before entering the classroom. *Respond* refers to our actions in the company of students as we actually teach a workshop. Of these three, *View*, *Design*, and *Respond*, *View* is primary, since it is the traceable point of origin that determines what we *Design* and how we *Respond*.

View is also primary as the first of three terms —*View*, *Meditation*, and *Action*—that are used to frame Tibetan Buddhism's Dzogchen teachings. To directly see the nature of mind is the *View*; the way of stabilizing that *View* and making it an unbroken experience is *Meditation*; and integrating that *View* into our daily life is what is meant by *Action*.

Whether or not you are a Buddhist, you can observe *View*, *Meditation* and *Action* functioning in your life, because the sequence encompasses what is arguably the most common of human experiences. You already have a set of beliefs that grow and change over time, a developing understanding of the nature of mind (your *View*). You spontaneously reflect and compare your *View* with your specific experiences, mature as you reflect, and plan your future actions (your *Meditation*). You apply what you have learned during *Meditation* in daily life (your *Action*). Some of us are more reflective than others, but we all engage in these three practices to some extent.

View, Design and Respond similarly encompass the Teaching Artist's experience. You already have personal beliefs and understandings about art, teaching and learning (your View). You plan what you do before you enter a classroom or workshop space (your Design phase). You apply what you know as you interact on your feet in the classroom or workshop space (your Respond phase). For our purposes, View, Design and Respond are separated and presented in this order. But in practice, the three easily overlap and reflect each other, like an Indra's Net. While recognizing how View directly informs Design and Respond, we should remember that View itself grows and changes over time according to what we experience during Design and Respond.

A Teaching Artist's Companion invites you to delineate your craft in terms of View, Design and Respond. The text also encourages you to develop your own View and a habit of self-reflection. It offers a range of models as a resource to help you clarify the Design and Respond phases of your work. Within this View, Design Respond framework, I won't espouse a single methodology or posit any hard and fast rules (*One must always...*, *One must never...*). Instead you'll find stories and detailed observations on the mechanics and mysteries of our practice. Since our work requires craft, I'll invite you to think of yourself as a craftsperson and provide field-tested examples of Teaching Artist craft for your consideration. I'll raise essential questions with the intention helping you to hone the questions you are already asking. When I provide answers, they are meant to be *provisional*, a step on the way to your personal mastery of Teaching Artist practice.

How To Use This Book

If you are new to Teaching Artistry, you might best use *A Teaching Artist's Companion* the way you would use a map to help you spend a day in an unfamiliar city: as a reference that supports an immersive journey. At the start of the day, before you dive in and walk the streets, you refer to the map to help you decide where to begin and what a good sequence of sites might be. During the day, you use it to re-orient yourself (even if you are not quite lost) or get a sense of scale, distance, and place. At the end of the day, you use the map to reflect on where you went, and your reflection shapes your plan for the next day's exploring. City maps are not designed with you and you alone in mind. But their design allows you to customize, according to your specific personal interests, how you use them. Customize your own use of *A Teaching Artist's Companion* as you plan, support, and reflect on your immersion in Teaching Artistry. I suggest spending some time exploring the book in a spirit of

serendipity in order to get a sense of the scope and details, then returning to the beginning to read through the chapters in order. Absorb what is here, choose the ideas and techniques you want to try out, and shape your own work.

If you are an experienced practitioner, please bring your expertise to a virtual conversation with me as you read. Compare your experience and experience-based beliefs with the ones I offer here. Examine them “as a goldsmith examines gold,” question, dissect, analyze, and please do judge. You’ll know what to do. I hope you have fun doing it and that you’ll use this book as a tool for focused reflection on your practice. We spend most of our teaching time alone (with our students); we’re rarely observed and too rarely have a chance to talk shop with other experienced practitioners. Let’s talk shop.

For arts administrators who hire, train or professional develop Teaching Artists, *A Teaching Artist’s Companion* is a field report: here is what’s happening out there, from a working Teaching Artist’s perspective. I am still working in the field, continuing to experiment, and making sure I can practice what I preach. I’ve tried to emphasize the practical, rather than the theoretical, in ways that I hope you will appreciate and put to use. With practicality in mind, the book is also a toolkit that might inform your professional development and curriculum writing processes. With your help, Teaching Artists will come to do their best work sooner rather than later in their careers.

Visual artists, dancers, theatre or other artists: you may notice that most of the work samples in *A Teaching Artist’s Companion* are musical. You may wonder how a music Teaching Artist can speak to your discipline-specific needs. I’ve tried to address this issue in a number of ways. I’d like to help you identify and master essential practices that Teaching Artists working in all disciplines recognize as vital. Every effort has been made to present these fundamental structures, approaches, and framing devices as concrete and *translate-able* examples, in a manner that makes it as easy as possible for you to sift out their essence and translate them for your own art-form-specific purposes. The sections are all written with this quality in mind. This translation dynamic is inspired by my own learning process: a great deal of my View and Design practice originated with visual and dance Teaching Artists whose work I experienced, translated, and put to new uses. Where a discipline-specific example seems appropriate, I’ve asked veteran Teaching Artists from theatre, dance, and visual arts to comment and contribute.

When a Teaching Artist’s intention, art and craft align, wonderful things happen. We’re able to serve our workshop participants with skill and ease. They are able to energetically

imagine, create, observe and interact with sophistication and satisfaction. We find that we really can tap our students' amazing potentials and make the most of the short time we spend with them. The View Design Respond framework is meant to empower Teaching Artists to more *deliberately cultivate* the causes and conditions that lead to this quality of experience. It is also an invitation to broaden our perspective as practitioners of Teaching Artistry. As we become more aware of our craft, we can develop a panoramic view of each teaching and learning situation. The broader our perspective, the more aware we are of the connection between mindfulness of our actions and the liberation that we experience in our workshops. In *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche describes this connection by pointing out that mindfulness creates space:

Right mindfulness does not simply mean being aware; it is like creating a work of art. If you are drinking a cup of tea with right mindfulness, you are aware of the whole environment as well as the cup of tea. You can therefore trust what you are doing; you are not threatened by anything. You have room to dance in the space, and this makes it a creative situation. The space is open to you.

Once we develop the habit of staying aware of the whole picture, we can become fearless in our Teaching Artist practice. There won't be a circumstance that we are not prepared to work with. We'll have a realistic sense of what the relationships are, what our goal is, and the limits of our own means. The workshop space will be open to us, and the ease that we feel will transfer to our students. This present, responsive freedom is the ultimate empowerment for a Teaching Artist.

I hope this book entices you to observe the View, Design and Respond frame at work in your own practice. Once you do, you'll be in a better position to lead your workshops in an increasingly free, joyful, and effective manner. Examine your own experience to see if these ideas don't ring true in thought, and also work well in the field. I hope you'll enjoy the fruits of your encounters, as the hero of your own Teaching Artist story, for the benefit of the children, adults and communities we serve.