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Reflections: Performance and Elements from the African American Diaspora.

-A proposal for a collaborative exchange between Hartford University Fifth Grade Art Students and UWM/PSOA/Theater Students and Faculty-

Theater is at its core both collaborative and cross-disciplinary. All performance takes place at a particular moment in history, not only current but in relation to both the past and the future. Theatre is not only the ideal discipline to examine the historical roots of a particular kind of performance, but also has the opportunity to build community, share visions and skills, and exchange those skills.

This project proposes that a group of Hartford University School students (HUS) and UWM students, working along side HUS faculty Steve Vande Zande, and UWM faculty Rebecca Holderness and a team of UWM students will research the Diasporic and historic roots of two styles of performance: "The Blues" and "Stepping." Each style can reference contemporary material but has roots in both African and African American slave history. Both have existed where blacks and whites have interacted and both provide an opportunity where we might ask questions about cultural suppression, support, and exploitation.

My own research intention is narrow--to search for facts about these forms and for a story to tell about their development--a human story that might serve as a basis for a production that inspires further questions from the audience. Cultural exchange is a long-term interest of mine and the experience of the loss of history and roots is one close to my own life story.

The project would occur in three phases:

Phase-One: Research and Presentation to HUS (January 2009).

We will take the January 2009 Winter Term and assemble a team of 6-8 UWM students to research and assemble images, facts, and any other primary source materials on the subject that seem compelling--culling material which seems most interesting for a play. We will present those materials to Vande Zande, looking for his leadership in how best to share these materials with the 5th graders and present it to them--student to student.

Phase -Two: Learning about Painted Scenery and the Vaudeville Second-Floor Theater (February/May 2009).

Calling upon resources from the UWM Library and expertise of faculty, UWM faculty Holderness and students will support Vande Zande's creation and presentation of several lessons about the nature of painted scenery and the American Vaudeville stage to both 5th graders and UWM students. We will sponsor a field trip to the Pabst Theater or other locations in Milwaukee to illustrate this topic. The 5th graders would then, under the direction of Vande Zande, create designs for painted scenery from the research material on "The Blues" and "Stepping." At the same time, the UWM students will complete the primary research and creation of the basic script.

Phase-Three: From Design to Execution (May/June 2009).

After the semester has concluded at UWM, but before the HUS school year has concluded, the 5th graders will be invited to work with the UWM students and faculty on the execution of their designs. The UWM students will use the results of this collaboration towards a studio performance in the fall or winter of the 2009-10 school year. Under the direction and suggestion of Vande Zande and theater faculty students would be observing and learning scenery techniques including drafting, and painting. The 5th graders will contribute designs to the eventual UWM production. This serves the 5th grade as it ties into and makes real their curriculum, which is focused on creating art in the community.

Outcomes would be manifold:

- A body of research about "The Blues" and "Stepping" in relation to performance history.
- Exposure for the HUS students to theater history, design, and technical-theater practice.
- Collaboration for UWM students with younger students.
- Jump-starting the creation of new theater work.
- Jump-starting faculty research on issues relating the African American Diaspora to performance history.
- Fun and community.

From history to performance

A community based research and performance project with two goals:

- to involve UWM Theater Students, Hartford University School art students, members of the Black Holocaust Museum and the UWM Special Collections staff in research on roots of the African Diaspora in Music.
- To involve UWM theater students, and Hartford University School students in the process of moving from research to production- looking specifically at the mid-19 Century to early 20th century production from Vaudeville to radio and early recording.

Activities for the project would include:

Winter/Spring 2009

- Research on the diaspora and music between UWM Theater performance, playwriting and dramaturgy students collecting materials for the creation of performance text.
- Presentation to Mr. Vande Zande of this research looking for a collaborative platform where the 4th or 5th graders will create the designs for painted scenery for the performance

Fall 2009

- Implementation of the Design and production of performance
In A labWorks modality with some extended production support.
- The process of taking small images large drops, and how this set might refer to historical vaudeville set, the use of computers for set design and scene paint techniques will be shared by UWM College Students to select Hartford students through the implementation of their ideas and designs.

Learning outcomes:

Research on Diapsora made in available to the public through performance.

Process of research to performance for a performance team

Use of research to inspire visual art

Exploration of scene painting, and production techniques between 4th or 5th graders and college students.

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Letter of Partnership:8/28/10

UWM to Hartford University School:

Rebecca Holderness, Bruce Brockman, Chris Guse of UWM PSOA Theater and Steve Vande Zande agree to lead a collaborative research and design project between the 5th grade at Hartford University School Students and theater undergraduates at UWM in the winter and spring of 2009- partnering together to provide designs for a theater production at UWM on aspects of the African American Cultural Diaspora in 2009 or 10. The several parties agree to the following roles and responsibilities:

Holderness, Brockman and Guse in collaboration with UWM students provide to Vande Zande and his students' appropriate research materials (pictures, film clips, music and other primary source media) in presentation on historical aspects of "the Blues" and "Stepping."

The UWM Team will collaborate with Vande Zande on a collaborative field trip to view local vaudeville era theaters.

The UWM team will utilize images or designs generated by the 5th grade in the creation of scenery. Including demonstrations of set painting and construction where possible.

UWM students will benefit by testing research with a community group who both has investment in the subject – testing history against current perceptions of a genre. UWM students will benefit by sharing their wonder and interest in the theater with young people. UWM will benefit by having the vision of young designers.

Hartford University School to UWM

Vande Zande will preview the research generated by the UWM students- helping define what of the larger group of research might be interesting to the 5th graders. And then provide an opportunity for the UWM students to share that research with the students.

Hartford and Vande Zande will assist in organizing the 5th graders to go with the UWM theater students on a theater-based field trip.

Vande Zande will undertake with the 5th graders the designs for the painted panels of the proposed production, As the painting would occur in the late spring and production not until the fall of 2009 at the earliest, this painting project can be scheduled with some flexibility,

Hartford University Students benefit by learning about the Diaspora, and how research can be channeled into creative acts. They are exposed to deeper research about the art of making theater and how it has been made in the past in their community. They learn design skills and are celebrated as young designers

Rebecca Holderness for UWM

Sieve Vande Zande For Hartford University School.

BUDGET:

Faculty Stipend:

Steve Vande Zande:	\$900.
Rebecca Holderness (Winter Term 2009)	\$900.
General Labor for panel construction	\$300.

Total Stipend: **\$2100.**

Trips:

Hartford and UWM combined research Transportation, and Museum Entrance fees. Research Booklets for HUS Students	\$400.
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Scenery Supplies

(Extra paint or other material to be donated to HUS)	\$600.
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Total Budget: **\$3100.**