

## Chapter 11: Other Perspectives on the Lovewell Method

### *Themes and Characters That Inform the Lovewell Process*

In this chapter, the Lovewell Method is examined thematically rather than sequentially as in the previous chapter. As the themes are examined, the people who embody and explore those themes are introduced--the human dialectic. Within the framework of the Lovewell process, the themes selected in the guided brainstorming sessions are subsequently explored, articulated, and humanized by the characters that the students create and embody. In regard to Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method, I have been brainstorming the themes identified in the previous chapters for over 20 years. In this chapter, some of the “characters” (and types of characters) who actually breathe life into Lovewell’s themes are introduced. The primary characters in the story of Lovewell are the staff instructors; the board members; the students; the parents; and, finally, the audience. First, a discussion of the responsibilities of staff instructors and the type of person who is drawn to these positions will reveal why the human element is such an important factor in the effectiveness of the Lovewell Method. The evolution of the method has helped Lovewell Institute identify and establish reasonable expectations for good instructors and generally what is required of them. The second part of this chapter reviews some of the people and organizations whose missions and activities are similar and relevant to the Lovewell Method.

### *Requirements and Training for Lovewell Staff Artist/Instructors*

Lovewell holds a high standard for staff artist/instructors, not only artists and creative innovators, but also as compassionate teachers and guides who know how to administer the pedagogy with consistency and integrity. Staff artist/instructors are the heartbeat of the Lovewell Method because they are in touch with the students day to day

and hour to hour in an intensive and demanding learning environment. A staff artist/instructor candidate is screened and interned (usually for several years) before he or she takes on the responsibility of a full staff instructor. Each instructor is aware that he or she is entrusted with more than just teaching the arts. They are also charged with teaching the students about emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), how to be aware of and appreciate the world around them, and about life from the viewpoint of a responsible creative artist who will have power over future audiences. Lovewell instructors help the students learn the basic rules of a discipline (often more than one), then instructors help them learn to experiment with new combinations of arts disciplines leading to new interdisciplinary forms of expression and communication.

The instructors assist the budding artists as they learn to contrast and compare, articulate a viewpoint, contemplate ethical questions, and mitigate opposing opinions. The staff and students learn together about symbiosis, collaboration, and the value of connecting intellectually and emotionally on deep and sometimes profound levels.

Because the interdisciplinary authenticity of the Lovewell Method relies on offering expertise in various domains such as music, theatre, writing, visual arts, dance, and stage technologies, Lovewell workshops are often misperceived by outside administrators and funding sources as being overstaffed because of the amount of field-specific experts required to properly administer a workshop. The Lovewell Method functions best when there is at least one instructor representing each discipline. Lovewell Institute's normal staff to student ratio is 1:5 or 1:6. This tends to be a problem for funding sources focusing only on the budget, especially if they do not understand the Lovewell process.

Lovewell Institute is occasionally forced to defend its position on adequate

staffing for all of its programs. I was once at a final granting session when one panelist stated that she was awarding points to potential grant recipients strictly on the basis of the proportion of dollars per student--the most students packed into the lowest budget (usually indicating understaffed) program wins. In other words, by giving fewer students a higher quality learning experience affording them more personal attention and tutored learning opportunities, Lovewell continues to be penalized by many granting committees. That panelist scored Lovewell so low that there was no possibility of getting the grant. I know of a local summer theatre camp that is financially successful because 400 students are supervised by three overworked drama teachers. Lovewell Institute has a distinct disadvantage when judged solely by the numbers as in many granting situations.

The salient point here is that Lovewell Institute must maintain these high standards in the quality and ratio of the staff instructors and that reality must always be reflected honestly in the budget. The staff to student ratio must be maintained for the process to work effectively, otherwise, it just becomes babysitting or another “daycare in disguise” program. It is commitment to the mission and dedication to the purpose that keeps Lovewell staff instructors coming back year after year. They are invested in the Lovewell process and they know that they have each contributed to the process and the product as they have evolved together over the years.

Many of Lovewell Institute’s current staff instructors first entered into the program as students in their teens. They were then singled out and groomed to become interns and, surviving that, became full staff instructors. It is a screening process that would challenge any human resource department. Lovewell board members, administrators, and senior staff instructors all participate in the search and selection of suitable staff. Because of the collaborative nature of the Lovewell process, mastering a

discipline and being a good teacher are only the prerequisites. Lovewell staff instructors must also be able to communicate effectively with students, fellow staff, and parents. They must be prepared, when necessary, to act as arbitrators, mediators, ombudspersons, counselors, and referees.

### *Respect and Collaboration*

Staff training takes on a new meaning within the context of the Lovewell Method. In the following paragraphs, the primary issues involving staff training are examined and explained. Social skills, academic skills, vocational skills, and communication skills are all aspects of what the Lovewell Method is poised to teach. One of the most important skills imparted by the Lovewell artist/instructors is the concept of "respect," respect for oneself; for each other; for the content, history, literature, and master practitioners of the artistic domains; and respect for the creative process. Lovewell instructors help students learn how to listen to other students' ideas and suspend judgment until an idea is fully expressed and explored. They set up an atmosphere of collaboration wherein each idea brought forward is questioned, examined, and weighed in terms of its value to the overall project (no matter how subjectively or myopically it is being articulated by the student). This is one of the most valuable skills a trained Lovewell Instructor can develop, to take the unformed and often vague idea of a student and see the potential in it. Then to guide the student through the process of refining and clarifying that idea until it is perceived as a valid contribution.

During the writing sessions, what sounds like the worst idea often eventually develops into the best idea, the idea that "saves the scene" and surprises the audience. This only occurs when critical judgment is suspended until the questionable idea has a chance to surface and breathe before being shot down (a knee-jerk reaction of many

teenagers). Watching potentially "embarrassing" ideas transformed into "productive" ideas when put into the context of the show, students learn to trust their instincts and appreciate the value of patience and true collaboration. They learn that mutual respect and patience are not just lofty ideals; they are vital tools of successful communication and collective achievement.

Lovewell students not only observe their instructors in the process of respecting each student's input but also have many opportunities to apply the concept in practical situations. Early in the Lovewell process, staff artists/instructors make it clear that the best artistic product is achieved by synthesizing a wealth of ideas (the collective mind), rather than competing and diffusing into fragmented paralytic work sessions of ego flexing and indecision. When a student sees the benefits of the practical application of respect, it is more likely that he or she will absorb and integrate the details of how true mutual respect is achieved. This respect for the ideas of collaborators can then be transferred to a higher level of respect for one's own ideas and those of the collective team. Acquiring collaboration skills takes time and nurtures patience. Not only are students encouraged to honor the ideas and thoughts of other people and themselves, they are taught to honor the *process* and its procedures. Collaboration is rarely taught in schools, but, as a primary focus of the Lovewell Method, it is considered an essential and teachable skill, a truly attainable learning objective.

### *Honesty*

Honesty is considered more of a quality than a skill; however, there are ways of learning more about the nature and value of honesty through the arts. Lovewell instructors teach students that what makes a truly honest and powerful moment onstage is an extension of the honesty of the people who have created that moment: the writer, the

director/choreographer, the actor, and the designers. Audiences know if the material or performers are not being honest, and they teach the young artist much about the essence of honesty by the way they respond. Lovewell students are often able to transfer what they have learned about onstage honesty to their own lives. Finding the truth of an onstage moment or of a character is the goal of all theatrical artists regardless of the "style" of the piece. Even in fantasy or comedy, there is an ethic that measures the level of honesty within the circumscribed reality of the piece. The Lovewell Method insists on the search for truthful moments in the creation as well as the interpretation of the artworks. Then, through integrative activities such as the Learning Meditations and Pillow Talk as described earlier, instructors endeavor to guide students to make the connections and look at the truth of who they are, what they are saying, what they can achieve, and why they want to become artists, essentially finding purpose and direction in their lives. This process also helps identify life goals that are attainable.

### *Acceptance and Forgiveness*

Enhanced understanding of “the world of human beings” and enhanced understanding of “the world of the self” are primary educational goals as defined by Gardner (1999). These are also primary objectives of the Lovewell Method. In an effort to meet those goals, the Lovewell instructors place an emphasis on open-mindedness. The most commonly shared observation made by students describing the Lovewell process is that it encourages "acceptance," as documented later in chapter 12. Lovewell instructors constantly strive to create an atmosphere of acceptance, for new ideas, for differences in culture and opinion, for each other, and for themselves. Acceptance requires certain steps and procedures, a methodical progression of “awarenesses.” Forgiveness is probably the most essential ingredient if acceptance and open-mindedness are to be achieved. Some

would say that the ability to forgive cannot be taught. Our experience has shown that forgiveness can be and *is* taught as a major component of the collaborative process. Forgiveness and open-mindedness are vital tools for intellectual expansion in a group dynamic. This is a good example of the way Lovewell frames some essential aspects of desirable human behavioral characteristics--not as religious imperatives--but rather practical tools of successful communication and collaboration.

Lovewell instructors are trained to build on whatever core of confidence that is already acknowledged by the student. Every student usually has something at which he or she suspects they are good. That suspicion is the departure point, and staff instructors build on that core of confidence by encouraging students to exercise the strength and see if confidence in another related area can be added on. For instance, if a student writes a beautiful song but is shy about singing, the staff starts them on vocal instruction. This is the teachable moment in which the student is highly motivated to extend the successful feeling of having created a worthy song into taking the risk of singing the song. The students work on techniques of singing until some level of confidence is achieved. Listening to a voice recording is usually enough to convince the student to honestly assess whether he or she will actually perform the song in the production or transfer it to another appropriate character. Knowing that the students have been trusted to create the content of the piece, they exercise more confidence in the interpretation of it. Confidence builds on confidence like snow on a downhill snowball. These confidence-expansion techniques have been very effective. Lovewell instructors are also called upon to gently point out the distinction between confidence and arrogance. I have observed that many Lovewell students do eventually learn the difference, although this is sometimes not an easy lesson.

### *Vocational Skills Cultivated Through the Lovewell Method*

Lovewell instructors guide the students through the basic arts-based and nonarts-based skills including all the disciplines involved in a typical interdisciplinary production. Among these skills are the following:

1. Dramatic writing. Instructors conduct writing exercises and instruct the students in the elements of dramaturgical structure, playwrighting, dramatic styles, and authentic dialogue.

2. Voice production. Students are trained in standard methods of vocal production including breath control, diction, and projection.

3. Acting. Instructors offer acting instruction including character analysis, improvisation, scene study, exploring styles, and traditional exercises emphasizing awareness and concentration.

4. Dance and stage movement. There are daily dance classes for dancers and nondancers (actors, singers, designers, technicians, and writers). Everyone in theatre has to walk across the stage at some point in his or her career. The dance instruction includes physical exercises, dance styles, expression through body language, painting stage pictures, narrative dance, telling stories through movement, and choreographic styles as they relate to the subject material.

5. Lyric writing. This discipline explores the difference between poetry, lyrics, and dialogue. Lovewell Institute recommends using *Wood's Unabridged Rhyming Dictionary* (1943) and *Roget's International Thesaurus* (1962) to help students as they strive to articulate the plot, illuminate the characters, and employ poetic imagery.

Students also learn how use these tools of the trade to expand their vocabulary and create lyrics that scan well with the music.



6. Musical composition. Three to 4 weeks is not enough time to instruct students in the fundamentals of a complete music education, but it is enough time to instill substantial motivation for future training. The Lovewell process invites any interested student to participate in creating a song regardless of their level of musical accomplishment. Naturally, the trained musician often has the advantage, but we all know by now that the Beatles could not read or write music, Irving Berlin could only play in the key of C, and that Charlie Chaplin whistled many of his movie scores to arrangers. Lovewell instructors provide quick lessons in the basic elements of theatre music - melody, harmonic progression, rhythm, mood, style, structure, and so forth. Examples of classic theatre songs are examined and analyzed.

7. Design and technical skills. Our designer-technical instructor teaches the students elements of design that will be applied to the sets, costumes, lighting, props, and sound. Students not only learn the function of good design but they also explore the scene shop and control booth to get hands-on experience in the construction and practical application of these elements. When a student is qualified, he or she may operate the lights and sound or call the cues during the performances.

8. Computer skills. In an effort to share ideas quickly and effectively, Lovewell artist/instructors help students transfer handwritten notes, lyrics, outlines, and dialogue to the word processor. Also, students of design and theatre technologies (sound, lighting, sets, and costumes) often get their first experience operating a computerized control board or working with arts technology-based software. Instructors introduce students and interns to graphic design software programs for posters, show logos, playbills, and special effects.

### *Academic Skills Cultivated Through the Lovewell Method*

The Lovewell Method affords the opportunity to build academic as well as vocational and social skills. The five major benefits derived from educational theatre as identified by Yoon (2000) are aesthetic, pedagogical, psychological, social, and vocational. These are some of the skills related to the pedagogical benefits that I have observed being cultivated through the Lovewell Method:

1. Organizational skills. Students engage in authentic problem solving as they assemble, compile, distill, and develop their ideas into theme, character, and plot. They learn how dramatic events are outlined, organized, and developed into a sequence of scenes, songs, narrative dance, and technical events or effects that add up to one cohesive statement. They explore form, structure, and language in determining linear or nonlinear thematic constructs and composites.

2. Language skills. Students learn to listen closely to language. They are introduced to the subtleties of expression through the writing of prose, dialogue, and lyrics. Writers, actors, singers, dancers, and designers are encouraged to explore deeper levels of communication and understanding of their craft by expressing ideas convincingly through the written, spoken, or sung word. Students learn the value and skills involved in the editing process. Also, they develop a keener vocabulary and a deft usage of words and “jargon” commonly used in the various disciplines. International programs necessitate swift acquisition of foreign language skills.

3. Reading skills. Students do not want to embarrass themselves in front of their peers. The Lovewell Method requires that all students read aloud their new scenes. The dialogue is constantly being revised, rewritten, and edited; consequently, the motivation to read aloud with authority, accuracy, and full comprehension of the material is very

high. These skills are honed on a daily basis. Peer pressure provides an effective motivator to develop these reading, writing, and editing skills.

4. Cognitive skills. Because the common goal is to create a group statement and communicate it effectively to an audience, the students are persistently called upon to practice cognitive skills such as perception (understanding the logical scene-to-scene progression of events), judgment (discerning what should be put onstage and what should be left off-stage), and memory (memorizing dialogue, songs, and staging).

5. Research. Instructors and students thoroughly research their issues and characters. They discover that through researching the issues, style, period, and content of the production, many valuable ideas emerge through the details. These ideas will translate directly into artistic decisions and creative choices.

These pedagogical activities correspond with the measurable learning objectives as described in Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). The Lovewell learning experience actually touches on each one of the levels of the taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The Lovewell process offers an opportunity to experience a flow, a continuum that moves methodically through the levels of the taxonomy in an uninterrupted sequence.

### *Staff Guidelines*

When conducting staff training sessions, my most valuable teaching tool is a set of five guidelines that evolved out of a facilitated staff retreat in the early years of Lovewell. It was a 2-day retreat wherein all staff members took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator survey (Briggs-Myers, 1975) and delved deeply into the subject of job descriptions and specific requirements of the Lovewell staff and instructors. The Myers-Briggs survey was a valuable exercise because it illustrated the value of respecting and

learning how to work with diverse personality types. There were 18 staff members at the retreat, and all but 1 were huddled together in the same quadrant. The 1 lone staff member in the directly opposite quadrant was the business administrator, and the rest of us were artists. The point was made that the success of the program depended on our ability to communicate effectively with the administrator even though she possessed the opposite type of personality from the rest of the staff. This situation proved to be a challenge but one for which we were fully prepared. The staff retreat was particularly meaningful when we brainstormed on a set of guidelines that would provide a foundation for delivering an effective creative process-based program. The five staff guidelines identified at the retreat are listed below accompanied by a brief description of how each one has been utilized in subsequent staff training sessions.

*1. Respect and trust in the process, the answers lie within.* This guideline is a bonding statement. It encourages trust and respect for the process and for the abilities of the staff and instructors to solve problems and meet the daily challenges of conducting the workshop. When the going gets rough, the unity often starts fracturing. Staff members begin to seek solutions elsewhere. In those instances, this guideline directs the focus back to the group dynamic. It instills a sense of mutual dedication and commitment to look within the existing circle to resolve conflicts and map out new strategies. It reestablishes common goals and common interests.

*2. Listen well, create well, love well.* The key to empowering the students with a sense of ownership over the production involves staff members actively listening to and contributing to the students' ideas. It is also a way to consistently remind the students of Lovewell's pledge that their voices will be heard. "Create well" is a mantra that embodies the true spirit of the Lovewell mission, as well as being the core function of the Lovewell

Method. “Love well” is literally the brand name--it is the verb that inspired the noun--a holographic imprint of the method. (Lovewell Lake does exist in Kansas as described in chapter 4 and remains the original inspiration for the name of the institute.)

3. *Be centered, facilitate, encourage, balance, and cultivate.* Here are five core concepts that guide the instructors through the Lovewell process and provide a solid philosophical and conceptual foundation for the methodology. “Be centered” could also be interpreted as “be present.” Most people have heard the term “stage presence” to describe those consummate performers who are visibly comfortable onstage, exude unshakable confidence, and exert an inexplicable command over the audience. Presence is that same quality except that it applies to real life. Students usually respond to this kind of authority when it is tempered with compassion, accessibility, and a sense of interplay. “Facilitate,” in the Lovewell context, means to make the impossible possible. I was told more than once that it is impossible to take a room full of teenage artists and expect them to write and fully produce a polished work of interdisciplinary art within a 3- or 4-week time period. The staff artist/instructors have been trained to facilitate this difficult but not impossible task.

“Encourage” means just what it says, to give the students the courage to craft their message and let their voices be heard. “Balance” is an undervalued concept in modern culture. The staff has learned to balance the passion for the art and the compassion for the student with the measured contemplation of how to deliver a good product. They are on the staff because they have demonstrated the ability to maintain that balance. They serve as role models to students who are largely divergent thinkers and will need to find their own sense of balance in a profession that thrives on emotional displays of imbalance and wretched excesses. Polemics are an inextricable part of the creative process, and that is

why it is particularly important for Lovewell staff to be cognizant of balance as a guiding concept. Balance is emphasized in the art itself as well as in the method used to create that art.

“Cultivate” implies the process by which the staff transfers their own understanding and proficiencies to the students. In training sessions, I ask the staff to offer examples of works of art that inspire them personally. In one workshop, the students wanted to write a show about art. After we watched Sondheim’s (1984) *Sunday in the Park With George*, the students had a point of reference and a good idea of how music, lyrics, and good characters helped tell the story and describe the emotions of a creative artistic genius. In another workshop, the students were interested in the Romeo and Juliet theme revisited in the age of AIDS. We watched *Romeo and Juliet* (Zeffirelli, Shakespeare, Brusati, & D’Amico, 1968), Zeffirelli’s movie masterpiece, studied Shakespeare’s (1936) script, and watched the movie of Bernstein’s updated musical treatment of the classic tale *West Side Story* (Bernstein, Sondheim, Laurents, & Robbins, 1961). “Cultivate” implies caring for and nurturing the growth of seeds into full grown plants. That is an apt metaphor for what the staff endeavors to do.

4. *Focus on solutions, what you focus on expands.* The simplicity of this statement does not detract from its usefulness and effectiveness in critical moments during the Lovewell process. As stated before, staff is encouraged to listen to the students’ problems; however, there comes a point where listening further to the details of the problem only exacerbates the problem rather than helping to solve it. Once the problem is clearly stated and the staff member has exhibited empathy by acknowledging the feelings, it is time to start focusing on what to do about it. If the problem continues to be the focus, the problem will become greater. If the staff member directs the student to use

his or her creativity to start coming up with resolutions--not just one, but maybe three ways to solve the problem creatively--then the problem becomes smaller. The problem tends to diminish even if it is not immediately or totally resolved.

5. *Embrace, inspire, and enjoy.* At a regional theatre conference workshop on censorship, I was surprised to learn that in some schools, drama teachers are forbidden to touch the students, even when directing scenes that require specific physicalization for comic or dramatic purposes. "Embrace" can be seen as a spiritual or intellectual concept, but sometimes a student just needs a hug from someone they trust and someone who cares about them. In a rehearsal situation, a student sometimes needs a step-by-step breakdown of how the body moves in order to achieve a certain effect onstage and in relationship to other actors' or dancers' bodies. At Lovewell, embracing is allowed, both physically and metaphorically. Without getting into ethics or politics, it is important to note that in the world of interdisciplinary arts, the body is an essential tool of expression. Gardner (1983, 1993, 1999) emphasized the importance of the body as a learning tool in his theory of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. So as it relates to staff training and body language, "embrace" is an important concept in many ways.

The next guideline item is "inspire." The word inspire comes from the Latin root *inspirare* which means to breathe in. As described in Learning Meditation 3 in chapter 9, this concept is an essential element in the creative process--breathing in information and stimuli from shared realities gives substance to the creation of the artist. The staff has experience with this procedure and passes it onto the students. This action serves as a motivator and prompts the students onto higher levels of achievement. Inspiration also stimulates the imagination. The last item is the most likely to be misunderstood. In our current culture, "to enjoy" something seems to imply that it has no value other than

personal gratification. Maybe that is enough, but in the Lovewell context, there are far-reaching ramifications of the concept of enjoying the process. From quality of life issues to having the desire to show up and work hard every day, the act of enjoying one's work transcends the personal and takes on a beneficial group dynamic in the Lovewell culture. This idea is also a commitment to consciously establish a pleasurable atmosphere wherein artists can celebrate the process of creating new realities.

### *Staff Awareness Exercise*

I developed this staff training exercise to help build awareness of strengths that are vital to the Lovewell Method. Each of the seven "actions" listed below is a discrete function that staff and students could potentially contribute to the process. The actions in some ways parallel Gardner's (1983, 1993, 1999) multiple intelligences; however, they are much more specific to the exigencies of the Lovewell workshop formats. It takes all seven actions interacting and layering to create a holistic interdisciplinary work of art.

In training sessions, I ask each staff member to reflect on how he or she can be a factor in accomplishing each action item. They are also asked to be aware of these strengths in the students and to allow the students' strengths to prevail when exhibited during work sessions. If a student (or staff member) is obviously clear and articulate in one of the action areas below, they are encouraged to "run with it" until their clarity or inspiration is exhausted. It is interesting to note here that the strengths demonstrated are often not in the areas of the artist's disciplinary expertise. This is one of the joys of interdisciplinary pioneering. Here is the list of actions with a brief description of how each contributes to the manifestation of the project.

*1. How can I help "give birth" to the project?* Some types of artists have absolutely no problem thinking of good ideas for a show or a song. They are burning with



concepts, timely themes, and thought-provoking subjects. They jot down notes and fragments of relevant quotes and resources for further development. The birthing process comes easy and is very compelling to them, and often they are very good at it.

Occasionally, their natural strength stops there. They need help in following through.

After the initial burst of creative energy, they need assistance strategizing on the feasibility of the concepts, and the nuts and bolts of how to bring their ideas to fruition.

*2. How can I help "give structure" to the project?* Some people are born structuralists. Those individuals can make priceless contributions to the process when dealing with vast amounts of information and raw data flying around the room during brainstorming sessions. Some students and staff do not know they have this strength until called upon to make sense out of all the random ideas brought forward. In our 1996 cultural exchange in Sweden, I experienced this phenomenon when we were encountering a structural meltdown while trying to sequence the events in a somewhat complex storyline. Brett Maltbie, our young musical director from Kansas, was a top-notch guitar player and recording engineer. I was at the chalkboard going over the "spine" of the show struggling to find a consensus among the Swedish and American students and staff. We were at an impasse. Suddenly, Brett stepped forward with complete confidence and clarity, took all of the scenes, songs, and dance sequences and rearranged them into a sequence that solved the dramaturgical problems and finally made sense to everyone in the room. It took him about 10 minutes to come up with the structure that gave the piece narrative flow and significant cohesion. Everyone was amazed and delighted with Brett's epiphany and learned a lesson about acquiescing to the person experiencing an episode of pure creative "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997).

*3. How can I help "give wisdom" to the project?* Wisdom is a difficult

characteristic to define or quantify, but it does describe the contributions of certain students and staff members who seem to be wise beyond their years. It is safe to say that those students who display early signs of wisdom are designated future staff members because that is a quality that makes good leaders in the Lovewell context. Gardner (1999) shed light on this issue:

We treasure leaders who are both effective and wise, those who have lived through a great deal, have drawn lessons from their experiences, and know how to use these lessons. Of the various stories at their disposal, they can assemble the one that makes the most sense to the most people in the present moment. They can speak to individuals at the deepest level, and are most likely to speak to a variety of people, including those of different backgrounds and beliefs. (p. 134)

Gardner's (1999) observations aptly describe the qualities that the Lovewell Method seeks to identify and nurture in our students and staff leadership. He went on to illustrate another aspect of wisdom critical to Lovewell's philosophical landscape:

A crucial point about wisdom is its modesty, its humility. Neither intelligence nor creativity nor leadership reserves a place for silence, for quiet, for resignation.

And morality may also carry a shrillness or an unwarranted self-confidence.

Youth, perhaps fortunately, knows no limits. The wise person knows when to say nothing, and when to step down and make room for someone else. The wise adult knows about the frailty of humanity and the difficulty of bringing about enduring changes. (p. 134)

So, "giving wisdom to the project" sometimes means backing off until the right moment, then coalescing the themes into one concise element that captures the essence of what the group is trying to say. Carrie Gilchrist, Nathan Tysen, Ryan McCall, Jaime

Johnson-McCall, Leslie Bennett, Gary Wayne, Joel Bicknell, Joe Hagen, Katie Hawley, Tamir Hendelman, Brett Maltbie, Michelle Rivers, and Holly McLean are all veteran staff instructors who have demonstrated this kind of wisdom through their leadership. They are truly the leading “characters” who have, over the years, explored the core elements of the Lovewell Method from numerous perspectives.

*4. How can I help "bring harmony" to the project?* Peacemakers are a rare commodity. Whatever genetic predispositions or life experiences mold this type of personality, it is a blessing to have them included in the Lovewell group dynamic. They smooth the rough edges, temper the passions, and comfort the distraught through the emotional and intellectual intensity of the Lovewell experience. They can bring the group into agreement and help achieve a congruity not otherwise possible. They also use this talent to harmonize elements of the script or story when dramaturgical conflicts need to be resolved. Those who bring harmony are often underestimated and undervalued, but in the Lovewell environment, their contributions are acknowledged and appreciated as a vital part of the process.

*5. How can I help "give passion and bring creativity" to the project?* Some students just naturally have great passion for the arts. They bring enthusiasm and excitement regarding the content, the heritage, and the tradition of creating something out of nothing. They are born “creative types” and infuse the group with the idea that they are collectively doing something important, that they are saying something that needs to be heard. Their enthusiasm for the creative process is more than cheerleading. It is a genuine incentive to work harder, concentrate more, and stretch out to new limits of learning and achievement. Their teachers and parents would probably say that they were unusual or special children. They make connections, suggest out-of-the-box ideas, reorganize the

facts, and basically frustrate anyone who cannot navigate all of the possibilities with the alacrity that they do. My experience has taught me that if they are high maintenance, it is usually a temporary situation. Creativity, if guided wisely, will lead to sustainability, humility, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). Lovewell artist-instructors are often this type of character themselves and consequently know how to nurture and guide this characteristic in nascent artists.

6. *How can I "give vision" to the project?* Writers and directors literally “see” the moment in their imagination that they are creating. Sometimes, artists write the ending of the story before they write the beginning. To those who have the “vision thing,” the world often appears to be unnecessarily self-contained. It is a special gift, or sense, or talent to be able to look at the whole picture. Some can look beyond the realities of what cannot be done into the realities of what can and should be done. These are the ones who can tell you the eventual consequences of a plot point or the inevitable reaction of the audience to a provocative moment onstage. Vision comes in all shapes, sizes, and ages. These visionary types are acknowledged and rewarded for their contributions and introduced to a culture where their visions can become realized.

7. *How can I "bring knowledge" to the project?* After having lived in New York City for 14 years soaking up the arts, I thought I had a working knowledge of the current issues, trends, and major creative figures in the worlds of theatre, music, dance, and visual arts. Perhaps I did, but then I met a high school student from the New World School of the Arts in Miami at a Lovewell Workshop in Kansas. He was a walking encyclopedia of modern American theatre. When I talked to the Lovewell students about current Broadway productions, this young man would know who wrote, directed, and starred in the shows and could sing the songs from any recent musical. He was a joy to

have around because he could always provide living citations and classic examples for any point I was trying to get across. Some students and staff members bring a wealth of knowledge about various related subjects into the mix, and it is always appreciated because it adds substance and quality to the fast-paced learning experience. It is valuable to be able to demonstrate examples of how a master craftsman has dealt with similar characters or dramatic situations. In these teachable moments, knowing one's domain becomes highly desirable, and people who exhibit this kind of knowledge serve as an incentive to the others to listen better, study harder, and learn more.

These seven "actions" not only help guide the staff in how to maximize the creative experience but also help the staff refine their own job descriptions.

Artist-instructors who direct the Lovewell workshops know what needs to be done and are well aware of the specific duties involved in administering a successful workshop. However, unique talents, proficiencies, and preferences always play a part in defining the final job descriptions of each staff member.

#### *Other Human Resources Vital to Lovewell Institute*

There are, in addition to the staff, other important characters playing out the themes of Lovewell Institute: board members, parents, students, and various artists and art groups who are doing similar work. Our board presidents have been Martha Rhea (not the movie star), Royce Young, Ann Knowles, Laurie Cohen, Lori Faye Fischler, Debra Frenkel, and myself. I have gone off the board twice for short periods of time over the past 10 years to see if it would function better without the Founder and Artistic Director being in such close proximity. Now that Lovewell Institute has a capable on-going staff and a dedicated Board, I have had the opportunity to navigate an optimum distance from the organization and its activities. Even though I am once again serving on the Board of

Directors, stepping back from some of the daily activities has allowed me to move to a different level of stewardship and service in relationship to the organization and its mission. I constantly rewrite my role in the Lovewell story. From an autoethnographic perspective, this has resulted in rewriting the role I play in life. As the saying goes, writing is rewriting.

There are many important characters who inhabit the Lovewell cultural community. Harriet Mathis has been a board member for over 12 years. She has arranged for scholarships; written and negotiated contracts; kept the financial records; administrated the programs; and been a friend, confidant, and advisor to me during that time. For a few years, she and I ran all the day-to-day business dealings of Lovewell Institute. An organization like Lovewell could not exist without board members like Ms. Mathis. Her leadership has been invaluable, not only because of her faith in the mission, but because she has brought a quiet spiritual grounding to the whole organization. With a rare blend of down-to-earth practicality and nonsectarian metaphysical wisdom, Harriet has expertly navigated the difficult path of an artist-driven, not-for-profit arts organization.

Dr. Abraham Fischler, as mentioned in chapter 7, has also been an inspiration and a guiding light on the Lovewell board for over 12 years. He has brought his expertise accumulated during his 22-year presidency of Nova Southeastern University to the Lovewell Board and counseled us through many difficult situations. Believing in the educational value of Lovewell, Dr. Fischler has encouraged the board to nurture the business aspects of the organization so it can take its place among the successful educational businesses by offering innovative concepts and an effective arts-based teaching and learning methodology.

Deb Frenkel, with a background in social work, has reached out to the community in unique ways. Bill Shoemaker has updated the articles and by-laws and prepared a new business plan for the organization. Connie Crawford-Rodriguez has filled out grants and opened new doors based on her experience as a classroom teacher and former Arts-4-Learning Education Director. Jana Sigars-Malina, Esquire, has negotiated complex intellectual property and partnership contracts and provided trademarks for Lovewell and the Lovewell Method. Much like in the Lovewell process itself, each board member has brought his or her own unique talent and passion to the organization.

Other leading characters are mentioned elsewhere in this study, and most of the outstanding students and parents who participate in the Lovewell Workshops usually find themselves on the staff or the board at some point. The cast of characters (list of human resources) is large, and each individual on that list has resonated with some aspect of the themes and core elements of the Lovewell Method. These characters have been and will continue to be the human face, hands, heart, and soul of Lovewell Institute.

#### *Human and Corporate Resources With Similar Missions*

There are other individuals and groups currently addressing some of the same issues and themes as Lovewell Institute but with a different focus or approach. Many of them are going through similar challenges to those that confront Lovewell. These entities share the desire to affect personal and social transformation through interdisciplinary arts and creative process. Although the problems facing the infrastructure of our communities and educational system tend to be assessed and articulated by arts and social advocacy groups or governmental agencies, some of the most innovative solutions come from small dedicated arts groups on a grassroots level. Not-for-profit organizations started by socially conscious individuals and dedicated artists are at the forefront of the revolution.

These groups are often primarily mission driven and struggling to make ends meet financially, concentrating on the programmatic activities rather than the fund-raising activities. I am familiar with a number of these initiatives and personally acquainted with many people who work on a daily basis to improve the quality of life through community-based arts programs. Linda Frye Burnham is the founder and publisher of Community Arts Network (CAN), the leading resource on community arts initiatives around the globe. She researches and reviews projects that combine the arts and social action on her website, *Art in the Public Interest* (Burnham & Durland, 1998). I designed a course at NSU based on the community arts concept that uses Burnham and Durland's book, *The Citizen Artist: 20 Years of Art in the Public Arena*, as a text and her website as a major resource. The field of Community Arts is worthy of its own degree specialization program, and someday I would like to be a part of that artist-scholar adventure.

I have served on the Broward Community Arts Education Project Advisory Committee. The purpose of this project was to increase the awareness and utilization of all existing community arts education programs in our county and to analyze unmet needs and then determine what our future community arts education priorities should be. Judging from the tone of the first few meetings, this is not a futile exercise to placate foundering disgruntled arts groups. Cultural executives insist that the money to help fund effective youth arts programs is plentiful and available once the benchmarks for accountability are established. The real impact of this endeavor is yet to be determined, but the opportunity for those of us in the county to network with like-minded activists is valuable in itself.

Many of the local organizations doing impressive work in arts-related areas are not waiting for needs assessments, scientific proof, or funding. They are forging ahead



with determination, trusting their mission and outcome in the spirit of true entrepreneurship. Some succeed and some do not, but most of them at least plant a seed and in some way leave a lasting impression on the community. Our society consistently underestimates the motivations and transformational capacities of artists. Articulate artists with a social agenda can ignite passions and affect change much faster and sometimes more effectively than can governmental, social services, or educational bureaucracies (Kushner, 2001). Perhaps this is one of the reasons the business and political worlds are so skeptical, fearful, and sometimes demeaning of artists and their candid messages.

Among the organizations that advocate the blending of the arts, education, and social transformation are City at Peace (2002), The Bauen Camp, Surdna Foundation (2002), Americans for the Arts (2003), Learning Through the Arts (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2004), Gallery 37 (2003), Kennedy Center's ArtsEdge Organization, Arts for Learning (Young Audiences), the Educational Theatre Association, the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts, the Creative Coalition, the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Community Performance, One Community-One Goal, the Desisto School, Artsgenesis, and Artserve.

There is a common theme of Lovewell Institute shared by the organizations mentioned above that embodies the three components of professional arts, educational arts, and social/therapeutic arts. This theme forms a continuum that starts with teachers and artists pursuing arts education leading to socially aware professional artist-scholars who then are inclined to make valuable contributions to society. Creative confidence and *ownership* of a domain evolves into *leadership* which then, with sufficient conscious awareness, transforms into *stewardship*. The "characters" involved in this trajectory are

on the world stage right now actively exploring the themes of interdisciplinary arts, creative process, and the healing aspects of art making. They are the researchers, practitioners, advocates, artists, teachers, and audience who know, celebrate, and struggle on a daily basis with the transformative power of the arts.