

HALENA KAYS

(773) 425-4856 · halena.kays@mtsu.edu · www.halenakays.com

EDUCATION

MFA, The University of Texas, Austin, TX 2011
Emphasis: Directing

BS, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 1996
Major: Theatre

Additional Training:

The Actor's Gymnasium, Evanston, IL 2002-06
Physical Theatre and Circus Arts

The Gaiety School of Acting, Dublin, Ireland 1995
Performing Irish Theatre

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre & Dance 2015-
Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN

Artistic Director, The Hypocrites, Chicago, IL 2011-15

One of Chicago's premier off-Loop theater companies, The Hypocrites specializes in mounting bold productions that challenge preconceptions and redefine the role of the audience. The company has a reputation for creating exciting, surprising, and deeply engaging theater as it re-interprets classics and tackles ambitious new works.

Co-Artistic Curator, Theater on the Lake, Chicago, IL 2011-14

The "Chicago Summer Theatre Festival" celebrating the "best of" work done by Chicago's rich off-Loop theatre community.

Co-Artistic Director, Lab Theatre, UT-Austin, TX 2009-10

UT-Austin's laboratory for new and experimental work. Student and faculty theater-makers proposed projects that are well served in a supportive, adventurous and risky environment.

Co-Founder and Artistic Director, Barrel of Monkeys, Chicago, IL 1997-2007

An award-winning ensemble of actor/educators who create an alternative learning environment in which children share their personal voices and celebrate the power of their imaginations. BOM accomplishes this through creative writing workshops and in-school performances of children's stories.

AWARDS AND HONORS

- Excellence in Direction (*Uncle Vanya* at MTSU), Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival 2015
- "Top 50 Players in Chicago Theatre," *New City*, Chicago, IL 2013
- 3Arts Award, Chicago, IL 2012
A juried cash award as well as project funding, residency fellowships, professional development, and promotion, the 3Arts award helps artists take risks, experiment, and build momentum in their careers.
- Best Director Nomination (*Six Characters in Search of an Author* with The Hypocrites), Joseph Jefferson Awards, Chicago, IL 2011
- Best Director and Best Production of a Musical, (*Threepenny Opera* with UT), Austin Live Theatre Applause, Austin, TX 2011

- Best Director Nomination (*Threepenny Opera* with UT), Austin Critic Table Awards, Austin, TX 2011
- The Elizabeth McGoldrick Surginer Endowed Scholarship, UT Austin 2009
- The Francis Hodge Endowed Scholarship in Drama, UT Austin 2008, 2009
- The Susan F. Berkowitz Award for Outstanding Service to Children, Chicago, IL 2006
- "30 under 30 to watch," *sixsix magazine*, Chicago, IL 2004
- Best Ensemble (*Machinal* with The Hypocrites), Joseph Jefferson Award, Chicago 2003
- Chicago/Midwest Emmy Award, Chicago, IL
"Outstanding achievement for informational programming" for work
as a segment host on public television station WTTW's *Artbeat: Chicago* 2001
- Best Supporting Actress Nomination (*Stupid Kids* with Roadworks), Joseph Jefferson Award, Chicago, IL 2000

CREATIVE ACTIVITY: PROFESSIONAL THEATER AND TELEVISION

DIRECTING

REGIONAL

<i>The Magic Play</i>	Actors Theatre of Louisville	2018
	Portland Center Stage	2018
	Syracuse Stage	2018
	The Olney Theatre Center	2017
<i>Love Song</i>	Nashville Story Garden	2017

CHICAGO

* <i>The Magic Play</i>	Goodman Theatre	2016
* <i>Pop/Waits</i>	The Neo-Futurists	2016
* <i>Burning Bluebeard</i>	The Ruffians/Neo-Futurists	2011-17
† <i>Feast</i>	The Albany Park Theatre Project	2015
<i>Endgame</i>	The Hypocrites	2015
<i>The Gashleycrub Orphanage</i>	Pivot Arts	2015
<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	Steppenwolf	2013
* <i>Ivywild</i>	The Hypocrites	2013
<i>44 Plays for 44 Presidents</i>	The Neo-Futurists	2012
* <i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i>	The Hypocrites	2012
† <i>Daredevils Hamlet</i>	The Neo-Futurists	2010
* <i>Fakelake</i>	The Neo-Futurists	2008
Δ <i>Dreamquest</i>	The Neo-Futurists	2007
*† <i>That's Weird, Grandma</i>	Barrel of Monkeys	2000-07
† <i>Barrel of Monkeys</i>	Barrel of Monkeys	1997-07
† <i>Daredevils</i>	The Neo-Futurists	2005
* <i>Edward Gorey's Dispirited Diversions for Christmas</i>	The Hypocrites	2003
<i>The Santaland Diaries</i> (with David Cromer)	Roadworks Productions	1999

NEW PLAY FESTIVALS

* <i>Wolf Play</i>	Victory Gardens Theatre	2017
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<i>*The True Tall Tales of Bathhouse John</i>	Pivot Arts Festival	2016
<i>*Secretary</i>	Nashville Rep	2016
<i>*The Magic Play</i>	Goodman Theatre	2015
UNIVERSITY THEATRE		
<i>How I Learned to Drive</i>	MTSU	2017
<i>*Kafka's Metamorphosis</i>	MTSU	2016
<i>Uncle Vanya</i>	MTSU	2015
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	North Central College	2015
<i>*† Buried in Bughouse Square: A Studs Terkel Circus</i>	The University of Chicago	2014
<i>Roustabout: The Great Circus Train Wreck</i>	Concordia College	2014
<i>The Threepenny Opera</i>	UT-Austin	2011
<i>*The Trojan Women</i>	UT-Austin	2009
<i>*The Death of Beth</i>	UT-Austin	2008-09
<i>† 101 Ways To...</i>	UT-Austin	2008
<i>*Lidless</i>	UT-Austin	2007

* World Premiere (original script or adaptation)

† Ensemble-generated script

Δ Co-adaptor, playwright

PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

<i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i>	Usher/Maid/Visitor	The Hypocrites <i>*Dir: Sean Graney</i>
<i>The Kid Thing</i>	Nate	About Face/ Chicago Dramatist <i>Dir: Joanie Shultz</i>
<i>A Brief Narrative of the Extraordinary Birth of Rabbits</i>	Kitty	Salvage Vanguard, Austin, TX <i>Dir: Jenny Larson</i>
<i>Oedipus</i>	Creon	The Hypocrites
<i>Fair Use</i>	Bec	Steppenwolf Theatre Company <i>Dir: Meredith McDonough</i>
<i>Mud</i>	Mae	The Hypocrites
<i>The Children's Hour</i>	Martha	Timeline Theatre <i>Dir: Nick Bowling</i>
<i>Theatrical Essays</i>	Ensemble	Steppenwolf Theatre Company <i>Dir: Tina Landau</i>
<i>The Golden Truffle</i>	Melissa	Redmoon Theater <i>Dir: Jim Lasko</i>
<i>Suburban Motel</i>	Amanda	Famous Door <i>Dir: David Cromer</i>
<i>Equus</i>	Jill	The Hypocrites
<i>Fatty Arbuckle's Spectacular...</i>	Keystone Cop	Second City Theatricals <i>Dir: Shade Murray</i>
<i>Betty's Summer Vacation</i>	Trudy	Roadworks Productions

<i>4.48 Psychosis</i>	Ensemble	<i>Dir: David Cromer</i>
<i>Division Street: America</i>	Lilly/Janice	The Hypocrites Steppenwolf Theatre Company <i>Arts Exchange, Dir. C. Columbus</i>
<i>Machinal</i>	Telephone Girl	The Hypocrites
<i>Stupid Kids</i>	Kimberly	Roadworks Productions <i>Dir: Shade Murray</i>
<i>The Most Fab Story Ever Told</i>	Rabbi Sharon	Bailiwick Rep <i>Dir: Jeremy Weschler</i>
<i>Our Country's Good</i>	Duckling/Tench	Strawdog Theatre Company <i>Dir: Shade Murray</i>
<i>White Trash Wedding...</i>	Aunt Shirley	The Factory Theater <i>Dir: Nick Digilio</i>
<i>The Cherry Orchard</i>	Charlotta	The Hypocrites
<i>Dragontales</i>	Dragongirl	The Factory Theater <i>Dir: Molly Brennan</i>
<i>Never Swim Alone</i>	Rose/Ref	Roadworks Productions <i>Dir: Shade Murray</i>

**All Hypocrites productions directed by Sean Graney*

TELEVISION

<i>Artbeat Chicago</i>	Correspondent	WTTW Television
<i>Energy Express (Weekly Series)</i>	"Halena"	WGN Television

PROFESSIONAL UNION MEMBERSHIPS

Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC)

SAG/AFTRA

SELECTED PRESS

The Magic Play: "True to its title, "The Magic Play," Andrew Hinderaker's highly original, altogether remarkable new work, is full of sleight-of-hand astonishments. But the real magic in this engrossing theatrical hybrid — now receiving a meticulously polished world premiere at the Goodman Theatre, in what is unquestionably a Broadway-ready production..." —Hedy Weiss, The Chicago Sun-Times

"One moment he's setting up a trick, and the next, the misty lights toggle on director Halena Kays's seductive staging to show us Daniel, the Magician's ex-lover, slowly bouncing on a high board. The flying effect is lovely... "The Magic Play" is an extremely cool-looking show." —Nelson Pressley, The Washington Post

Burning Bluebeard: "the most distinctive holiday show in the entire city...with its ragtag, outré aesthetic" and "emotional, existential echoes." —Chris Jones, The Chicago Tribune

“Halena Kays’ pitch perfect direction makes the uproarious comedy and unbearable poignancy equally memorable.” –Kerry Reid, *The Chicago Reader*

Lord of the Flies: “...Kays, the artistic director of the Hypocrites, has a remarkable knack for depicting scenes of real fear and horror without artifice. Even better, as the founding artistic director of the wonderful educational troupe Barrel of Monkeys, Kays seems incapable of talking down to young audiences. Her staging of the events on Golding’s island is presented without a lick of condescension or sanctimony.” –Chris Vire, *TimeOut Chicago*

Daredevils Hamlet: “The whole shebang is directed by Halena Kays...Like a Handful of other first-rate women directors in town ...she is a skilled, pedal-to-the-metal artisan when it comes to testosterone-fueled theater. The male ego is in good hands.” -Kerry Reid, *The Chicago Tribune*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 2015-present
Assistant Professor/Directing, Department of Theatre and Dance

Script Analysis 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated course designed for students interested in exploring a diverse range of approaches to play script analysis.
- Students were required to read plays and essays and analyze them using a wide range of activities.
- Students completing this course acquired creative and formal tools useful for analyzing a script with a mind toward translating it to production.

Fundamentals of Play Directing 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a skills-based course designed for students interested in experiencing theatrical production from a director’s point of view.
- Primary course work revolved around the creation of a “director’s notebook” where analysis, research and creative work was gathered and presented to the class along with two large scene-study projects.
- Students completing this course are prepared for serious engagement with pre-production practices, basic technical staging concepts and rehearsal practices, and an awareness of how artists can critically engage with creative work presented by peers and in the community.

Directing New Work 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a skills-based course designed as a laboratory for students interested in directing new work- both scripted and devised.
- Primary course work explored the different roles a director might take in order to

create a new theatrical work through a wide range of activities, including rehearsals in and outside of class, readings, research, and performances.

- Students collaborated with a visiting professional playwright directing a reading of a work in progress.
- Students collaborated with the MTSU playwriting class. Student directors were paired with student playwrights and direct a final showing of work creating during the semester.

Improvisation and Sketch Comedy Writing 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a highly participatory, skills-based class designed for students entering their improvisational training and an introduction to comedy sketch writing derived from improvisation.
- Primary course works included exploration of team “game” style improvisation, various “long-form” improvisational structures as well as written “review” style performances. Students were required to research subject matter, create and present lectures, and build/write material based on in class workshops.
- Final projects included the creation of original comedic “sketch” and improvised material for public presentation.

Advanced Directing 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a skills-based course designed as a laboratory for students with experience and passion for directing.
- Primary course work included in-depth study on research and preproduction methodology, communication and collaboration (particularly with a design team), rehearsal room techniques and audition practices. Students were required to research subject matter, create and present lectures, and present scene work based on in class workshops and outside rehearsals.
- Students presented site-specific and promenade or environmental theatrical works as part of their scene work.
- Students collaborated with the advance lighting students to present a fully realized production of an Actors Theatre Humana Festival play as their final project.

North Central College, Naperville, IL
Visiting Assistant Professor in Theatre

2014-2015

Improvisation 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a course designed to build improvisational skills for both ensemble generated new work and comedy performance
- Students were required to research subject matter, create and present lectures, and build/write material based on in class work-shops

Directing 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a directing skills course for fourteen students
- Students required to build scene work based on pre-production creative and script analysis work, in and outside class rehearsals and student lead lectures

Classical Acting Styles 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated an acting skills course for students beginning their classical performance training
- Students required to do scene and monologue work, write and present a research topic and see and critique classical performance

Freshman Seminar: Theatre of the Absurd 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a seminar course focused on the history around what is coined as absurdist theater, including other art forms, historical events and philosophy
- Students required to do a group creative research project, see and critique absurdist performance and create their own absurdist art project

Fundamentals of Acting 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated acting skills course for fourteen students
- Illustrated a variety of theatrical techniques used to create and perform monologues and scene-work

The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Lecturer and Visiting Director

2012-2014

Circus Performance Workshop 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a course designed to build an ensemble generated piece of physical theater
- Students were required to research subject matter, create and present lectures, and build/write material based on in class work-shops
- Class culminated in a full rehearsal process of the script created (through coursework) and a fully realized physical theatre piece as part of the mainstage season.

Fundamentals of Acting 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated acting skills course for twenty students
- Illustrated a variety of theatrical techniques used to create and perform monologues and scene-work

Text and Performance 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated a combined analytic and practical course for twenty students
- Using the events surrounding the historical account of the Papin sisters students read, researched and ultimately created original artistic material inspired from the culminating work and knowledge.
- Illustrated a variety of theatrical texts, styles and modes of performance

The University of Texas, Austin, TX

2009-2011

Graduate Student and Instructor

Acting I 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated acting skills course for twenty theater majors
- Illustrated a variety of theatrical techniques used to create and perform monologues and scene-work

Fundamentals of Acting 3 Credits

- Created and facilitated introductory acting skills course for twenty students
- Illustrated a variety of theatrical techniques used to create and perform monologues and scene-work

Guest Lecturer

2004-2013

DePaul University, Chicago, IL

Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

North Park University, Chicago, IL

University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

- Guest lectured in class and taught 1-2 day intensives on directing, community activism and applied theatre

ARTIST RESIDENCIES

Workshop Facilitator

2009-2012

Literacy to Life (pilot program), Paramount Theatre, Austin, TX

- Led facilitators in a 6-week in-school theatre and creative writing residency
- Established expectations and facilitated problem solving for a three person teaching team
- Consulted with founding director to create mission, vision and core curriculum
- Directed the in-school performance for an audience of 200 students and teachers

Workshop Facilitator

1997-2007 and 2011-2012

Barrel of Monkeys (Lead Teacher), Chicago, IL 1997-2007

- Led teams of 3-4 teaching artists in facilitating creative writing and drama workshops for at-risk elementary school students
- Oversaw curriculum formation from the initial conceptualization through its yearly development

Workshop Facilitator

2001-2007 and 2011-2012

Chicago Park District After School Program, Loyola Park, Chicago, IL

- Conceptualized and led teaching teams in a year-around creative writing and theatre program for community youth
- Created curriculum
- Coordinated and directed bi-annual community performances

Instructor 2005-2006

Writers' Theatre, Glencoe, IL

- Created curriculum and led improvisation and storytelling classes for elementary age students

Workshop Facilitator 2001

Steppenwolf Theatre, Arts Exchange Program, Chicago, IL

- Co-taught theatre workshops at area high schools
- Co-created curriculum modeled around my performance in *Division Street America* by Studs Terkel

SERVICE

Professional

Artistic Associate, The Neo-Futurists Theater, Chicago, IL	2013-present
Festival Selection Committee, The University Co-op Presents the Cohen New Works Festival, Austin, TX	2009
Mentor, Grrl Action (a program of the Rude Mechanicals), Austin, TX	2009-10
Big Apple Circus Clown Care unit	2002-2007

University

Chair, Dorothe Awards Planning Committee	2017-18
Chair, Theatre Season Selection Committee	2017-18
Faculty Research and Creative Activity Committee	2016-18
Dorothe Awards Planning Committee	2016-17
Theatre Season Selection Committee	2016-17
Dorothe Awards Planning Committee	2016-17
Hiring Committee: Costume Coordinator	2016
Hiring Committee: Lighting Coordinator	2016
Theatre Season Selection Committee	2015
Auditions and Casting Policy Committee	2015