

# Iris Sowlat

Director & Teacher, *Chicago, IL*

P: (312) 927-7949 | E: [iris.sowlat@gmail.com](mailto:iris.sowlat@gmail.com) | W: IrisSowlat.com

## CREATIVE RESEARCH INTERESTS

Directing, Acting pedagogy, Shakespeare, Voice & Speech, LGBT Theatre, New Play Development, Dramaturgy, Issues in Contemporary Theatre

## EDUCATION

**MFA Theater Directing**, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Sept. 2024

Thesis: Lauren Gunderson's *Emilie: La Marquise du Chatelet Defends Her Life Tonight*

**BA Theatre Arts & English Literature**, *Illinois Wesleyan University*

May 2015

IWU London Program, *London, UK*

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE, *University Theatre*

**Instructor, Theater 140: Fundamentals of Acting**

Fall 2021 - Spring 2024

*Graduate Assistantship, University of Massachusetts Amherst*

- o Independently facilitated an undergraduate level acting course as part of the UMass Theatre Dept. core curriculum for six semesters.
- o Designed and curated custom lesson plans based in Action/Objective acting methods, scene study, play analysis, & ensemble-building.
- o Facilitated Viola Spolin-style improvisation and ensemble-building games to introduce acting concepts and build students' collaboration skills, listening skills, and confidence.
- o Constructed long-term projects that challenged students to actively implement core concepts being discussed in the classroom including Scene Study and Autodrama.
- o Utilized active classroom techniques to foster open communication (ex: Collective Agreements, daily group check-ins.).
- o Presented constructive feedback by coaching student scene work, grading papers, and evaluating overall student progress.
- o Empowered students with diverse backgrounds/identities to participate, curated a safe classroom environment for exploration and inquiry.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE, *High School & Youth Theatre*

**Core Faculty, "Cherubs"**

Summer 2024

*Northwestern University's National High School Institute, Evanston, IL*

- o Instructed around 60 high school seniors each day at Northwestern University's academically competitive pre-college theater conservatory.
- o Developed, designed, and implemented the syllabi and curriculum for two sections of daily Core Performance classes, a daily Performance Theory course, and a daily Autodrama elective course.
- o Identified key areas of growth and development; adjusted projects/assignments to address and strengthen core skills.
- o Adapted classroom planning to best accommodate needs of the students in each section/unit.
- o Collaborated with faculty colleagues to best serve the needs of the student body.
- o Mentored and supervised two college-age Faculty Associates who served as teaching assistants in Core classes

**Acting Faculty & Associate Director of High School Rep. Production**

Summer 2023

*Interlochen Fine Arts Camp, Interlochen, MI*

- o Designed advanced acting courses for national/international students ages 13-18 which explored various techniques, skills, and tools.
- o Facilitated intense daily acting course which included lecture and practice of common advanced theater performance techniques.
- o Created and executed syllabus in performance building, including instruction in physical & vocal warm-ups, action/objective techniques, introduction to Laban movement analysis, improvisation, monologue preparation, and introduction to Shakespearean text, and ensemble-building.
- o Associate Director (AD) of high school rep. production of *As You Like It*; supported Director with scene direction, monologue work, and individual text analysis & coaching for student actors.

**Camp Director**

*Summer on Broadway Rising - Skokie Park District, Skokie, IL*

- o Responsible for the direction and execution of a musical theater summer camp for students ages 5-7.
- o Created and implemented a curriculum of theater games, acting lessons, and camp activities appropriate for elementary students.
- o Wrote, adapted, and curated material for short showcases; directed five bi-weekly showcases that implemented syllabus goals.
- o Managed the daily tasks of three staff members; supported administrative needs of the team and effectively solved problems.
- o Supervised weekly field trips with the assistance of direct report staff members.
- o Enforced best practices for safety and First Aid, documented incidents, and communicated with parents as necessary.

**DIRECTING CREDENTIALS** *c Indicates additional Producer Credit. + Indicates virtual production. ^ Indicates a staged reading.***Full Productions**

<i>Emilie: La Marquise du Chatelet Defends Her Life Tonight</i>	Lauren Gunderson	University of Massachusetts Amherst
<i>Orlando</i>	Sarah Ruhl, from Virginia Wolf	University of Massachusetts Amherst
<i>Late: A Cowboy Song</i>	Sarah Ruhl	University of Massachusetts Amherst
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	William Shakespeare	Accidental Shakespeare Co. *+
<i>The Anxiety Variety Show</i>	Caleb Walker	Clown House, at RhinoFest *
<i>Underworld Anthem</i>	Alexandra Ranieri	RhinoFest *
<i>The Days Are Shorter</i>	Corinne Kawecki	Pride Films & Plays
<i>Joan of Arc</i>	Alexandra Ranieri	RhinoFest *
<i>Narratives of Achromatopsia</i>	Iris Sowlat	Chicago Fringe Festival *
<i>Turn That Thing Around</i>	Aaron Harris	Chicago Fringe Festival *

**Staged Readings & New Play Development**

<i>The Oceanarium</i>	Kevin Michael Wesson	Stage Left Theater
'68	Jamie Leo	Co-Prosperity Gallery
<i>Sunshine</i>	Jacob Menke	University of Massachusetts Amherst
<i>Jane: Abortion and the Underground, 2022</i>	Paula Kamen	Violet Surprise Theater at Berger Park *
<i>The Icon Project</i>	Ensemble-Devised	Violet Surprise Theatre + *
<i>Area 33</i>	Natalie Meisner	Self-produced + *
<i>Karaoke Phantom</i>	Reina Hardy	Self-produced + *
<i>ABCD (Lab Production)</i>	Rukmini Girish	Piven Theatre's Lab
<i>Jane: Abortion and the Underground, 2017</i>	Paula Kamen	Chicago Women's History Center *
<i>Jarred</i>	Eli Campbell	20% Theater

**Selected Short Plays**

<i>Not Your Average Jo</i>	Allison Fradkin	Quick Creation Festival, Los Angeles +
<i>Lesbian Lipstick</i>	Allison Fradkin	OutWrite fest, Rochester, NY +
<i>It Starts with Me</i>	Chantal Bilodeau	Climate Change Theatre Action 2019 *
<i>I Really Love Lucy</i>	Eileen Mitchell	Violet Surprise: Femslash Fest *
<i>The Bear</i>	Anton Chekhov	Accidental Shakespeare Co.
<i>The Tower, Scene</i>	Keyanna Khatiblou	Women's Theatre Alliance Showcase
<i>Final Exam</i>	Rachel Bykowski	American Blues Theatre's Living Newspaper Fest
<i>Virginia &amp; Orlando &amp; Vita</i>	Natalie Meisner	History Lezons Festival *
<i>The New Galileos and This</i>	Amy Barryman and Caridad Svich	Climate Change Theatre Action 2017 *
<i>Barbarism</i>	Jason Grote	Collaboration's Peacebook Festival
<i>That Last Light</i>	Riley Mondragon	Chicago Theatre Marathon
<i>Everyone's A Critic</i>	Michele Stine	Broken Nose Theatre's Bechdel Fest
<i>Art &amp; Army</i>	Shozzett Silva	MadKap Productions' Short Play Festival

**Assistant Directing Credentials**

<i>As You Like It</i>	dir. Shelby Lewis	Interlochen Fine Arts Camp
<i>Dance Nation</i>	dir. Dawn Monique Williams	University of Massachusetts Amherst
<i>Into the Breeches!</i>	dir. Jessica Thebus	Northlight Theatre
<i>Trans Scripts, Part I: The Women</i> ^	dir. Delia Kropp	About Face Theatre

*The Luckiest People*  
*Richard III*  
*Human Terrain*

dir. Jason Fleece  
 dir. Mark Dodge  
 dir. Benjamin Brownson

Stage Left Theatre  
 Fury Theatre  
 Broken Nose Theater

## SELECTED THEATRE MANAGEMENT

### Interim Artistic Director

March 2020 – August 2021

*Accidental Shakespeare Co., Chicago, IL*

- o Executively led the virtual production of *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as the virtual festival *The Star-Crossed Lovers Fest*.
- o Assisted in the day-to-day facilitation of production meetings, rehearsals, and operation needs while maintaining safety standards.
- o Organized monthly company meetings, hired production personnel, managed production budgets, and spearheaded marketing initiatives.
- o Researched and updated CDC recommendations for safety as the company navigated the COVID19 pandemic.
- o Problem-solved underlying technical difficulties and questions for virtual festival creation.

## THEATRE FESTIVALS + *Indicates virtual production.*

### Producer

*SapphFest*

*Lavender Menaces*

*The Star-Crossed Lovers Fest*

*Violet Surprise: Lez Beaus*

*Climate Change Theatre Action 2019*

*Violet Surprise: Femme-Slash Parody Fest*

*History Lezons*

*WeFest 2017 (feat. Molly Brennan & Malic White)*

*Climate Change Theatre Action 2017*

*After Orlando*

*Climate Change Theatre Action 2015*

Violet Surprise Theatre +

Violet Surprise Theatre +

Accidental Shakespeare Co. +

Violet Surprise Theatre

Switchboard Ensemble / NoPassport / Arctic Cycle

Violet Surprise Theatre

Pride Films & Plays

Pride Films & Plays w/ Center on Halsted

Global Hive Labs / NoPassport / Arctic Cycle

Pride Films & Plays / NoPassport

NoPassport / Theatre Without Borders

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**The Linklater Center:** *Linklater Voice Accelerated Part 2*

Summer 2024

**The Linklater Center:** *Linklater Voice Accelerated Part 1*

Spring 2024

**Shakespeare & Company of Lenox, MA**

2023 - 2024

*Month-Long Shakespeare Intensive*

January 2024

*Linklater Voice Progression*

September – October, 2023

*Shakespeare Intensive*

August – September 2023

*Shakespeare Intensive*

April 2023

**Theatrical Intimacy Education,** *Online coursework, full list available upon request*

2022

**Chicago Dramatists:** *Devising Theater w/ Olivia Lilley*

October-November 2020

**Directors Lab Chicago:** *Directing Participant*

August 2019

**Stage Left Theatre:** *Artistic Associate*

2017 – 2020

**American Theatre Company:** *Artistic & Development Events Apprentice*

2016

**Steppenwolf Theatre:** *Theater Management Internship*

2015

## AWARDS, HONORS, and RECOGNITION

“30 Under 30” *Windy City Times*

June 2018

*Honoring LGBT Chicagoans Making an Impact*

**Academic Grant,** *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

*UMass Arts Council Grant*

2022

**Academic Achievements** *Illinois Wesleyan University*

2011 - 2015

*Alumni Fine Arts Scholarship*

*Dean's List for Academic Excellence*

*Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society*

References available upon request.