

Brandi LaShay

Arts Programming Overview + Teaching Artist(s) Bio

Brandi LaShay, is a native of Orangeburg, South Carolina and Alumnus of Claflin University ('17). She furthered her theatre career as a resident performer and Education Assistant at the St. Louis Repertory Company. Brandi later transitioned to Louisville, KY, where she earned her Masters of Fine Arts- Performance and certification in African American Theatre, at the University of Louisville ('22).

Since earning her Masters degree, Brandi has directed five productions, performed in five productions, spearheaded the Museum Theatre program at Historic Locust Grove, written and produce four productions, co-wrote and produce one full length play, curated specialized curriculum as a UofL adjunct professor, and served as resident teaching artist for over fifty schools, community centers and institutions in Louisville and Jefferson county.

While growing her theatre practice in Louisville, Brandi also serves Redline Performing Arts (RPA) as the first and only Black Woman in the position of Resident Artistic Director, simultaneously, serving as an inaugural creative partner with IdeasZlab and The Unknown Project. Brandi is excited to continue serving the Louisville community and surrounding areas with her artistry and looks forward to the expansion and longevity of her offering in the field of theatre arts.

Artistic Content of Programming

Playwriting Writing/ Creative Writing Residency

This course will initiate various improvisational and writing activities to demonstrate key playwriting concepts such as, character, setting, conflict, stakes, plot and resolutions. Students will be introduced to several types or short stories and plays, or learn to explore their personal interest to produce their own short play. This course will offer a strong emphasis on giving and receiving effective feedback, by reading, acting, directing and responding to personal written drafts and the drafts of their peers. Students will not only meet educational Literacy and English standards, students will activate other skills such as writing, reading, storytelling, effective communication, creative expression, creative impulse, self-awareness and confidence.

Scene Study + Script Analysis

Scene study is a course that offers tools and techniques on how to analyze text, ensemble building, creating strong character choices, improve active listening, identifying objectives and tactics, while constantly engaging in the art of effective communication and feedback. Students will not only work their acting muscles, they will explore how their creative strengths and weaknesses contribute to performing a scene, this includes, scene study from the lens of a playwright, director, set and/or sound designer. This course will emphasize the concept of "Not abandoning your scene partner" which identifies the importance of ensemble and community.

Theatre for Communication/ Stage Presence/ Public Speaking

-This course is an introduction to theatre and performance as communication. Students will develop a general performance awareness and effective approaches to speaking in front of a variety of groups throughout the course. Students will demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving by exploring the link between self and partner/audience. Additionally, students will build and grow themselves in performance and communication through ensemble building, active listening, acting exercises, and creative material development.

Museum Theatre & the Black Diaspora

-In this course students will examine the encapsulation and preservation of the Black Diaspora through artistic works and its presentation through the medium of Museum Theatre. Students will develop a general awareness of how to blend the past histories with present day experiences and cultural norms to produce their own performative narratives. Students will exercise life and creative skills such as; critical thinking, problem solving, self-reflection, collaboration, effective communication and storytelling. Additionally, students will grow their personal understanding of histories associated with the Black Diaspora in America.

All Outcomes Are Measure Through:

Surveys, Evaluations, and SWOT analysis

Educational Content of Programming

1. Speak publicly, in both formal and informal contexts, demonstrating skills such as appropriate selection of topic and materials, clear organization, effective presentation, and the ability to adapt to audience, setting, and occasion.

This will be assessed through informal performances and presentations such as observations of others, improvisation, and speeches. This will also be assessed in reading responses, in-class discussions, feedback session and final creative presentations.

2. Demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills to understand the intricate link between audience, speaker, and occasion.

This outcome will be assessed through the informal presentations including observation of others, acting and improv scenes and writings. This outcome will also be assessed in the practice of class feedback, as well as written performance and presentation critiques.

3. Evaluate and synthesize materials from diverse sources and integrate multiple perspectives into oral presentations.

This outcome will be assessed primarily through students' work on their Final Creative Presentation, in their Creative Material Development, as well as in Draft showings of the Final Creative Presentation.

4. Analyze and critique the oral communication of oneself and others.

This outcome will be assessed through class Participation and Discussion, class Feedback two

Performance and Presentation Critiques, and in the application of feedback for their Final Creative Presentation.

5. Listen effectively, using critical and reflective thinking when responding to communication events. This outcome will be assessed in informal performances and presentations including: Improv acting and writing scenes. This will also be assessed through the work incorporating feedback during the Draft Presentations of the Final Creative Presentation.

Process for hiring, training, and evaluating my performance/effectiveness.

Post class SWOT analysis is my primary method of evaluating my own performance and effectiveness. SWOT analysis allows me to measure Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Treats. This type of immediate evaluation is most beneficial for documenting, informal and verbal feedback from students and documenting all class sessions from the lens of the instructor. This primary, process based method of self-evaluation is an important tool for determining what adjustments need to be made for the duration of the residency.

My secondary method of evaluation is a mid-class and post-class evaluation. This is an opportunity to receive unfiltered feedback directly from students. This type of feedback may prompt questions about the instructor, what activities are enjoyable and what may be challenging, in addition to assessing personal expectations and personal improvements.

My last method of evaluation is parent/ guardian communication. Community building opportunities are stronger when parents and guardians are involved. In environments in which parents are involved in drop off or pick up, I try to assess student growth and development outside of the classroom, guardians can articulate noticeable improvement by their child's communication, enthusiasm to participate or complete a project, or even expressed desire or admiration to continue to learning a particular skill with a particular instructor. This also strengthens the three-way communication between instructor, student and guardian, lending itself to ensemble building in the classroom and community building beyond the classroom.

How are participants of all backgrounds and abilities included in programming?

Interactive Introductions: This is a culmination of theatre and improv games. These activities include, physical, verbal, non-verbal and interpersonal communication. This type of introduction to one another relieves social pressures and anxiety, reassures a "safe space" and "brace space" and communicates to the instructor a wide range of social, emotional and educational needs.

Music: Music is proven to increase engagement, connection, community and self-expression. All courses include students contributing to the atmosphere of the space. Music is not only a practice to ensure inclusion, it also ensures teamwork, exposes others to different forms of social engagement and it enhances and encourages our input towards this shared experience.

Self-Expression/ Authentic Expression/ Active Listening: Actively listening to how students prefer to creatively express themselves is a key component to assure maximum self and authentic expression. All creative course to designed to reassure the validity of one's opinion, lived experiences, while learning about others.

Feedback: All courses rely on the process of giving and receiving effective feedback. Student to teacher feedback is essential for dismantling the power dynamic that is often assorted in youthful spaces. Feedback is a tool that exercises strategic self advocacy, active listening, and accountability. Once the space has been established as a safe space, all persons are encouraged and challenged to share their feedback.

How do I engage teachers and community center staff before, during, and after programming?

My primary tool for teachers community center and staff engagement is initiated by inviting them to join the process. As the instructor aims to remove the power dynamic and trust in each course, other teachers, community leaders and staff may notice an improved relationship with students if they are engaged in inactive activities that are not facilitated by themselves. This open invitation coincides with my goal of community building and developing a healthy coexistence.

How do I engage participants in the creative and learning process?

The instructor engages with participants in the creative and learning process with music, social media, TV shows, mixed media, games and current news and social topics. The instructor also models creative participation, reassesses expectations and consistently provides positive reinforcement.