

Jay Stratton

Director

Philosophy: *The Director is the primary **advocate for the audience.**
As director, my first responsibility is to **reveal** to the audience the heart of the
playwright's work in the most evocative, engaging, and exciting way possible.*

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- **Associate Professor of Theatre**
At The University of Texas at El Paso since 2015
 - **Masters of Fine Arts**
From the Alabama Shakespeare Festival 1998
 - **Bachelor of Arts**
From the University of Washington 1995
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CURRENT and UPCOMING PROJECTS

Director, *Metamorphoses*, Mary Zimmerman, from Ovid

Wise Family Theatre, Fall 2023

Summary: I am directing this beautiful Zimmerman script with an undergraduate cast. The piece will feature extensive movement and I am collaborating closely with choreographer Melissa Melpignano.

<https://www.melissamelpignano.com/>

DIRECTING EXPERIENCE (Selected)

Director and Adapter, *Twelfth Night* (Bilingual)

Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival, September 2023

Summary: As producing Artistic Director of Madeline Park Shakespeare, I made the decision that our second-year offering would be a bilingual version of *Twelfth Night*. Supported by the UTEP College of Liberal Arts, I worked with a student translator to create a family-friendly adaptation of the play that moves back and forth between English and Spanish. We believe this bilingual approach will create a festival that is more inclusive and accessible to all El Paso audiences and that reflects the border culture of our city.



Director and Combat Choreographer, *One Man Two Guvnors*

Lyric Repertory Company, Summer 2023

Summary: I was given the opportunity to direct this outrageous farce by Richard Bean. Lyric is a professional company with both students and AEA actors. I was fortunate to work with Michael Doherty and Brandon Foxworth in leading roles, but the entire cast was very strong.



Reviews for this production are available here:

- <https://utahtheatrebloggers.com/907827/one-man-two-guvnors-is-three-hours-of-non-stop-laughs-at-lyric-rep>
- <https://www.cachevalleydaily.com/news/archive/2023/07/08/lyrics-one-man-two-guvnors-is-a-hysterical-blend-of-slapstick-physical-comedy/>



Director and Combat Choreo, *The Motherf*#cker With the Hat*

Teatro Neplanta, Spring 2023

Summary: This daring new El Paso theatre company hired me to direct an immersive version of Stephen Adley Guirgis's dark comedy. In this intimate production, the audience traveled room to room with the cast to experience an incredibly personal version of the story. The production played a sold-out run and was an enormous success for the fledgling company.



The show was the subject of a CBS Channel 4 Feature:

https://cbs4local.com/news/local/new-theater-company-teatro-neplanta-plans-to-change-el-paso-theater-scene?fbclid=IwAR3ggnoMpFQPH8V9bu_gG8kQ8okbAdKQK6ZmLy_4zK6inm_2_gcF6DB8dQ



Director, Adapter, and Combat Choreographer, *As You Like It*

Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival, September 2022



Summary: Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival's slogan is simple, "Free, Family-Friendly, and Fun!" With this in mind, I created an 85 minute adaptation of this Shakespeare comedy and mounted it in a public park in El Paso, Texas. The results exceeded our expectations! With four live performances, we served over a thousand audience members – a quarter of them kids. We raised enough money to pay all contributing artists and never charged admission.



"Professor Stratton's response to this challenge was both brilliant and effective. Without cutting any of the major characters, he engineered a performance text that had a very legible plot and that retained many of the major themes in the play. The resulting performance moved very briskly and put some of the play's themes into better focus."

-Joe Ortiz, UTEP Chair, English Department



Director and Playwright, *Keeping Distance*

UTEP Krushevski Studio Theatre, Fall 2021

Summary: *Keeping Distance* is a technically innovative new comedy about the coronavirus and the isolation it has created. The play features a single live actor interacting with all other characters via screens – interrogating the notion that screens are an effective substitute for human contact. In an unusual structure for academia, all performers in the premier performance were compensated and the production was underwritten by a **Liberal Arts CEA grant**.



Director and Adapter, *Lysistrata*

UTEP, Spring 2021

Summary: To create a safe environment for both audience and performance team, I created a new, site-specific version of *Lysistrata* for outdoor production in the Fox Fine Arts Atrium space. The show was trimmed to a dynamic 45 minutes with choreography provided by Professor Tawanda Chabikwa, and live percussion by Dr. Andrew Smith's Music students.

Lysistrata was also livestreamed and may be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjSGKjyx9Tc>



"Stratton is to be commended for both his skill as a director and adapter, and his perseverance to provide his students and audience a chance to once again share a space together"

-Wil Kilroy, NMSU, Chair of Theatre



Director and Adapter, *Shakespeare's Asylum*

Austin High/ UTEP Co-Production, Fall 2019

Summary: In an effort to create a bridge between UTEP and local schools, we created this hugely successful Shakespeare themed haunted house at Austin High School. The cast and team were a mix of UTEP students and Austin students. The project worked best as an accessible tool for teaching Shakespeare to both college and high school students.



This innovative and collaborative production is the subject an article in the Fall 2020 issue of Teaching Theatre Magazine.



Director and Co-Adapter of *A Christmas Carol en La Frontera*

Wise Family Mainstage, UTEP, Fall 2018

Summary: To serve the largely *Latinx student body* at UTEP, my team and I created a new version of Dicken’s timeless classic. Our adaptation is bilingual and focuses on the rich heritage and culture of the Border region. The production was hugely successful, and the department has elected to make it our go-to holiday mainstage production for the foreseeable future.



“The script, and especially the interwoven languages and cultures in it were outstanding... by far the best Christmas Carol we’ve done at UTEP over the past 30 years.”

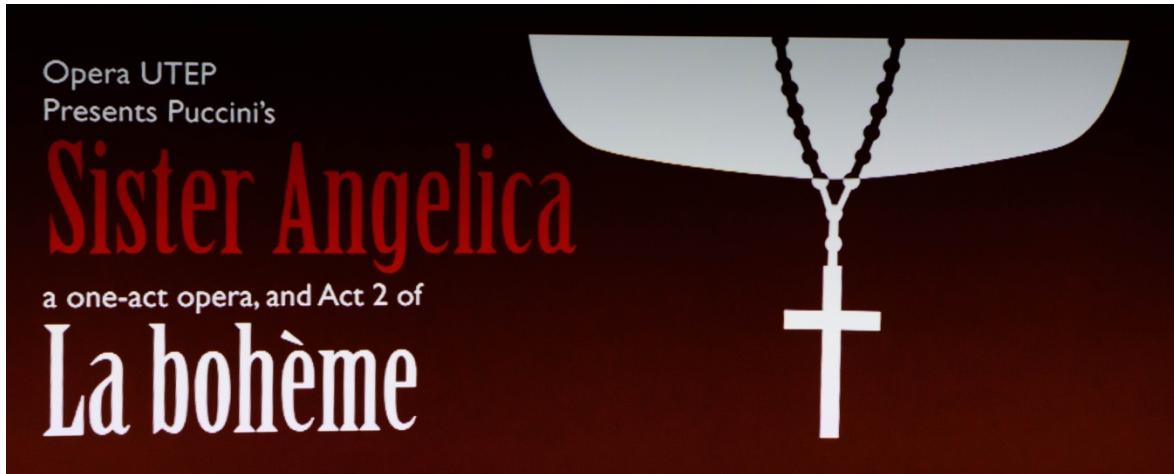
-Diana Natalicio, former UTEP President



Stage Director of *Suor Angelica*, Puccini (Opera)

UTEP school of Music, Spring 2019

Summary: Having seen a number of my successful large cast productions at UTEP, the music department asked me to direct their Spring opera. The result was a potently moving production of this Puccini classic.



In The Next Room by Sarah Ruhl (Director)

Wise Family Mainstage, UTEP, Spring 2018

Summary: Largely for educational purposes, my department elected to produce this brilliant and challenging piece of feminist theatre on our mainstage. In my opinion, this is Ruhl’s strongest play, but it is also a play that presents enormous challenges to a student cast. The final product was funny, lyrical, and heartbreaking, but the real success was the growth of the young and talented cast.



“Mr. Stratton crafted specific and dynamic stage pictures and used the space in its entirety. I found some moments to be crafted so well it moved me to emotion as an audience member”

- Nichole Hamilton, NMSU Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts



Bloody Shakespeare! (Director and Adapter)

UTEP Studio Theatre, Halloweens 2017, 2015

Summary: I conceived, adapted, and directed this innovative, site-specific, Shakespeare themed Halloween event. The show was a 45-minute experience that was one part classical theatre, one part haunted house, and one part valuable training tool. The show was commercially successful and a great way to introduce classical language and stage combat to students.



The Good Doctor* by Neil Simon

Monomoy Theatre, Late Summer of 2017

*Cape Cod Times "Favorite of 2017"

Summary: As part of my ongoing relationship with the Monomoy Theatre, I was asked to return and direct Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor*. The show is a comic and musical homage to Chekhov as well as a love letter to theatre. The cast included both undergraduate and graduate students as well Equity guests.



"Monomoy's director Jay Stratton uses his six young artists to breathe life into two, three, or even four wildly different characters in a dazzling display of virtuosity."

- Roger Shoemaker, Cape Cod Times



Sister Act by Bill and Cherie Steinkeller & Alan Menken

UTEP Dinner Theater, Summer 2017

Summary: The UTEP Dinner Theater is a beloved El Paso semi-professional theatre that produces Broadway style musicals. I coordinated with designers, music director, choreographer, and more than 20 cast members to produce a show that was both entertaining and moving. *Sister Act* was hugely successful, selling out every seat and extending its run.



Medea by Euripides

Wise Family Mainstage, UTEP, Spring 2017

Summary: Because of my classical experience, I was asked to direct UTEP's mainstage production of *Medea*. I chose to add live percussion throughout and a choreographed dumb show of the betrothal between Jason and Glauce. I also added an elaborate and stylized violence sequence to bring the climax of the show onstage.



Dead Man's Cell Phone, by Sarah Ruhl

UTEP Studio Theatre, Spring 2016

Summary: I directed this beautiful play by Sarah Ruhl in my visiting year at UTEP. While much of my directing work can be quite muscular, this play required a more subtle guidance, while still demanding high stakes and energy.



Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen (Adapted by Jon Jory).

Monomoy Theatre, Summer of 2015

Summary: This technically ambitious adaptation of Austen's novel had 18 actors playing 26 characters in over 50 locations. The cast included undergraduate and graduate students, local community members, and Equity guests. Because we had only two weeks to rehearse, I continuously returned the production's focus to the potent and still relevant themes of Austen's classic novel.



Pride@Prejudice adapted by Daniel Elihu Kramer,

NCC Mainstage, Fall of 2014

Summary: This version of Austen's novel is performed by six actors each playing multiple roles. My cast reflected the broad diversity of NCC's population. Because many had little to no experience, I mentored them closely and functioned as the show's dialect coach.



See Rock City by Arlene Hutton, Chester Theatre Company

Chester Theatre Company, Summer of 2010

Summary: Chester Theatre Company did all three plays in Arlene Hutton's Nibroc cycle and asked me to direct the middle segment. This was a professional production with an all Equity cast. Because the entire trilogy happened on a single flexible set, I had to work closely with two other directors as well as the design team.



Suburbia by Eric Bogosian, NCC Mainstage

Fall of 2012

Summary: For my first collegiate directing experience, I was asked to helm NCC's mainstage production of *Suburbia*. So that I could utilize the broad range of ethnic diversity at NCC, I chose to modify the script to allow for the casting of black actors in my male lead roles. The show was successful and reflected the demographics of the NCC student body.



Jay Stratton

Fight Choreographer

Philosophy: *First and foremost, stage combat must be safe and comfortable for the combatants. Second it must serve the director's vision for the piece. Third it must be motivated and grounded in character. All other considerations are subordinate to these priorities.*

- SAFD certified actor-combatant at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in 1998.
 - Recertified with recommendation in 2021.
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One Man Two Guvnors

Summer 2023, Lyric Repertory Company

- Lots of comedic physical violence including slaps, falls, grappling, found objects, and groin strikes
- Two sequences of knife violence with falls
- Two underscored Vaudeville styled chase sequences with tight traffic
- Collaborated with cast to build all the elaborate and carefully timed physical comedy of Act 1, scene 4 (the dining sequence) including violence



Jay Stratton Directing Portfolio, Continued

The Motherfucker with the Hat

Spring 2023, Teatro Neplanta

- Immersive theatre style with extremely close audience and arena staging
- One substantial and brutal unarmed fight featuring found weapons and furniture all in close audience proximity

Note, this fight was recorded and may be viewed here.
Warning – language and simulated violence.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVav6Zaj_8E

- Other incidental violence



Heroes and Saints

Spring 2023, UTEP Wise Theatre (dir. Adriana Dominguez)

- Police violence sequence including a baton assault
- Boxing training sequence with mitt work

Pagliacci (Opera)

Spring 2020, El Paso Opera

(dir. Justin Lucero)

- Several combat and chase sequences including slaps and falls
- Incidental violence
- One fatal knife stabbing



Jay Stratton Directing Portfolio, Continued

Twelfth Night

Fall 2023, Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival

- Opening underscored dumbshow separating Viola and Sebastian
- Comedic sword fight between Andrew and Viola
- Serious sword fight between Toby and Antonia
- Unarmed sequence between Sebastian and Andrew



As You Like It

Fall 2022, Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival

- Substantial comedic wrestling sequence
- Falls and incidental violence

Lysistrata

Spring 2021, UTEP Fox Fine Arts Atrium

- Collaborated with choreographer Tawanda Chabikwa to create several comedic sequences of violence
- Challenge of safely creating violence during the coronavirus pandemic



Jay Stratton Directing Portfolio, Continued

Monsters We Create

Spring 2020, UTEP Studio Theatre (dir. Kim McKean)

- One unarmed fight including a flip
- Incidental violence and a stabbing sequence

Shakespeare's Asylum

Halloween 2019, Austin High School/ UTEP Co production

- One violent bathtub drowning sequence
- Eye gouging
- Incidental violence



Carmen (Opera)

Spring 2016, El Paso Opera (dir. Susan Payne O'Brien)

- Incidental violence including one unarmed group fight
- One underscored knife fight with traditional Spanish Navaja blades



Jay Stratton Directing Portfolio, Continued

Bloody Shakespeare!

Halloween 2015, 2017, UTEP Studio Theatre

- Significant unarmed combat and incidental violence
- Stylized strobe dagger combat sequence with musical underscore
- Numerous kills and blood stunts including cut off hand, ripped out tongue, throat slitting, and stomach stab, all in close audience proximity



Sister Act

Summer 2017, UTEP Dinner Theatre

- One underscored comedic chase sequence with vaudevillian violence including travel through audience

The Importance of Being Earnest

Fall 2017, UTEP Wise Mainstage Theatre (dir. Kim McKean)

- One comedic cane duel between Jack and Algernon

Medea

Spring 2017, UTEP Wise Mainstage Theatre

- One elaborate filicide sequence involving four women and two children

Lydia*

Spring 2017, UTEP Studio Theatre (dir. Kim McKean)

- Incidental and unarmed violence including one domestic abuse sequence

* - KC/ACTF national winner "Best Play"

House on Mango Street

Fall 2016, UTEP Wise Mainstage Theatre (dir. Rebecca Rivas)

- Domestic Abuse Sequence

Dead Man's Cell Phone

Spring 2016, UTEP Studio Theatre, Co-fight director

- One elaborate unarmed two person fight with close audience proximity