

Stephanie Stroud Theatrical Portfolio (Selected Works)

Stephanie Stroud
1039 Ferdinand Avenue
Forest Park, IL 60130
stephaniestroudsemail@gmail.com
206-240-4406
stephaniestroud.com

INTRODUCTION

The following selections represent my holistic interest in theatre. As a storyteller, I am drawn to projects that mine new voices, foster community dialogue, push performance boundaries, and explore old pedagogy with fresh perspective. The following productions are a select few that highlight my career as an actor, director, movement specialist, and new works collaborator.

DIRECTING

Until Death

By Dana Lynn Formby
Chicago Dramatists
Concordia University Chicago

Until Death received a grant from Chicago Dramatists, in association with Actor's Equity, to workshop this new play by Dana Lynn Formby. As the director of this workshop, I have curated an ensemble of professional actors that will offer insight on play structure through readings, movement, and staged performance. Post workshop, the play will be brought to Concordia University for a full production in February 2015. The second portion of this project is part of an ongoing partnership with Concordia University Chicago and Chicago Dramatists.

THE SATURDAY SERIES: November 15, 2pm

UNTIL DEATH

BY RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT DANA LYNN FORMBY
DIRECTED BY STEPHANIE STROUD

Devon Thompson is in love and, inspired by her feminist roots, has just proposed to the man of her dreams, Josiah Boor. But her mother-in-law-to-be is a Mormon, and the pair cannot see eye to eye on what it means to be a family. As the two battle their way through their relationship, à la *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, they find that life is more precious than the differences that try to keep them apart.

CHICAGO
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ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

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The Best of The Tens

The Second City

In association with Chicago Dramatists

Beginning as a national playwright submission for comedic 10 minutes plays, selected submissions were workshopped and staged at Chicago Dramatists. As a director, I worked with Equity actors as part of the initial staged reading and workshop process. The best of the workshopped plays were then selected and performed with a new cast on stage at The Second City.



ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

T. Eloop Production in Association with Chicago Dramatists and The Second City Training Center, select 10 minute comedic plays written by up and coming playwrights and produced by faculty members of The Second City Training Center.

Playwrights: William Boarsma, MT Cozzola, Michael Leathers, Stephanie Mohr, Shannon Pritchard, and Scott Woldman. Directors: Jeremiah Howe and Stephanie Stroud

Seek and Ye Shall Find

By Sentell Harper

Mortar Theatre Company

Apollo Theatre

Collaborating alongside writer and performer Sentell Harper, this one man show was workshopped over the course of a year prior to production at Apollo Theatre in Chicago.



ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

Seek and Ye Shall Find, written and performed by Sentell Harper, is a one-man show that asks, What does it mean to be different? To be black? To be gay? One performer brings us the untold stories of black, gay men by boldly exploring dozens of characters who are fiercely funny, deeply honest, and constantly surprising. Seek and Ye Shall Find brings forth the comedic and heartbreaking tales of individuals whose complexity cannot be simplified behind stereotype. It's Chicago gay realness with dramatic storytelling flair.

PRESS

“... what a comic and poignant ride Harper and director Stephanie Stroud take you on...”-Windy City Times, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

-ChicagoCritic, RECOMMENDED

-Huffington Post, RECOMMENDED

MOVEMENT DIRECTING

Corazón de Manzana

By Dana Lynn Formby

Mortar Theatre Company

Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs

Movement direction in collaboration with choreographer Mike Ford. Viewpoints and Laban technique were utilized to complement this new work exposing the femicide crisis in Juarez, Mexico. Provocative movement allowed audience member to process jarring and complex issues resulting in an emotional, but safe, catharsis.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Mixing realism, fantasy and stylized choreography, *Corazón de Manzana* intertwines the lives of three mother/daughter pairs living in Canada, the United States and Mexico to the tragic femicide occurring in Juárez, Mexico. A desperate cry for help reaches across borders to begin an investigation into a mother's plea to find her missing daughter. As the discovery into the child's disappearance unfolds, the connections between suffering and privilege in the three countries come into dramatic and heart-wrenching clarity. Funding for *Corazón de Manzana* was made possible by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs (DCASE). The Chicago DCASE grant provides support to established and emerging artists within Chicago.

PRESS

-“Relying on magical realism and choreographed movement, the scenes are at once disturbing and eerily beautiful.” -Time Out Chicago

-Chicago Theatre Addict, RECOMMENDED

-Chicago Now, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

EXPLORE: Detroit

Mortar Theatre Company

In association with Steppenwolf Theatre Company

Invited to participate in Steppenwolf's EXPLORE series; the ensemble drew inspiration from Steppenwolf's production of *Detroit*. The movement ensemble concentrated on the cloistered and sometimes stifling suburban environment that affects individuals understanding of self.

With Arcade Fire's song *Sprawl 1* as the backdrop, ensemble members created vignettes exposing the suburban pressure to remain in safe and controlled traditional roles



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Summoning the spirit of the suburbs was the centerpiece of this EXPLORE event, which included a series of pop-up performances by local actors, musicians, photographers and others—all inspired by the influential and popular album *The Suburbs* by Arcade Fire. In addition, the event featured an interactive art exhibit by celebrated Milwaukee artist Paul Druecke

ABOUT *DETROIT* AT STEPPENWOLF

In a “first ring” suburb outside a mid-sized American city, Ben and Mary fire up the grill to welcome the new neighbors who’ve moved into the long-empty house next door. The fledgling friendship soon veers out of control, shattering the fragile hold Ben and Mary have on their way of life - with unexpected comic consequences. *Detroit* is a fresh, off-beat look at what happens when we dare to open ourselves up to something new.

ACTING

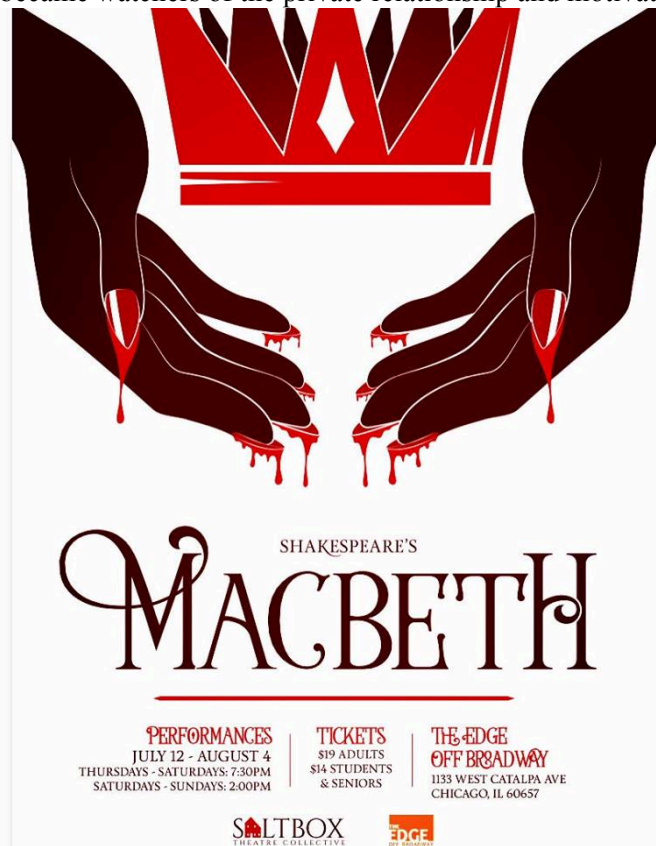
Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Brian Fruits

Saltbox Collective

This production was a unique experience, as it allowed me to collaborate with past students as well as my current colleagues in a professional setting. The intimate and minimal set allowed the audience to become watchers of the private relationship and motivation of the Macbeths.



PRESS

-“Stephanie Stroud was the standout for me as Lady Macbeth. She is a commanding presence and manages to feel like the propulsive force behind the action without reducing Lady Macbeth to a caricature of the evil schemer or Macbeth himself to some henpecked flunky. Instead, her performance speaks of a simmering outrage that she must constantly be at the sidelines of power.” Chicago Theatre Review, **RECOMMENDED**

-“ Stroud too is very strong as the woman behind the King. Her sly and falsely ingratiating approach to the arrival of Duncan contrasts beautifully with her previous soliloquies in which she solicits the spirits of darkness to “unsex” her and make it possible for her to kill him. Her Lady Macbeth is a powerful creation, never more so than in the famous sleepwalking scene when her emotions overwhelm her. “ Chicago On Stage

Tell Me What You Remember

Adapted by Gedalya Chirin

By Erasing the Distance

As an actor, *Tell Me What You Remember* has offered me the opportunity to work with collaborators not only within theatre, but mental health professionals and organizations that speak for those afflicted with mental health issues. This unique experience derives its story directly from the voices and letters of a family's struggle with mental illness. Discussions and installations enable audience members to continue the conversation individually or as members of the audience community.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Tell Me What You Remember is the culmination of ETD's year-long Depression in Families Project, which was commissioned by Rebecca's Dream and led by the creative team of producer Brigid O'Shaughnessy, director Nikki Zaleski, and adapter Gedalya Chinn. The project began in late 2013 with a series of workshops training students and volunteers on story collecting and shaping. After the initial stories were collected and transcribed, script devising and development workshops continued throughout the first half of 2014. A public reading of the piece was held in July 2014, and feedback from that reading helped shape the final script. *Tell me What You Remember* depicts the true story of one family's life-altering battle with depression, using their distinct journey to illustrate the universal truth of how deeply depression can impact both those who suffer, and those who love them.

Tell Me What You Remember is commissioned by co-producer Rebecca's Dream (rebeccasdream.org)

PRESS

-Around The Town Chicago, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Bombs, Babes and Bingo

By Merri Biechler

Mortar Theatre Company

Directed by Rachel Edwards Harvith

This new play by Merri Biechler created unique challenges for the actors. Each scene is performed at random changing the arc of the story for each production.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Bombs, Babes and Bingo is a play that deals with a war, the fallibility of memory, the division of family and the struggle by a scientist to make sense of his life and work after a traumatic brain injury. Dennis is the scientist, father and bomb maker. His wife keeps busy enrolled in Clown College and his daughter walks among the destruction her father's designs have caused searching for meaning. Bookended by two fixed scenes, the additional scenes' order is determined by a random pull of a bingo ball from the Bingo Girl, creating a myriad of possibilities of story, character and comedy that plays out differently each performance. As Dennis' broken synapses fire and misfire in hope of making any connection, the pull of the bingo ball randomly summons forth his memories. Neither the audience nor the cast knows the order until the moment the bingo ball number is called. As a result, each performance of *Bombs, Babes and Bingo* is unique to that audience with 3,628,800 possible outcomes.

PRESS

-“Stephanie Stroud is a stand-out as Dennis's hapless wife”, Chicago Reader, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

-“I’ve never seen anything quite like *Bombs, Babes and Bingo*, and the boundary-pushing Mortar continues to demonstrate why they are a force to be reckoned with in the Chicago theatre scene.” Chicago Theatre Addict, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

-“Stroud gives a striking performance as she transitions from sad clown to aggressive housewife.” Time Out Chicago, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

-“Stephanie Stroud multiplies Lucille Ball’s physical comedy and *Lady Macbeth*’s survival instinct and sneaks up on us with a presentation of a woman not as over the edge or as controllable as her husband has rationalized her to be.” Gapers Block, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

-“Stroud in particular stands out as a quirky housewife deteriorating under the strain of balancing the equation of duties as a mother and wife. She also brings the most comic moments to the production with her clown-college career (and with her precision, I had to wonder if she actually ever was a clown).”
Chicago Critic, HIGHLY RECOMMENDED