

Dear Department of Dance and Theatre at UNT,

Fond greetings from New York! My name is Erik Crowl, and I had the pleasure to attend UNT between the years of 2017 and 2021. Caw! Despite the challenges of Covid, rest assured I walked away from college feeling well prepared and thankful for the experiences granted to me from my Theatre degree.

Today, I write to you about Bob Hess - a teacher who was pivotal to much of my success at UNT. Truthfully, I've rewrote this letter multiple times. It's hard to put into words, beyond "he's really just that great" - but please bear with me while I try.

I was a student of Bob's beginning in my Sophomore year, fall of 2018, in Acting Realism. While the foundational courses prior to this class did their jobs well, this was the first class that I truly felt I could not receive at a different academic institution. Later, I took Acting for the Camera with him, then went on to assist him in teaching a future Acting for the Camera class. Beyond this, I had regular interactions with Bob outside of classes. He had a vested interest in my education and career, and went above and beyond the call of duty regularly. It is my impression I was not alone in this, and many other students talked very fondly of him.

As a student, my perception of Bob as a teacher is phenomenal. Bob Hess is a professional in every sense of the word. He is very organized, and will often hold coaching sessions outside of class time (with his free time, I presume) to ensure students are latching onto the learning material properly. In my experience, he would regularly talk to us on a sort of "meta-level" in his classes. This was to gauge how the class is going, and adjust accordingly if certain teaching methods weren't working as intended. Nearly every aspect of his teaching works, and works well. He maintains teacher student boundaries, while still allowing for the close friendly connections that a theater teacher sometimes requires. All of this is to say, Bob is an amazing teacher and professor.

I'm not sure if it showed up on the backend, but it was a regular experience every semester to stress and worry about getting into Bob's classes. I very strongly remember a semester in which Acting for the Camera was offered simultaneously by another teacher, and nearly every student I talked to in that separate class expressed a desire to have been taught by Bob instead after he had substituted once. This is not said to disparage the other teacher, merely to display Bob's prowess when it comes to teaching. He deeply understands my generation, and how to bring out the best in us.

With Bob's mentorship, without a doubt I have reached a new level on my own personal performers journey. Broadly, I walked away with a much deeper and enriched emotional well for my art. I learned a vast variety of techniques under him, including but not limited to some of the greats: Stanislavski, Meissner, and Strasberg. Beyond classic theory though, Bob has displayed a rich grasp on modern trends in acting, combining it with a very learned and wise perspective. There are memories I've made in his classes, experiences that will likely follow me for years to come - possibly to the day I die.

Career wise, Bob has done a FANTASTIC JOB, arguably the best of any teacher, at preparing me for the realities of post-Covid Theatre. Without his Acting for the Camera class, I would be completely adrift in this new landscape where self-tapes are the norm. I had no clue how to handle this prior to the class. Afterwards, I have a firm grasp on: Setting up a studio (including the camera, backdrop, lighting, etc), video editing, sound editing, and all that goes into the technique of acting on film. I have used all of these excessively in this new landscape, and they have helped me into the door to auditions.

I understand the purpose of this letter is to provide “proof of mentorship”, and I sincerely hope it has provided even a fraction of what I’ve received in the three years I studied under Bob. If necessary, I would be willing to write more examples, call and discuss, or anything else if needed, as Bob truly deserves the high praise. My email is [crowlerik@gmail.com](mailto:crowlerik@gmail.com) if this proves necessary.

It is my opinion that the Theatre Department of UNT would be forever changed, and for the worse, if Bob found a better opportunity elsewhere. He has guided myself, and many of my friends and peers, to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of acting, theater, film, and the human experience. I cannot imagine the UNT Theatre without his influence there - with that, I strongly recommend he be considered for tenure.

Thank you for reading, and I wish you a fantastic rest of your day!

Erik Crowl