

Matthew McCray

Full Bio

Matthew McCray is a multi-faceted artist who has worked professionally in Los Angeles theatre as a producer, director, performer, musical director, composer and teacher of theatre. Originally from Fort Collins, Colorado, he moved to California in 1994 to attend Chapman University. After earning a BFA in Theatre Performance and a minor in Vocal Music from Chapman in 1998, he moved to Los Angeles. He currently resides in Eagle Rock, California.

As A Producer

In 2005, Matthew was featured on the cover of American Theatre Magazine for his work with Son of Semele Ensemble (SOSE), a Los Angeles theatre company he founded in 2000. Under his leadership for six years, SOSE was labeled by American Theatre Magazine as one of the country's up-and-coming young ensemble companies. To date, it has produced 18 productions and workshops in Los Angeles, garnering:

- Six LA Weekly Theatre Award nominations for *Iphigenia (a rave fable)*. (2007)
- One LA Weekly Theatre Award nomination for *Hyperbole: Epiphany*. (2006)
- Four NAACP Theatre Award nominations for *The Tower*. Recipient of one award. (2005)
- A company profile in American Theatre Magazine. (2005)
- A photo representation of the West Coast premiere production of *A Human Interest Story (or The Gory Details and All)* in the international theatre journal TheatreForum. (2004)
- Seven LA Stage Alliance Ovation Award nominations for *Animal Farm*. Recipient of two awards. (2003)

SOSE productions are consistently praised by the press for their daring and unique esthetic, and critics from the Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly and Back Stage West have all recommended SOSE's work. Matthew currently serves as SOSE's Founding Artistic Director, Development Director, Graphic Designer and is the organization's Board Chairman.

This year Matthew is collaborating with Center Theatre Group and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks to produce the year-long play festival 365 Days/365 Plays. Having completed work on the festival's Curatorial Committee, he is now the liaison for the 13 theatre companies participating in the 2nd quarter of the festival. As such he is coordinating with all 13 companies to produce a culminating event later this year, showcasing the work of all 13 companies.

In 1999 Matthew created a children's theatre program in Newport Beach called Musical Theatre Playground (MTP) that produces reduced musicals and Shakespearean plays with child actors (K-6). As the program's sole producer, adaptor and director, Matthew has presented over 30 productions, inspiring countless children to become theatre-goers and theatre-makers. Now in his 8th year of producing and directing for MTP, Matthew's earlier MTP cast members have gone on to specialty high schools for the performing arts to continue their studies in the theatre.

Matthew produced two training workshops in Los Angeles last year that introduced fresh theatrical concepts, approaches and styles to many Los Angeles theatre artists. They included:

- Corporeal Mime lead by Elke Luyten, who is currently in residency at Robert Wilson's Watermill Center.
- Theatre Devising Techniques lead by an associate artist with internationally-acclaimed theatre company Theatre de Complicite, a company based in London. Matthew is coordinating another Theatre de Complicite workshop in 2007.

As A Director

Matthew's directing work includes published plays, new work and self-written work. Recently he became a nominee in the 2007 LA Weekly Theatre Awards for his 2006 West Coast premiere production of *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls On The Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart (a rave fable)* by Caridad Svich. As the production's Director he and his design team have been nominated in the category of Production Design, which is only one of the six nominations that *Iphigenia...* received from LA Weekly this year. Other directing work includes his own original plays *A Few Moments Behind The Mask*, *Earthlings* and *Amended* which premiered in REDCAT's Studio Festival. For local universities, his directing work includes productions for the BFA program at Chapman University for the past 3 years including the West Coast premiere of *What The Moon Saw* by Stephanie Fleischmann. Also, in 2006 he worked as a Musical Director with Ovation Award-winning stage director Edgar Landa on *Titus Andronicus* at California State University Long Beach. Most recently, Matthew was invited by Erik Ehn to direct a workshop production written by Sibyl O'Malley at California Institute of the Arts. Before starting that project, he is scheduled to direct a portion of Week 21 of the 365 Days/365 Plays festival and complete work on three productions with Musical Theatre Playground.

As A Performer

Matthew has appeared on the stage, as well as in film, television and commercials. His acting work in the theatre spans many different styles and genres, from the experimental stage of REDCAT where he acted in his original work *Amended*, to the stages of the nationally-recognized musical theatre organizations REPRISE! and Musical Theatre West, to the classical stage of Shakespeare Orange County. For Son of Semele Ensemble his acting credits include the role of Abraham in *The Mysteries*, the role of Boxer in the Ovation-nominated cast of *Animal Farm* and Paul Antonelli in *Film is Evil: Radio is Good*, for which he was published on the cover of American Theatre Magazine. He was also a member of the devising team for SOSE's original work *The Labor Project*. His television work includes the recurring role of Jasper on the Emmy Award-winning television show *Will & Grace* and, most recently, *Boston Legal*. He has also been seen and heard singing in a Discover Card commercial, and in 2003 he carried a supporting role in the independent film *The Commission*, starring Martin Sheen, Edward Asner and Martin Landau. Matthew is a member of Actor's Equity Association and the Screen Actors Guild.

As A Writer and Composer

Matthew has authored three plays: *Amended* which premiered at REDCAT's Studio Festival in 2004; *Earthlings* which Son of Semele Ensemble premiered in Los Angeles in 2001; and, *A Few Moments Behind The Mask* which premiered in 1998 at Chapman University.

His musical writing includes choral work, musical scores and incidental music for the theatre. His two published choral works for voice and piano are *When We Two Parted*, published in 1995 with Twin Elm Publishing, and *The Paper Reeds By The Brooks*, published in 1998 with National Music Publishing. *When We Two Parted* was performed by The Choral Project in Santa Cruz and San Jose in 2004. In

1996 his musical anthology of Lewis Carroll poetry was added into a theatre work about Alice Liddell, subsequently performed at Chapman University. Additionally, in 1998 he directed a complete evening of his choral compositions, also at Chapman. Since that time, he has collaborated with New York composer Andrew Ingkavet to create a vocal soundscape for Ingkavet's musical score in Son of Semele Ensemble's production of *The Tower* and also wrote a vocal soundscape underscore for *Titus Andronicus* at California State University Long Beach.

As A Teacher

Since 2005, Matthew is a part time faculty at Chapman University, where he has taught Directing, Musical Theatre and Rehearsal/Performance. Other teaching includes a performance workshop at California Lutheran University, as well as private singing instruction at Pacific School of Music and the Arts. Last year Matthew was asked to join a panel at California Institute of the Arts to speak with students about the formation of ensemble theatre companies.