

CHARENCE HIGGINS

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EDUCATION

MFA	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, <i>Acting</i>	May 2022
BS	Jackson State University, <i>Speech Communication & Theatre</i> Summa Cum Laude	May 2016
BS	Jackson State University, <i>Psychology</i> Summa Cum Laude	May 2016

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign August 2018 to May 2022

Primary Instructor, Theatre Department

Courses Taught:

THEA 170-Fundamentals of Acting

Designed for beginning acting students to gain respect for the craft of acting by focusing on physical and vocal awareness, the basics of character creation and script analysis through exercises, improvisations, and performances. Students also adapted skills to transfer the knowledge gained in the classroom to professional settings, including interviews, peer projects, and collaborative ensemble work.

THEA 175-Relationships in Acting

In addition to the study of acting performance techniques, students mobilized research techniques to enter in the character's given circumstances, and the world of the play through scene study and character development.

THEA 101 (ONLINE)-Introduction to Theatre Arts

This course aimed to help students foster an appreciation of theatre functions. They developed an understanding for the multiple roles of theatre, built vocabulary, and explored the various aspects of the art form, including: playwriting, acting, directing, design, dramaturgy, and dramatic criticism.

Guest Instructor, Theatre Department

Courses Taught:

THEA 376-Acting Studio II: Voice

This class deepens the actor's intellectual and physical understanding of the vocal progression in order to apply this knowledge to future work as an actor. The actors continued the understanding of themselves in the voice work through an exploration of the International Phonetic Alphabet which was applied to the analysis of their own speech pattern and the speech patterns of others.

THEA 375-Dynamics

Body & Voice Dynamics taught how to avoid feeling, moving, and speaking like machines by enabling students to achieve complete relaxation and develop new vigor through a series of rhythmic exercises with stress on the relation of breathing to movement. Each movement and release is repeated in a sequence daily making the most difficult movements eventually become simple.

Teaching Assistant, Theatre Department

Courses Taught:

THEA 275-Relationships in Acting II

This course centered on setting, developing, and stretching personal goal development and application to character goal creation, establishing believable action onstage from personal experience and character exploration, exploring acting within context of a full play, application of course elements to more individual scene work, and supportive preparation for semester auditions and development of acting discipline through auditioning requirements.

THEA 121 (HYBRID)- Theatre Foundations: Performance

Practical exploration of the foundations of performance for Theatre Majors with emphasis on ensemble building, self-expression, performance of "self", acting explorations, script analysis, and professional standards.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Creative Root

Summer 2024

Lead Teaching Artist, The Theatre School at DePaul University

- Instructing students on the fundamentals of theatre
- Guiding campers as they create an original script inspired by the worlds and characters of popular literature
- Leading warm up exercises to get grounded through gentle yoga-based stretching, mindfulness, and breathing exercises
- Employing a holistic theater arts education strategy that embraces restorative and diverse approaches to learning centered around student and community needs
- Facilitating auditions and casting students in roles

Chicago Shakespeare Theatre

Oct. 2023 to present

Chicago Shakespeare SLAM Teaching Artist and Final Bout Emcee, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and partner schools

- Encouraging and enforcing SLAM goals: Be Seen, Be Heard, Be Creative, Take Risks, and Play as an Ensemble
- Facilitating Voice & Movement classes for student competitors
- Creating ease and comfort for students with voicing Shakespearean texts
- Aiding students' connection of body and voice with text
- Introducing effective, repeatable warm-up techniques
- Guiding students toward discovery-through-process and active engagement in physical exercises
- Teaching students to harness projection and vocal power

Porchlight Music Theatre

Aug. 2023 – present

Sing Out! Literacy and Theatre Resident Teaching Artist, Sherman School of Excellence, Frederick Douglass Academy High School, Brown Community Academy Elementary School

- Supporting Illinois Core ELA Standards alongside foundational theatre skills
- Promoting social-emotional learning, collaboration, and confidence
- Facilitating devising process of original short form musicals for K-12th grade students
- Working with Education Director and teaching team to plan, prepare, and execute classes upon agreed schedule
- Participating in self-evaluation and providing feedback on teaching team and class experience

Columbia College Chicago

Jan. 2023 to July 2023

Columbia Community Schools Teaching Artist, Brennemann Elementary School and Jones College Prep

- Creating curriculum and supply lists for K-12 programming in areas of theatre, musical theatre, and dance
- Incorporating social emotional learning techniques and soft skills into the program curriculum in accordance with school site values
- Attending field trips with program participants
- Advising the Coordinator on the needs of the program such as any development or issues that affect program delivery
- Creating and planning for a culminating event in both the Spring and Summer with program participants

Smithsonian Discovery Theatre

Oct. 2017 to July 2018

History Alive! Museum Educator, National Museum of American History

- Engaging visitors through interactive theater programs
- Bringing history to life and stimulating audiences to talk about it
- Inviting audience participation
- Facilitating conversation with audience members
- Helping visitors immerse themselves in the times and the emotions of historical events

Jackson Public Schools

Oct. 2016 to July 2017

Interventionist, Bates Elementary School

- Assisting in improving students' basic academic skills in all areas
- Contributing to the development and implementation of a successful instructional program
- Monitoring small group discussions and interactions
- Assisting in planning/ conducting field trips
- Assistant Coordinator for G.E.M.S. (Girls Excelling in Mississippi Schools) Program

Jackson State University

Summer 2016

Musical Theatre Camp Instructor, Camp Stars

- Designed and implemented pilot musical theatre program for all age groups.
- Lead Musical Theatre Instructor
- Adapted student written skits into full production for ages 12-15
- Wrote original production for elementary age campers

Madison Square Center for the Arts

Summer 2012-2013

Camp Counselor, Summer Arts Camp

- Responsible for planning, leading, and implementing core and non-core programs and experiences for children in a small group setting.
- Responsible for the general safety and development, growth, and skill of students

Summer Show Offs

Summer 2012

Camp Counselor, Jackson Academy

- Planned activities that gave children the opportunity to express themselves creatively
- Facilitated activities that gave children a sense of accomplishment that comes from mastering techniques and completing projects
- Used group management skills to engage all children in daily activities

HONORS AND AWARDS

UIUC FAA DEIA Award 2022

Awarded to students or faculty within the College of Fine & Applied Arts who have successfully initiated novel programs benefiting and supporting minoritized students and alum

SETC-Denise Halbach Performance Award 2019

The Denise Halbach Performance Scholarship is awarded to a student pursuing a graduate degree in acting or musical theatre performance who demonstrates excellence both academically and in performance.

National Society of Arts & Letters Acting Competition Finalist 2019

Actors compete on a national level presenting classical and contemporary monologues and are awarded by a panel of renowned theatre practitioners.

Miss Jackson State University 2016

Once selected to progress by a distinguished panel of judges at the pageant, students vote to elect someone to this position. Miss JSU represents the university at school sanctioned events and beyond and competes in the NBCA HBCU Queens Hall of Fame Pageant.

KCACTF Region IV Dramaturgy Nominee 2015

An Award designed to recognize contributions by student dramaturgs to the conception, development, and production of theater within their colleges and universities, or to educational projects in dramaturgy.

S. Randolph Edmonds Playwriting Competition 1st place 2015

Awarded to the writer of the best original play by an undergraduate student currently enrolled in a NADSA (National Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts) member college or university.

NADSA All Star Cast Member 2013 & 2014

Awarded to an outstanding performer in a full-length production presented at the national conference

NADSA 1st place Superior Dramatic Monologue 2014

Awarded to the participant who scores the highest on delivery of a monologue of their choosing

KCACTF Region IV Irene Ryan Nominee

2014

Nominated based on outstanding performance in a university production at a KCACTF member school

PUBLICATIONS

Higgins, Charence, "What Needs to Change in the American Theatre," Southern Theatre Magazine, Vol. 61, Issue 3, 2020, p. 10.

PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES

Workshop, "De-escalation & Successful Conversations in Museum Settings for Forward-Facing Staff," Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Aug. 17-18, 2023

Presentation, "Black Like Me", College Women's Wellness Retreat, H3W Campus Wellness Ambassadors Program, Dec. 10, 2022

Workshop, "Integrating Viewpoints in Production" Jackson State University Department of Theatre, Nov. 4, 2022.

Lecture/ Q&A, "Psychology in Non-Traditional Settings," Jackson State University Department of Psychology, Oct. 18, 2022.

Presentation/ Q&A, "Theatre Conversations with Charence Higgins," Jackson State University Department of Theatre, Oct. 13, 2022.

Panel Discussion, Diversity Workshop, Illinois High School Theatre Festival, Nov. 28, 2020

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Acting: Aaron Muñoz, Dan Sullivan, Robert G. Anderson, Nisi Sturgis, Roberta Gasbarre, Dr. Nadia Bodie-Smith, Rob Demery, Chris Roebuck, Yohance Myles, Dr. Mark G. Henderson

Voice: Allison Moody, Dr. Loretta Galbreath, Cynthia Stewart

Dance/ Movement: Robin McFarquhar, Kirstie Simson, Genessee Spridco, Tiffany Jefferson, Quintin Lewis, Marcus Yates

Stage Combat: Zev Steinrock, Danny Dauphin

Directing: Dan Sullivan, Yolanda Williams

Dramaturgy: Yolanda Williams

Hair, Makeup, Costumes: Dr. Nadia Bodie-Smith

Post-Performance Dialogue: Sam Smith

Workshops:

Rainn Wilson, Screen Acting, 2020

Jeffrey Driesbach, McCorkle Casting, Auditioning, 2020

Jef Johnson, Clowning, 2020

Derin De Paul, Voice Over, 2020

Adam Belcuore, The Goodman Theatre, Audition Techniques 2019

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Alpha Psi Omega National Theatre Honor Society

Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Symposium - Consultant

Department of Theatre Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Taskforce - Member and Event Organizer

Krannert Center Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee - Member

Dept. of Theatre Student Advisory Board- Member

Fine & Applied Arts Black - Member

Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre – Assistant

Fine and Applied Arts Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee – Member

Jackson State University:

Homecoming Planning Committee - Member

Welcome Week/Move-In Day Planning Committee - Member

Graduation Planning Committee - Member

Gibbs Green Plaza Commemorative Ceremony - Speaker and Planning Committee

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Xtigone

Community sponsored theatre production involving local middle and high school students for the purpose of eradicating gun violence amongst our youth

Co-director, Dramaturg, Organizer, Facilitator

Champaign-Urbana, IL 2022

Slapped: Racism in Women's Communities

Play Reading and Post Performance Dialogue with playwright, scholars, and community activists

Actor, Organizer, Facilitator

Urbana, IL 2022

ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Theatre

Rosencrantz & Guild...	Ophelia	Court Theatre	Charles Newell
brother sister cyborg...	Ava	Raven Theatre	Terry Guest
Describe the Night	Urzula	Steppenwolf Theatre	Austin Pendleton
A Raisin in the Sun	Beneatha	American Players Theatre	Tasia A. Jones
Sense & Sensibility	Miss Grey	American Players Theatre	Marti Lyons
Hamlet	Player	American Players Theatre	James DeVita
Gem of the Ocean	Black Mary	University of Georgia	Chuma Gault/ Johnathan Kitt
Hands Up!	Dead of Night	Alliance Theatre	Keith Bolden/ Alexis Woodard
Crumbs from the Tab...	Lily Ann Green	Theater at Monmouth	Chris Anthony
The Age of Bees	Sarah	Theater at Monmouth	Eddie DeHais
Measure for Measure	Escalus/Provost	Theater at Monmouth	James Noel Hoban
Gem of the Ocean	Black Mary	Illinois Theatre	Chuck Smith
The Curious Incident...	Judy	Illinois Theatre	Latrelle Bright
Tame that B!#@H	Kate/Petruchio	Illinois Theatre	Nisi Sturgis/Robert Anderson
Fools & Madmen	Goneril	Cohesion Theatre	Mari Andrea
Battle of Blue Apple...	Satan	Baltimore Rock Opera Society	Aran Keating
Crampton '61	Lead Singer	The Smithsonian (NMAAHC)	Roberta Gasbarre
The Christians	Ensemble	Baltimore's Center Stage	Hana S. Sharif
Thea's Turn	Sister Thea	Canton Visitors' Bureau	Dr. Mark G. Henderson
As Much As I Can	Nurse Cathy	Harley & Co.	James Walsh
A Christmas Story	Chief Elf	New Stage Theatre	Turner Crumbley
Stickfly	Cheryl	New Stage Theatre	Jasmine Rivera
Hairspray	Dynamite	New Stage Theatre	Francine Reynolds

Film & Television

Sio Roho Yangu (film)	Lead	Tin Mirror Studios	Joe LoBianco
Main Event (film)	Lead	Moore Studios	Rassell Holt
Turn of Events (tv)	Lead	Red Light Arts	Rob Demery
LOUD: a dance film	Supporting	Forty Acre Visions	Shantoni Xavier
Soul Damage (feature)	Lead	Phoenix Rising Entertainment	Maximus Wright
I.M.A.G.E. (tv)	Lead	WDBD Fox 40 (Jackson, MS)	Purvis Parker

Makeup/ Hair Designer

Measure for Measure	Theater at Monmouth	James Noel Hoban
The Agitators	Theater at Monmouth	Debra Ann Byrd
The Age of Bees	Theater at Monmouth	Eddie DeHais
Sofonisba	Theater at Monmouth	Dawn McAndrews
Aesop's Guide to Friendship	Theater at Monmouth	Ian Carlsen
Crumbs from the Table of Joy	Theater at Monmouth	Chris Anthony
Daddy Long Legs	Theater at Monmouth	Adam P. Blais
Like Fine Wine	Jackson State University	Prince Duren
One Monkey Don't Stop No Show	Jackson State University	Dr. Mark G. Henderson

Dramaturgy

Xtigone	CU Community	Charence Higgins/Paul O'Mahony
Wine in the Wilderness	Jackson State University	Yolanda Williams

Directing

Xtigone	CU Community Production
BrownGirlWhiteGirl	Illinois Theatre Sunday Shorts
In the Blood	Jackson State University
Rabbit Hole	Jackson State University
Tartuffe	Jackson State University

LANGUAGES

English: Native Language

Spanish: Basic

American Sign Language: Intermediate

REFERENCES

Robert G. Anderson, Associate Professor
Department of Theatre
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Email: rganders@illinois.edu

Dr. Mark G. Henderson, Coordinator/ Associate Professor
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Speech Communication
Jackson State University
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