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The Argument FOR Tech Theatre in High Schools An Editorial by Beth Rand

"There's never been a time when art and entertainment are as important as today. I think people are desperate for it, and I think that our place in the world is both important and something that I'm extremely proud of, to be in this business at this company at this point, at this time in the world. I don't look at it as frivolous. I don't look at what we do as small. I don't look at what we do as inconsequential."

- Bob Iger, Disney CEO, in an interview published in the October 14, 2019 issue of Time Magazine.

Anyone who has seen the credits for a movie will know that acting is but a small part of the Entertainment Industry. And it's often in high school theatres where people are first exposed to the prospects of a wide range of careers in the Entertainment Industry. Technical Theatre is a vocational CTE (Career and Technical Education) subject, and is in fact '*STEM - behind the scenes*'. Students involved in Technical Theatre in our schools are our future grips for our movies, producers of our favorite TV shows, editors for our scientific documentaries, sound technicians at our radio stations, not to mention our Olympics organizers, and our football half time show designers and technicians. For students who don't go on to work in the entertainment industry Technical Theatre is a subject through which students learn many related skills and practices that provide them with transferable job skills required by today's workforce in a wide variety of careers that have related knowledge bases and practices, such as architecture, engineering, computer programming, project management, graphic design, to name but a few. And yet, Technical Theatre in high schools is often a mere add-on to acting classes; an afterthought, only there to support performance, often not seen as a vocation in and of itself that prepares students for a future in a STEM world.

Tech theatre education is a transformative experience. The skills students learn by participating aren't learned by sitting in a classroom. For instance, you can't learn how to run a fly system from a text book. Tech theatre provides an applicable educational experience, which doesn't rely on role-playing, simulations or mocked-up workshops. These are tangible, measurable, real life results, which incorporate whole learning. Tech theatre is a collaborative process within which personalized learning needs are met through the act of participation in the actual activity.

Yet too few high schools actually offer their students the Technical Theatre education needed to learn these wide range of transferable skills required by today's STEM workforce, despite the fact that Technical Theatre students develop a broad range of vocational proficiencies, as well as 'soft skills' that will benefit them in the workforce, such as: creative thinking, teamwork, decision making, problem solving, working with diversity, analytical thinking and self-responsibility.

Edcor, an educational outsourcing and consulting service, who seeks to strengthen relationships between employees and employers, asserts in a 2019 post: "*Employers searching for workers who can think creatively, collaborate and communicate may find them among graduates who have had arts education as part of their higher education. There is no doubt that digital literacy, technical skills and STEM knowledge are important for employees.*"

It is well documented that CTE provides high school students with an education that is vocationally relevant in today's STEM world. In fact many high schools now require that all students take at least one credit of CTE. The reasons for this have become evident. CTE courses, despite their inherent hazards - such as woodshop, auto shop, culinary arts, welding, agriculture, biotechnology and so much more – employ students in the active engagement that enhances increases in memory, knowledge, communication, and prepares many students to enter specialized or related industries. Technical Theatre is one of these CTE subjects. It's time to open the curtain!

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