



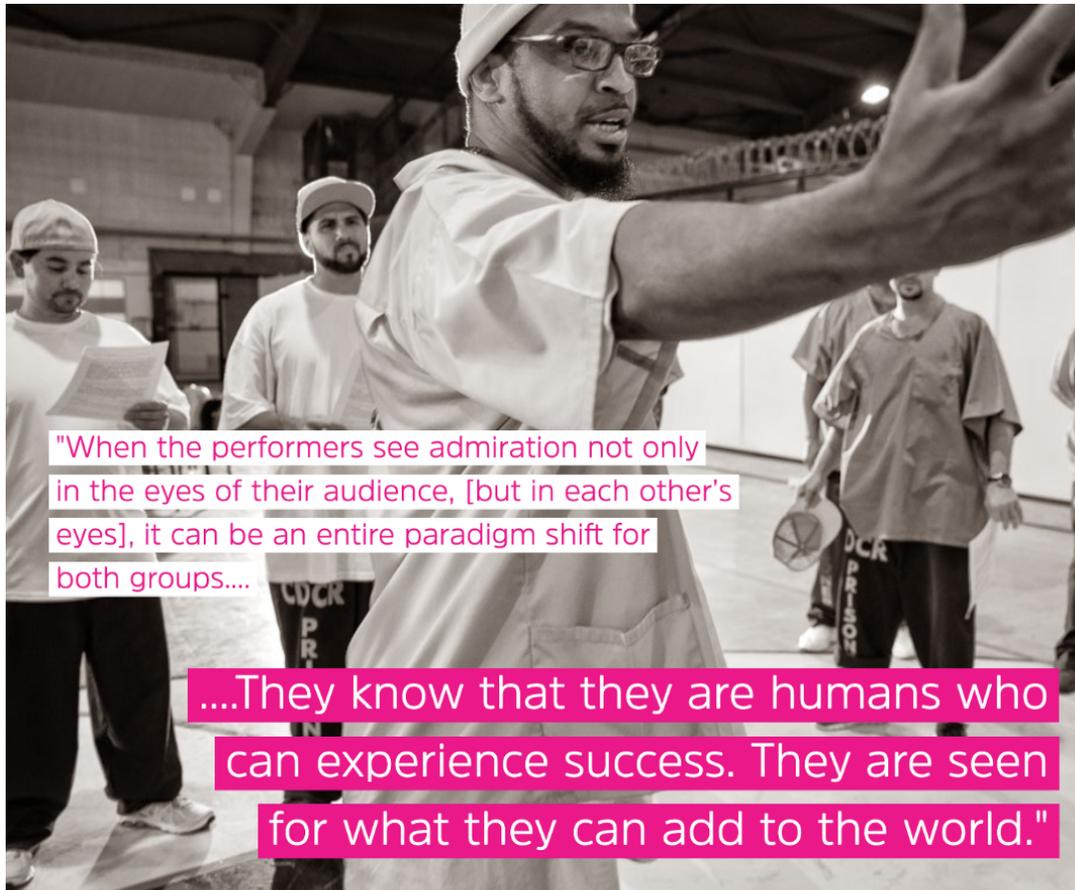
“Inside Shakespeare for Social Justice” is Marin Shakespeare Company's social media series spotlighting the participants in the SSJ programs, that seeks to expand our virtual community and keep the hope and promise of Shakespeare in prisons alive through these difficult times. While our spring Shakespeare for Social Justice season has been postponed, we want to honor each Shakespeare for Social Justice class for their work toward the planned performance.

After each Shakespeare for Social Justice performance, students are asked to reflect on what it was like to create a play with their team of fellow actors, and to share their appreciation with one another.

Here, the teaching artists at Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI), who have seen the group through various phases of growth and expansion since 2017, share their appreciation for the class. This teaching duo has steered the group's rehearsal process through unexpected transfers of incarcerated actors, lockdowns, and even quarantines. They've successfully performed productions of Henry IV Part 1, The Tempest, Hamlet, and Macbeth. This year's performance will be of The Comedy of Errors; while the performance was postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis, we eagerly anticipate being able to reschedule.

We invite you to join us in celebrating the work of Shakespeare for Social Justice at DVI, and, in doing so, to consider the wisdom of people who have been in circumstances different than your own.

What do you hope that students receive or achieve through the post-performance appreciation session?



K: In the post-performance appreciation session, I want students to feel appreciated and respected as theater artists and as humans. I want audiences to recognize their hard work, commitment, creativity and talent.

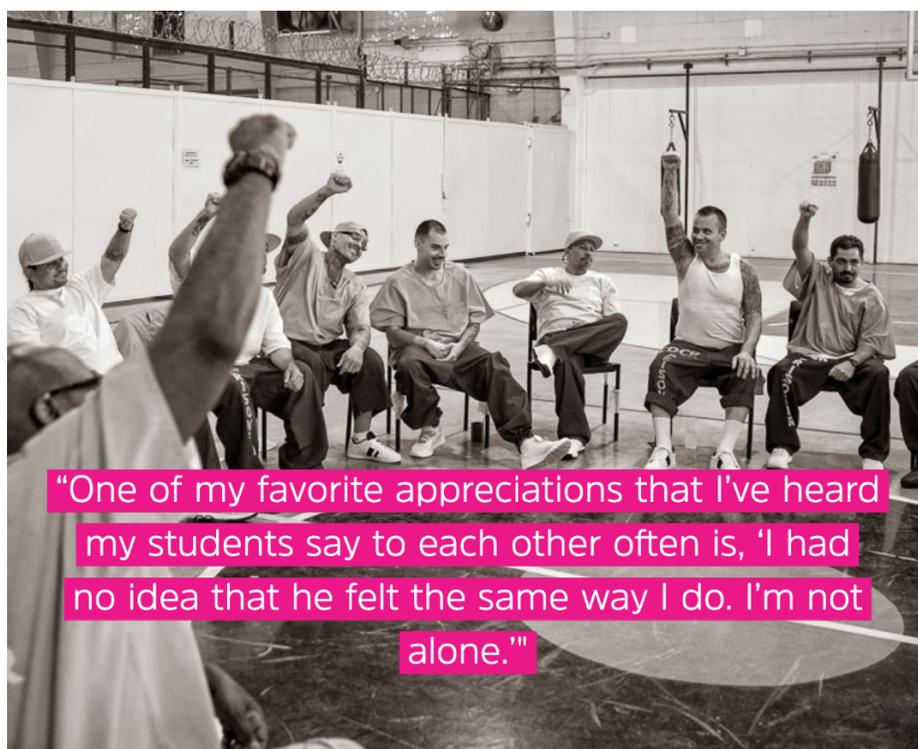
P: I know for myself being onstage is a rush. So much is happening externally: focusing on playing the role, on caring for the ensemble, paying attention to details, seeing what lands with the audience. Internally, there's this lovely cocktail of adrenaline and other hormones that alter the brain. When one comes down off of that euphoric high,

it's easy to wonder, did that really happen? Alternately, it's easy for people to perseverate on a missed line and distort what happened in their mind. My intention for an appreciation session is for the students to get to really take in feedback for each's individual growth and contribution in a quieter moment. Plus, it's a chance for the ensemble to reflect: "yes, that really happened" and to affirm their teamwork.

K: It's moving to watch that reciprocal relationship between audience and performer shared out loud. Some men have never worked in a team before, or experienced success working towards a common goal. When the performers see the admiration not only in the eyes of their audience, but in their words, it can be an entire paradigm shift for both groups. They know that they are humans who can experience success. They are seen for what they can add to the world.

Do you recall anything particularly surprising or compelling that your students have appreciated about one another, whether individually or collectively?

P: [During one session] they were so into the appreciations, everyone wanted to appreciate everyone. So we let them. They appreciated people for the ways they'd helped them, for raising the bar, for the support to be their best selves. I was amazed at the details they noticed and reflected back to each person.



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K: One of my favorite appreciations that I've heard them say to each other often is, "I had no idea that he felt the same way I do. I'm not alone."

P: [My favorite appreciation] was for Macbeth. We had a really talented actor playing MacDuff. He had not been able to act the day of the show due to a quarantine on his wing. Already we'd been so concerned that he might be transferred and not able to play this part. He wasn't transferred, but rather was a few hundred yards from the gymnasium, locked in his cell while another man played his part. On the night when we shared our appreciations, he came to class. Everyone gave him a lot of appreciation and credit for his loss. He then admitted that he had cut off his long dreadlocks to look the part. It was heartbreaking. [But, the men created] a song tribute to the MacDuff actor. He got a standing ovation from his peers.



What have you grown to appreciate about the participants?



K: I appreciate the students' resilience and dedication to each project. Students adapt and help each other and are willing to change parts whenever needed. When others are transferred or sick, there is always someone else willing to step up. I appreciate that they approach the projects with humor and camaraderie.

Is there anything you have learned from the students that has been helpful or supportive to you during this time?

P: I have a tiny inkling of what solitary might feel like, as I shelter alone. I definitely think about how they use the time to [improve themselves] and cultivate their relationship with the divine.

K: I have learned from my students that we don't always have a choice in events that occur in our environment, but we each have a choice in our reactions to them. I am in awe of the many students I teach who choose to spend their time helping others, learning more about the world around them, taking classes to understand themselves better, and fostering their creative souls. Those students inspire me to not

grieve my past during this uncertain time, but to live in a present filled with compassion and curiosity.

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