

JESS SHOEMAKER

Director | Playwright | Educator

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EDUCATION

The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Theatre and Dance | 2020

- MFA, Directing

Webster University, Conservatory of Theatre Arts | 2010

- BFA, Acting and Minor, English Literature

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Salisbury University

Visiting Professor, Theatre Department

2025

Acting I (1 semester)

A beginning level course focused on the basic procedures and practices an actor uses to prepare to act onstage. The majority of our work in class will be experiential, practical, and somatic. We'll be using the studio as a lab for mindful, committed experimentation in exercises and activities, including monologue and scene work

Visiting Professor, Theatre Department

2025

Directing I (1 semester)

A studio course, focused on the basic principles, skills, theory and technique that make an effective director. This course will be a mixture of classroom and experiential learning, with students taking the lead on their own production project in the last eight weeks. Students in this course will practice dramatic analysis, the fundamentals of design, staging, actor coaching and the mechanics of a rehearsal process.

Visiting Professor, Theatre Department

2025

History of Theatre I (1 semester)

This course covers the evolution of theatre from oral tradition through drama in the 18th century. In this class, students studied plays, playwrights, production practices, design and performance norms, all through the lens of historical context. Students engaged with an array of time periods and cultures, reading and interpreting a variety of dramatic texts. They also developed and express your own ideas, mining the past for lessons to inform their present experience and future work.

Webster University

Adjunct Faculty, English Department

2023

Global Dramatic Literature (1 semester)

A literature course in which undergraduate students studied significant works of dramatic literature that spanned an array of cultures and time periods, from ancient Greece to 1870s Ghana to contemporary North Korea. Through class discussions, interactive learning, and written essays, students analyzed and interpreted scripts through literary and performance lenses.

Adjunct Faculty, English Department

2022 – 2023

Playwriting Workshop (3 semesters)

A hands-on workshop course for undergraduate students, focusing on the fundamentals of writing for the theatre, including structure, dramatic tension, character development, and active dialogue. Over the course of the semester, students practiced specific skills through exercises and writing drills, responded to one another's work, and developed their own one act plays.

Adjunct Faculty, Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts

2022 – 2023

Text Analysis (1 semester)

A class for first year acting and directing students focused on the basics of literary analysis for practical application in a production setting. Working from a variety of scripts, students learned how to use the text to research and ideate. They analyzed and built characters, explored and concretized the given circumstances, and identified beats and objectives for active scene work. Assignments were divided between traditional literary analysis and exercises designed to apply learned skills in a practical setting.

Saint Louis University

Adjunct Faculty, Prison Education Program

2023

Introduction to Theater (1 semester)

A workshop course for incarcerated men working towards an Associate of Arts degree, this class served as a general introduction to theater and the creative process of acting. Students watched, read, and discussed plays; participated in ensemble building and creative drama exercises; kept journals, and learned the fundamentals of acting. Designed with the mission of the program in mind, this course sought to "foster human connection, an appreciation for the arts, and [offer] resources for personal growth."

The University of Texas at Austin

Assistant Instructor, Department of Theatre and Dance

2019 – 2020

Fundamentals of Acting (3 semesters)

A workshop course whose curriculum was created and taught by myself, under the general supervision of the department. This course was geared towards non-majors with a focus on the basics of acting, including the development of skills like careful listening, detailed observation, the beginnings of breath and movement work, creative play and ensemble building – as well as creative practice through improvisation, monologue and scene work.

The University of Texas at Austin (cont.)

Teaching Assistant to KJ Sanchez, School of Undergraduate Studies

2018 – 2019

Spectacle as a Political Tool (2 semesters)

A lower division class designed to introduce undergraduates to scholarly analysis from an interdisciplinary perspective, as well as familiarize them with university resources. The course examined the specific elements of spectacle, generally, and how spectacle is used to move people towards political thought and action. As a teaching assistant, I oversaw four course sections, which included leading a weekly class with each section. I also graded papers and challenged critical thinking skills in discussion, while guiding students through their first semester at UT Austin.

Teaching Assistant to Kirk Lynn, School of Undergraduate Studies

2017- 2018

The Performance of Prayer (2 semesters)

A lower division class designed to introduce undergraduates to scholarly analysis from an interdisciplinary perspective, as well as familiarize them with university resource. The course examined the various aspects of performance and prayer, by asking students to examine these concepts from a variety of lenses before proposing their own definitions. As a teaching assistant, I oversaw four course sections, which included leading a weekly class with each section. I also graded papers and challenged critical thinking skills in discussion, while guiding students through their first semester at UT Austin

Guest Lecturer, Department of Theater and Dance

2017 – 2019

- Introduction to Theatre: "The Crucible and Realism"
- Performance as Public Practice: "Emotional Safety and the Rehearsal Process"
- Performance as Public Practice: "12 Ophelias: Directing and Acting Nonrealism"
- Introduction to Theatre: "The Director's Practice"

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Webster University

Surfacing New Works Festival – Faculty Advisor and Producer

2023

- Served as faculty advisor and co-producer for an evening of short plays, directed and written by five teams of playwrights/directors. Part of my approach was to flip the model by prioritizing student leadership and decision-making.
- Surfacing was an event that the English Department hoped to revive, following a five-year hiatus. As part of this iteration, we expanded the scope of the event to include simple staging. We also drastically increased the size of our audience.
- Collaborated closely with a student producer to determine deadlines, facilitate meetings, auditions, set-up and strike.
- Knowing that we did not have access to student designers, I fostered a collaboration between playwrights and their peers in the art and music departments, which resulted in original work inspired by each script.
- Met individually with student playwrights throughout the process to offer dramaturgical and logistical support.

The University of Texas at Austin

Cohen New Works Festival – Head of Season Selection Committee

2018 – 2019

- Collaborated on the development of a new application process for both membership on the application committee and individual submissions to the Cohen New Works Festival. In the development of new systems, my team placed a strong focus on transparency, inclusive outreach and leading an informed voting process.

- Developed and presented workshops to familiarize each member of the applications committee with the criteria and mission of the Cohen New Works Festival prior to selection day. These workshops were designed to ensure that the mission statement and goals of the executive committee were honored as part of the selection process.
- Developed and presented workshops for any applicants looking to strengthen their application before submitting a project to the selection committee. Applications were solicited both from within the Department of Theatre and Dance and the UT Austin as a whole. Applicants included those at the BA, BFA, and MFA levels, majors and non-majors alike. These workshops were designed to democratize the process, by offering critical guidance for those less familiar with this type of application process.
- Met individually with students to offer feedback/mentorship on their application prior to selection day

Studio Season – Season Selection Committee Member

2017 – 2018

- Collaborated on the process overhauling our application and selections process for self-produced student work in studio spaces.
- Was responsible for developing messaging around the application process and soliciting feedback from students in the department.
- Reviewed applications and voted as a committee on approval of projects

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING ARTIST PRACTICE

Octopus Theatricals

Lobby Display Consultant and Content Creator

2023

All the Devils are Here

Collaborated with Patrick Page and producing team on developing a lobby display for *All the Devils are Here*, an award winning production that played off-Broadway at regional houses across the country.

Curriculum Consultant and Content Creator

2021 - 2022

Hadestown Education Initiative

Created lesson plans about theater-making and mythology for classroom teachers in middle and high schools across the country, designed to support and enrich student experiences when attending *Hadestown*.

Great River Shakespeare Festival

Co-Program Director, Lead Teacher

2015 - 2020

Apprentice Actor Training Program

Served as program director and lead teacher for the GRSF Apprentice Acting Program, a summer internship program designed to teach classical acting skills to actors at the BA, BFA or MFA level. As part of my tenure, I completely redesigned the curriculum, and collaborated on a massive overhaul of the program structure and recruitment process. These changes resulted a dramatic increase in the number of under-represented students from roughly 15 percent to 50 percent of the ensemble—a shift that had a dramatic impact on the makeup of the GRSF professional company in subsequent years.

In my work with GRSF, I was responsible for developing professional development opportunities like audition workshops and our mentorship program. I also consistently ran meetings and participated in conversations around unconscious bias and equity, including conflict resolution around issues of identity and a training on sexual harassment for leadership and company members.

Teaching Artist

2015 – 2017

Shakespeare in the Schools Residency

Directed and taught as part of a months-long school residency. Developed curriculum to deepen students' relationship to classical text within the context of an English classroom and led an ensemble of high school students in a full-length production, while teaching the basics of acting, including a classical acting skillset and fundamentals like rehearsal etiquette.

Teaching Artist

2015 – 2016

Shakespeare for Young Actors

Taught as part of a summer intensive for high school students interested in Shakespeare, focusing on teaching the basics of scansion and rhetoric.

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis

Teaching Artist and Performer

2011

Educational Tour

Performed in short plays designed specifically for area schools and facilitated anti-bullying workshops for K-12 audiences.

Grandstreet Theatre

Teaching Artist

2011

Summer Theater School

Developed and implemented curriculum for directing and acting classes at the high school level, aimed at training fundamental skills in young theatre-makers.

LAMB Theater

Teaching Artist

2008

LAMB Ewe-niversity

Developed and implemented curriculum for creative drama and improvisation, teaching K-12 students with a focus on engaging in basic collaboration and improvisation. Worked with students classified at risk of dropping out of high school to offer initial arts exposure opportunities.

PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE: DIRECTING

NOTE: I spent 2024 at the Hermitage Artist Retreat, working as their Alumni Coordinator. As part of taking on that role, I put all production opportunities on hold. In the fall of 2024, the Hermitage Artist Retreat was hit with two, Category Five hurricanes in less than two weeks and my work with them ended soon after.

1877		2023
by Colin McLaughlin*	Bread and Roses Missouri – St. Louis, MO	
Maddi's Fridge		2023
by Anne Negri	Metro Theatre Company – St. Louis, MO	
Sueño		2022
by José Rivera	Webster University – St. Louis, MO	
Seedfolks		2022
by Paul Fleischman	Metro Theatre Company – St. Louis, MO	
HOMES		2022
by Delaney Piggins*	Staged Reading, Confluence Writers Project – St. Louis, MO	
Little Women		2021
by Kate Hamill	Grandstreet Theatre – Helena, MT	
Romeo & Juliet		2021
by William Shakespeare	Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN	
Tjipetir		2020
by I.B. Hopkins	UT New Theatre – Austin, TX	
The Battlefields of Clara Barton		2019
by Suzan Zeder and Jenn Hartmann Luck*	Workshop and Staged Reading – Austin, TX	
12 Ophelias		2019
by Caridad Svich	University of Texas – Austin, TX	
Flora Circular		2019
by Thom May*	UT New Theatre – Austin, TX	
(& Medea)		2018
by Jess Shoemaker	University of Texas – Austin, TX	
Venus in Fur		2018
by David Ives	Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN	
Loverboy		2018
by Drew Paryzer*	UT New Theatre – Austin, TX	
Big Iron Fires		2018
by Greg Romero*	Frontera Fest, Best of Fest – Austin, TX	
Dye House		2017
by Minghao Tu*	Workshop and Staged Reading – Austin, TX	
The Crucible†		2017
by Arthur Miller	University of Texas – Austin, TX	
One Minute Play Festival		2017
curated by Dominic D'Andrea*	Scriptworks and Salvage Vanguard Theatre – Austin, TX	
50 Shades of Shakespeare		2017
adaptation by Jess Shoemaker	LA New Court Theatre, Hollywood Fringe – Los Angeles, CA	
The Winter's Tale – Shakespeare in the Schools		2016
by William Shakespeare	Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN	
A Midsummer Night's Dream		2016
by William Shakespeare	Grandstreet Theatre – Helena, MT	
A Midsummer Night's Dream – Shakespeare in the Schools		2015
by William Shakespeare	Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN	

* New work collaboration

† Co-directed with Robert Ramirez

PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE: PLAYWRITING

(& Medea)		2023
directed by Jamie McKittrick	Staged Reading, Muhlenberg College – Allentown, PA	
Looking for Ithaca		2023
directed by Gaby Rodriguez	Asolo Repertory Theatre – Sarasota, FL	
The Book of Orpah		2020
directed by Andrea Hart	Staged Reading, UT New Theatre – Austin, TX	
(& Medea)		2018
directed by Jess Shoemaker	Studio Production, University of Texas at Austin – Austin, TX	
Jason (& Medea)		2015
directed by Beth Lopes	Hollywood Fringe, LA New Court Theatre – Los Angeles, CA	
Jason (& Medea)		2015
directed by Amy Hayes	Wisdom Tooth Theatre Project – Indianapolis, IN	
50 Shades of Shakespeare		2014
directed by Matt Wills	(re)discover theatre – Chicago, IL	
Jason (& Medea)		2013
directed by Janet Howe	(re)discover theater – Chicago, IL	
Flesh & Bone		2012
devising process led by Jess Shoemaker	(re)discover theater, St. Louis Fringe – St. Louis, MO	

PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE: ASSISTANT DIRECTION

The Emporium		
Assistant to Kirk Lynn and Christian Parker		2019
by Thornton Wilder, adaptation by Kirk Lynn		
You Are Here		
Assistant to KJ Sanchez		2019
by KJ Sanchez		
The Monster Builder		
Assistant to Art Manke		2017
by Amy Freed		
The Crucible		
Assistant to Paul Mason Barnes		2016
by Arthur Miller		
As You Like It		
Assistant to Doug Scholz-Carlson		2016
by William Shakespeare		
Macbeth		
Assistant to Paul Mason Barnes		2015
by William Shakespeare		
King John		
Assistant to Rick Barbour		2015
by William Shakespeare		
Much Ado About Nothing		
Assistant to Jim Edmonson		2015
by William Shakespeare		
Troilus & Cressida		
Assistant to Rick Barbour		2014
by William Shakespeare		

PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE: TEXT, DIALECT & INTIMACY COACHING

Dialect Coach, UT New Theatre

Tjipetir by I.B. Hopkins

2019

directed by Jess Shoemaker

University of Texas at Austin – Austin, TX

Sow and Suckling by Dan Caffrey

directed by Liz Fisher

Intimacy Coach, The Women of _____ (a song not song)

by I-Chia Chiu

2019

directed by kt shorb

University of Texas at Austin – Austin, TX

Text Consultant, Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare

2018

directed by Adam Sussman

University of Texas at Austin – Austin, TX

Dialect Coach, Shipwrecked!

by Donald Margulies

2017

directed by Rick Barbour

Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN

Text Coach, Comedy of Errors

by William Shakespeare

2017

directed by Melissa Rain Anderson

Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN

Text Coach, Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

2015

directed by Paul Mason Barnes

Chesapeake Shakespeare Company – Baltimore, MD

Text Coach, King John

by William Shakespeare

2015

directed by Melissa Rain Anderson

Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN

Text Coach, Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

2015

directed by Jim Edmonson

Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN

Text Coach, Troilus & Cressida

by William Shakespeare

2014

directed by Rick Barbour

Great River Shakespeare Festival – Winona, MN

Text Coach, Twelfth Night

by William Shakespeare

2014

directed by Dylan Roberts

The Framework – Chicago, IL

Text Coach, King Lear

by William Shakespeare

2013

directed by Juli Kleist-Mendez

The Framework – Chicago, IL

Text Coach, The Tradgedie of Hamlet

by William Shakespeare, adaptation by Jess Shoemaker

2012

directed by Matt Wills

(re)discover theatre – Chicago, IL

PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE: ACTING

The Hamlet Project – Rosencrantz/Guildenstern

adaptation by Beth Lopes

2014

under the direction of Shannon Ferrara

The Hamlet Project: Chicago – Chicago, IL

50 Shades of Shakespeare - Actor

by William Shakespeare, adaptation by Jess Shoemaker

2014

under the direction Matt Wills

(re)discover Theatre – Chicago, IL

Twelfth Night – Maria	by William Shakespeare under the direction of Dylan Roberts	2014 The Framework Theatre – Chicago, IL
The Hamlet Project – Host/Bernardo/Osric	adaptation by Beth Lopes under the direction of Beth Lopes	2013 The Hamlet Project: Chicago – Chicago, IL
As You Like It - Rosalind	by William Shakespeare, adaptation by Jess Shoemaker under the direction of Matt Wills	2013 (re)discover theatre – Chicago, IL
King Lear – France/1st Servant	by William Shakespeare under the direction of Juli Kleist-Mendez	2012 The Framework Theatre – Chicago, IL
Not I - The Mouth	by Samuel Beckett under the direction of Matt Wills	2012 (re)discover theatre – Chicago, IL
Hamlet - Laertes	by William Shakespeare, adaptation by Jess Shoemaker under the direction of Matt Wills	2012 (re)discover theatre – Chicago, IL
Into the Woods – Stepmother	by James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim under the direction of Marianne Adams	2012 Grandstreet Theatre – Helena, MT
Shrew in a Few – Bianca	adaptation by Chris Limber under the direction of Chris Limber	2011 Shakespeare Festival St. Louis – St. Louis, MO
A Christmas Carol – Nell Dilber	adaptation by Charles Jones under the direction of Lara Marsh	2010, 2011 NTC Productions: East Coast Tour – Omaha, NE
Wisewrite Play Fest – Actor	scripts by elementary school students in St. Louis region under the direction of Mark Chaitin	2010 Repertory Theater of St. Louis – St. Louis, MO
Cloud 9 – Edward/Betty	by Caryl Churchill under the direction of Jef Awada	2010 Webster Conservatory – St. Louis, MO
The Winter's Tale – Paulina	by William Shakespeare Under the direction of Tim Ocel	2009 Webster Conservatory – St. Louis, MO
Hamlet – Horatio	by William Shakespeare under the direction of Rick Barbour	2009 GRSF Apprentice Project – Winona, MN
Cabaret – Fraulein Kost	by John Kander, Fred Ebb, and Joe Masteroff under the direction of Kat Singleton	2009 Webster Conservatory – St. Louis, MO
Stepping Out – Mrs. Fraser	by Richard Harris under the direction of Lara Teeter	2008 Webster Conservatory – St. Louis, MO

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Muny

2023

Co-Head of Transportation (summer contract)

An outdoor summer theater with an 11,000 seat house, The Muny is located in St Louis, Missouri. Each summer, the theater stages seven large-scale musicals with some of Broadway's most notable directors, choreographers, designers and performers.

- Managed a team of 10+ drivers and 3 vans, responsible for transporting 50+ artists, 7 days per week
- Managed maintenance and oversaw rentals/returns for 30 bicycles, available to guest artists during their stay
- Overhauled all scheduling and communication processes within the department for a substantial increase in driver consistency and responsiveness
- Organized and maintained the office space, including maintaining inventory of all department supplies
- Reorganized and maintained data on multiple technological platforms
- Scheduled all appointments with IT department and worked with IT staff to resolve technology issues
- Hired and trained drivers, set employee expectations, managed conflicts and gave feedback as necessary
- Created monthly schedules and managed last-minute staffing changes for sick or injured drivers
- Managed travel paperwork and communication for hundreds of guest artists
- Coordinated with production and stage management as needed to support sick and injured artists, and delivery of personal and/or production materials
- Met the needs of an exceptionally demanding, and ever-changing production schedule

Nextions LLC

2020 – 2021

Project Manager and Research Specialist

2012 – 2015

A consulting firm catering to primarily Fortune 500 companies, major legal firms and nonprofits. Our team offered presentations, workshops and assessments focused on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the workplace.

- Managed assessment clients, oversaw client goal setting, strategic planning, proposal and agreement process
- Communicated regularly with clients about their needs and progress of complex projects
- Designed and conducted qualitative interviews to assess and evaluate individual workplace experiences
- Scheduled a high volume of meetings and interviews with clients and assessment subjects
- Turned hundreds of pages of interview notes into 15-20 page impactful summary reports
- Collaborated on presentations and proposed strategies for setting and meeting EDI goals
- Facilitated meetings and trainings for both clients and our team
- Developed and implemented an educational branch of the company catering specifically to e-learners
- Produced a weekly podcast, including content development and guest booking
- Supported research, citation and marketing for two books by Dr. Arin N. Reeves
- Performed administrative tasks, including management of travel, maintenance of a large contact database, applying for industry-specific accreditation across numerous states, developing research studies, long-form transcription and the creation of client resources