



Albert Innaurato in a still from a YouTube video.

Innaurato, Albert (b. 1948)

by Raymond-Jean Frontain

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"'Gayness,' in and of itself, is of no interest to me whatever as a writer," playwright Albert Innaurato explained in response to a controversy that broke out over his attitude towards sexual orientation in one of his plays. "I am interested in the experiences of individual people in specific circumstances, and it would never occur to me to attack a work of fiction because I disagreed with the sexuality of a particular character--but these are the times in which we live."

Innaurato's quiet exasperation suggests the extremes that he negotiates in his writing. His plays are remarkable as much for the marginalizing ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and body image of their characters (people whom he describes as sitting "outside the standard categories our great society thinks so immutable"), as they are for the playwright's refusal to adopt a politically correct attitude concerning the unfairness of prejudice.

Innaurato's fascination with the ambivalent responses that people make at moments of identity crisis--and his own refusal to criticize those responses and, thus, allow his audience to leave the theater confident that justice has been served and/or a crisis resolved--have made him a difficult playwright to type and, as a consequence, have limited his popularity.

This is unfortunate because he remains an important playwright of the nascent gay theater movement of the 1970s and 1980s--in particular the Theater of the Ridiculous--and deserves to enjoy the same renown currently bestowed upon Charles Ludlum and upon Innaurato's one-time collaborator, Christopher Durang.

Biography

Albert F. Innaurato was born in an ethnically diverse neighborhood in south Philadelphia on June 2, 1948. The neighborhood experience is recreated in several of his plays in which an Italian-American family coexists, generally happily, with its Jewish- and Irish-American neighbors on the outskirts of a larger, more powerful, and vaguely menacing WASP society.

Innaurato began studying piano and musical composition as a child and became addicted to listening to the Saturday afternoon radio broadcasts by the Metropolitan Opera. While still only a boy, he began attending live local performances.

He remembers those days with great fondness: "I was utterly uncritical about what I saw. In those days, in Philadelphia, the scenery would often wave when a well-endowed singer took a deep breath. It didn't matter to me; that was life. That was the only world worth living in. A world where fat people were young and beautiful forever. A world where the darkest deeds and most horrible tragedies were celebrated in the most glorious music and the victims emerged from endless death throes into equally endless ovations."

In an essay detailing his love of opera, Innaurato recalls that he had written his third score by the time he was sixteen, including a libretto based on Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. A music teacher who appreciated the boy's ambitious libretti, but who lamented his lack of musical talent, encouraged him to write plays instead.

Still, Innaurato's passion for opera has been a hallmark of his career, reflected not only in his playwriting, but also in his side career of writing about opera and his serving as dramaturg, director, and developer of projects for opera companies.

After graduating from Philadelphia's Temple University (B. A. circa 1969), Innaurato attended the California Institute of the Arts (B. F. A. 1972), and then entered the theater arts program at Yale University (M. F. A. 1974).

Innaurato's two years at Yale coincided with an extraordinary moment in the drama school's history. He studied playwriting with Terrence McNally, at the time a rising young playwright who, during his Yale residency, wrote and oversaw a student production of the play that would eventually become his wildly successful Broadway farce, *The Ritz*.

Innaurato would remain friends until her death with Wendy Wasserstein, a fellow student who would become a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright. And while at Yale, Innaurato collaborated with another student, Christopher Durang, on three works: a satiric cabaret piece titled "I Don't Generally Like Poetry, But Have You Read 'Trees?"; a black comedy titled *The Life of Mitzi Gaynor; or, Gyp*; and a musical play titled *The Idiots Karamazov* that careened wildly off Dostoyevsky's somber novel. Fellow students Meryl Streep and Sigourney Weaver acted in two of his earliest produced works.

Following graduation, Innaurato scored a critical success with the dark and disturbing *The Transfiguration of Benno Blimpie*, which was done in a workshop at Yale in 1973, then moved in 1975 to Off-Broadway in a production directed by McNally's partner at the time, Robert Drivas, with whom Innaurato had also worked at Yale. The production earned Obie Awards for both Innaurato and his star, James Coco.

Unfortunately, while *Benno Blimpie* played to capacity houses for months, it was in a theater that had only seventy-five seats, and Innaurato made little money from the production. When a Guggenheim Fellowship for which McNally had recommended him ran out, Innaurato was forced to support himself through a series of menial jobs as he struggled to complete his next play.

In 1976 Innaurato was at his lowest ebb emotionally when a medical condition (which had first manifested itself while he was at Yale) recurred and left him with sizable medical bills. He was able to complete *Gemini* only after the timely arrival of a Rockefeller Foundation grant.

Gemini proved one of the dramatic hits of the decade. It moved from a low budget production at Playwrights Horizons (1976) to a limited run at the Circle Repertory Theater (1977), and from Circle Rep to a highly successful run of 1,819 performances on Broadway (1977-81). It was subsequently made into a film titled *Happy Birthday, Gemini* (1980, directed by Richard Benner), and in 2006 was briefly reincarnated as *Gemini: The Musical*, with a book by Innaurato and music by Charles Gilbert.

Unfortunately, despite their striking originality and mordant humor, none of Innaurato's subsequent plays

enjoyed as great a success.

The Early Plays

Innaurato's early plays display a Charles Ludlum-like delight in the ridiculous. *The Idiots Karamazov* (first produced at Yale in 1973) conflates Dostoyevsky's Karamazov family with the Tyrones of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*--in particular, Katharine Hepburn's film interpretation of the opium-addicted Mary--and infuses the mix with the absurdist delights of such popular cultural icons as the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*, and American theater's then-obsession with the plays of Anton Chekhov. In the earliest version of the play, Innaurato himself "substituted" for the supposed star, an ailing Dame Edith Evans, in the central role of Russian literature translator Constance Garnett--a part subsequently assumed by a young Meryl Streep.

Earth Worms (1974) places on stage a blind woman preoccupied with killing cockroaches, an elderly former college professor who dresses in elaborate nineteenth-century female costumes, a couple covered with the blood of worms they squish while rolling about naked in a cemetery, and three nuns rendered faceless by their wimples who scourge a near-naked young man for his sexual transgressions.

Innaurato's satire of the behavior of Roman Catholic clerics continues in *Urlicht* (1974), in which Mother Superior Mary Martha Lazarus supports her impoverished convent by taking the only job for which she is qualified: descending into the bowels of the New York City subway system to club rats. During the course of the play, the nun emotionally brutalizes a young man waiting on the subway platform as cruelly as she clubs the rats that infest the tracks. The play is indebted to Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1960) and clearly anticipates Durang's *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All to You* (1981).

In *Wisdom Amok* (no date available), a priest who is sexually attracted to altar boys crashes the wake of a twelve-year-old girl, whom he mistakes for his dead younger brother. Having disturbed the already distraught family by kissing and passionately fondling the corpse, he is sent by his bishop to a convalescence home to serve as the chaplain to a group of insane nuns presided over by a hunchbacked, sex-crazed Mother Superior (reminiscent of the role undertaken by Vanessa Redgrave in director Ken Russell's 1971 film, *The Devils*). In a dark parody of the Roman Catholic belief that during the celebration of the Eucharist the host and wine are transformed by the priest into the actual body and blood of Christ, which are then consumed by the communicants, the mad nuns devour the bodies of still-living males--including that of Father Augustine--with sadomasochistic glee.

Innaurato's extraordinary *The Transfiguration of Benno Blimpie* reveals the existential mystery that is at the heart of the playwright's engagement with the ridiculous. Rejected by his family who are disgusted by his morbid obesity, and gang-raped by a sadistic group of thugs on a school playground one night, the four-hundred-pound Benno nails shut the windows and door of a rented room and, no longer able to satisfy his gnawing appetite with foodstuff, prepares to consume his own flesh.

Innaurato says of *The Transfiguration of Benno Blimpie* that "Blimpie is meant to be a vision or a version of a certain kind of artist who burns out and dies into his art. Blimpie is a failed artist who is unable to make any of the connections that you need to make in order to survive in a career. And what happens when your art meets a dead end? You either give up entirely or you start becoming your art, you start consuming, you start becoming your art to the point that your art is consuming you, and that's really what he does. His death becomes his final work of art. . . ."

Benno is, in ways, the antithesis of Franz Kafka's "The Hunger Artist" who starves himself because he cannot

find the food that satisfies him.

The Second Stage of Innaurato's Career

In interviews, Innaurato has repeatedly expressed his frustration with the disappearance of a serious audience composed of "people who love the theatre and have the habit of going to the theatre and are enthusiastic about the theatre and make up their own minds" rather than rely upon professional critics who are only too willing to impose their personal tastes on audiences unable to form an independent opinion. Not surprisingly, the plays written following the success of *Gemini* meditate on the nature of theater and performance, in particular a playwright's inability to connect with his audience, a concern that marks the second stage of Innaurato's career.

In *Ulysses in Traction* (1978), a university drama department in race-torn Detroit attempts to rehearse a play about the Vietnam War as a campus social protest march disintegrates into a riot outside the theater. The personal lives of the actors and production staff increasingly overlap with the characters in the play being rehearsed, raising questions about the relation between truth and acting. As the riot threatens to invade the fortress-like theater building, Innaurato challenges commercial theater's immuring itself from the real world when theater should be at the center of any social revolution.

Passione (1980), a screwball comedy set in a chaotic Italian-American household in south Philadelphia, is an absurdist reimagining of George Kaufman and Moss Hart's *You Can't Take It with You* (1936). Innaurato's continued faith in the ridiculous is manifest in a scene in which the Fat Lady from an urban circus wrestles for the soul of her husband with a Baptist zealot who lost three fingers in a farm accident. Innaurato's comic existentialism in *Passione* has grown lighter since *Benno Blimpie*, for here eating is no longer an act of despair but a celebratory affirmation of life.

Coming of Age in Soho (1985) is Innaurato's most specifically gay-themed play. Aged thirty-six, Beatrice Dante is a writer whose early first novel, *Little Boy Bound*, continues to command a cult following. Unfortunately, he has been unable to write anything new since then. Determined to start his life and career afresh, he has left his wife in Philadelphia and moved to New York City's bohemian Soho district to begin work on a new novel.

Circumstances force him to reevaluate his bondage fantasies that involve teenaged boys. In the process he unbinds himself emotionally, growing able finally to accept and offer love and presumably, as a consequence, to write a second book.

Innaurato's disappointment with the lukewarm reception with which *Coming of Age* met is addressed directly in *Gus and Al* (1988). Devastated by the reviews that his last play received, an impoverished, self-pitying playwright named "Al Innaurato" is transported (in a time travel machine invented by an orangutan named Kafka) to the drawing room of composer Gustav Mahler in 1901 Vienna, where he commiserates with the great composer who is similarly pained by his contemporaries' dismissal of his work.

The rising anti-semitism feared by members of the Mahler household in *Gus and Al* parallels the threat that homosexuals like Innaurato feared in 1980s New York City in the face of the AIDS epidemic. In the end Gus and Al agree that "whatever happens, we must all swear to keep fighting, to offer up our sufferings and work and work until we are spent, regardless of what the world thinks. After all, only to have been alive once, that is enough."

Although Innaurato himself did continue working, neither *Magda and Callas* (1989) nor *Dreading Thekla* (Williamstown Theater Festival, 1997) was well received. No evidence is available of a production of the play-in-progress titled *Life after Sex*, that Innaurato refers to in a 1999 interview.

"Operas without music"

Like Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King, Innaurato's characters are driven by the need to satisfy their appetites. "I want, I want, I want," Henderson's heart seems to shout as it beats within his chest. In *Gemini* the irrepressible Fran chastises a neighbor who picks gingerly from the food spread out on the table: "Take! Take with both hands, it's there, why you act like there ain't plenty when there is, hanh?"

Innaurato's characters must learn not to be ashamed of their needs or desires. As Al's future grandfather counsels him in *Gus and Al*, one's only choice is to "love life no matter how unhappy it makes us. Grab life, . . . hug it to you, fuck it, dance with it, and use it to wipe your tears, or kill yourself and be done with it."

This emphasis on the need to seek emotional and physical satisfaction despite the social censure that one may face drives Innaurato to populate his stage with emotionally flamboyant and arrestingly corpulent characters who overspill traditional bounds.

Indeed, one might consider Innaurato's canon as an ongoing debate concerning the significance of society's disdain for fatness. In *Gemini*, while Randy worries about being too skinny, Francis believes himself unlovable because he is fat. Benno is nicknamed "Blimpie" by the kids in the neighborhood and, like Herschel in *Gemini*, is routinely derogated by his mother for eating so much; Benno remains fat, alone, and ravenously hungry. After Al is transported to 1901 Vienna, he is jeered at the beach one day by a group of soldiers. "Funny," he observes, "I thought loathing fat people was an invention of the New Right in the late Seventies, but it seems to be inborn in humans."

Accepting one's appetites, however, means accepting one's self, whatever shock or disdain one's desires arouse in others. In *Gemini* Herschel justifies his love of anything having to do with public transportation by explaining that one of the abandoned cars in the city's trolley "graveyard" that he visits regularly seems to stand "straight up as though sayin', like, I'm going to stand here and be myself, no matter what." Herschel will need to develop a similar indifference to majority opinion if he is to survive in a society that finds him abnormal and, at times, downright repulsive.

Likewise, in one of the most outrageous moments in Innaurato's theater, the resplendently porcine Francine in *Passione* offers an apologia for her size that includes a dismissal of the anemic WASP culture of self-denial and rectitude represented by her rival for Little Tom's affections: "You can kiss my fat ass! . . . I got more body, more sex, more tit, more ass than you ever had, and I'm proud of it! . . . When I move I'm sex on parade. I'm three hundred pounds of pulchritude, I'm a ton of beauty. Look at these legs, look at these thighs. . . . Fuck Weight Watchers! Fuck calorie countin'! . . . Fuck all girdles! [I am fat and I am proud!] I bulge!"

In a body of work focused so heavily upon the need to pursue one's bliss, it is not surprising that eating should be one of the primary actions depicted in Innaurato's plays. In *Gemini* a table is repeatedly set up in the backyard for a meal in which family, neighbors, and visitors partake, and the action of *Passione* takes place in the kitchen as Berto and his daughter-in-law cook in anticipation of their extended Italian-American family gathering later that afternoon for a meal.

The abundance of life is suggested by the litanies of food that Innaurato's hosts offer their guests. "Don't be shy," Fran encourages his son's WASP friends who are visiting for breakfast and who are overwhelmed by the selections; "we got here: coffee cake. . . . jelly doughnuts . . . black olives, green olives, pitted black olives--they're easier to digest, chocolate covered doughnuts . . . brebalone, pepperoni, pizzel, biscuits, a fiadone Lucille baked last week and some hot peppers." In *Coming of Age in Soho* Beatrice's immaturity is suggested by his subsisting on frozen Sara Lee pound cake, Häagan Dazs ice cream, and diet Pepsi.

In Innaurato's early plays, people's attempts to grab life with both hands often render them grotesque. The crazed nuns in *Wisdom Amok* feast on human flesh, but not before Augustine delivers a homily that attempts to answer the question "Why do we eat?" Benno's grandfather hungers sexually for a neighborhood Catholic schoolgirl, who allows him to fondle her in the park in exchange for his signing over to her his monthly social security check. "I want more--I want more," the old man pants as she refuses to engage in coitus. And no matter how much Benno Blimpie eats, "horrible waves of longing wash over" him because he can find no cure for his hunger except, finally, to eat his own flesh. "I wanted so much," Mary despondently acknowledges in *Earth Worms*.

The grotesqueness or ridiculousness of Innaurato's early plays is succeeded by a comically operatic quality in his later ones. In *Gemini*, for example, Lucille complains about Francis's constantly playing opera records: "all that screamin'--that's what I got against opera, Fran, ain't like real life." Ironically, she delivers this observation only after the household has forestalled neighbor Bunny's attempt to commit suicide by jumping off from the telephone pole she's climbed; after Bunny has overturned a piano on her son and worries that she's "ruptured him for life"; and after nearly everyone in the play has confessed a forbidden or conflicted passion, often by "screamin'" loudly enough for the entire neighborhood to hear.

Similarly, in *Coming of Age*, after a Mafia enforcer has tied up the three boys that he and his cohort have found in Beatrice's apartment in an attempt to force Beatrice to comply with their demand that he remain married to Patricia, the boys compete to sacrifice themselves for Beatrice. "They think they're in an opera," Patricia sneers. (Indeed, references to Wagner's great love tragedy, *Tristan und Isolde*, abound in Innaurato's plays.) And a record of Tito Schipa singing "Passione" fills Berto's apartment several times in the play of that title. For Innaurato, the passion of life *is* deeply operatic.

Innaurato's style of characterization is related to his early fascination with operas in which "fat people were young and beautiful forever" and "the darkest deeds and most horrible tragedies were celebrated in the most glorious music." His characters may appear grotesque to people accustomed to looking at life on a small screen, but their emotional extravagance and outsized gestures are presented by Innaurato as being perfectly natural--indeed, far more natural than the hypocrisy, repressed desires, and altogether anemic

existence of the WASP majority. "I'm still writing operas; I think that's the only way to put it," Innaurato says of his plays. "Operas without music."

"Liv[ing] freely, without a safety net"

Operatic in its extravagance, Innaurato's theater is a theater for voices. "I love voices and I believe the human voice is the most perfect instrument, the most completely expressive sign of humanity," he says. Conversely, people who refuse to listen to another's voice--in particular theater critics who object to the seeming freakishness of Innaurato's characters--display a lack of compassion that is inhumane.

If the first great theme of Innaurato's theater is the need of the "freaks" to courageously seek satisfaction in a world where people will not "let them be what they are" (*Passione*), the second is the need for people to accept others, no matter how freakish they may seem.

"In all my plays I deal with the person who doesn't really fit into any kind of prefabricated identity, either a gay identity or a straight identity," Innaurato told an interviewer. Generally, his characters accept that they don't fit in, even while on some level they wish they could.

In *Gemini*, for example, Lucille blithely assumes that her daughter did not gain admittance to Yale University because she has buck teeth and lacks the requisite "poise." And Fran explains his divorce from Francis's mother by describing her (like Aggy in *Passione*) as "one of them people that like to fade inna the air. Don' wanna stand out. Francis and me, well, we stand out. Don' wanna, understand, but we talk too loud, cough, scratch ourselves, get rashes, are kinda big. You have to notice us. Don' have to like us but you gotta see us."

In *Coming of Age*, Beatrice recognizes that "I want to stop working to define myself by every standard but mine. I want to stop judging myself. Some of us sit outside the standard categories our great society thinks so immutable. I have to find out what that particular truth is for me."

In Innaurato's plays, the "particular truth" that each person must discover for him or herself most often regards the ambivalent nature of sexual desire. "You see, as in sexual experience, I don't believe in limits," Innaurato explains in an interview with John DiGaetani. "I don't believe experiences are black or white. I don't believe in the small screen in life since I think life is not a small screen. I don't believe there is *one* sexual feeling. I think that in the course of a lifetime we all have many sexual feelings, though we may or may not choose to act on them."

Perhaps the first element that strikes the reader of Innaurato's plays is the gender ambivalence of his characters. "Sexuality does not move in discrete patterns," fourteen-year-old Puer instructs Dy in *Coming of Age*, and in general Innaurato makes a carnival of sexual and gender identities, revealing them to be entirely mutable and porous.

At one point in *The Idiots Karamazov*, the three Karamazov brothers sing a song in the guise of Chekhov's three sisters. In *Urlicht*, Mother Mary Martha Lazarus's very name incorporates both the male and the

female members of the biblical household, and although she wears a traditional habit, she talks and moves like a stevedore.

In *Wisdom Amok*, Augustine meets the first male accepted as a postulant in an order of nuns, who explains that after he was rejected initially, he filed a gender discrimination suit against the Vatican. In *Coming of Age in Soho* Bartholemew Dante has been nicknamed "Beatrice," and has been supported by his wife, the first female capo in the Mafia. And in *Gus and Al*, a sexually aggressive young woman seduces the forty-year-old composer who ejaculates on first being touched; Mahler later anticipates the arrival of his wooer with the giddiness of a sixteen-year-old girl.

Innaurato increases the stakes by setting the action of his plays at the moment when people are on the verge of discovering their sexuality. The action of *Gemini*, for example, occurs on the weekend of Francis's twenty-first birthday as he debates whether he desires Judith or her younger brother Randy.

Questioning Francis's sexuality, Lucille acknowledges how painful the issue is for Francis Senior: "It's hard on a man to have a queer for a son. I mean, I guess Fran would rather he was queer than humpbacked or dead, still it's hard." Yet when Francis decides that he will follow Judith and Randy to their summer home and simply wait to see where his affections lie, the household--in a moment of joyful comic exuberance--rushes to support his decision by packing his bag for him and ensuring that he makes the train on time.

"This is what I intended to convey by Francis' choice," Innaurato has explained when questioned about Francis's continued uncertainty; "life is more than labels, and more than merely being accepted by others. The effort must be made to live freely, without a safety net and that is what he sets out to do in the end, period."

"I'm a homosexual who suffers temporary amnesia in the presence of strong-willed ladies," Beatrice admits in *Coming of Age in Soho*. Much of the comedy of this play results from the fact that Beatrice's fourteen-year-old son Puer is more mature emotionally than thirty-six-year-old Beatrice. Significantly, Beatrice is not the only person in the play who is "coming of age." He takes in a sixteen-year-old runaway named Dy, who is struggling to understand his own sexuality, and dialogues with an eighteen-year-old mafioso-in-training, Danny, who describes himself as being "straight" but with "aberrations."

"That's what I can't understand about this society!" Danny protests. "Straight, gay, who gives a fuck, hanh?" Danny proves as rich an imp of the sexually perverse as Chaucer's Wife of Bath and Innaurato's own Francine. As Danny observes, "it's nice in life when two people get together and hold one another, no matter what their sex is."

Defending his play from the charge by gay activists that he was softening Beatrice's sexuality so as not to offend mainstream theater-goers, Innaurato explains that Beatrice is "probably bisexual, you see. And there's very little tolerance in our society for that. Gay people are often hostile to bisexuality and refuse to believe it exists, but in fact it does."

Just as Innaurato resists *any* categorization of sexuality, his characters are frustrated to be pigeon-holed or typed by others. In *Wisdom Amok*, Rex boasts that "I am neither normal nor ab, just me. My longings do not say 'men only,' or 'women only,' or 'only oxen need apply'; my longings take me where they will."

In *Ulysses in Traction* Emma repeatedly reminds the people with whom she works that because she is big-

boned, not conventionally pretty, and has written a feminist version of "Sleeping Beauty" (in which the prince turns out to be gay and the heroine must awaken herself), she is not a lesbian.

Likewise in *Ulysses*, Lenny--a middle-aged, gay, Jewish unsuccessful New York actor reduced to teaching theater in a Detroit university--recognizes why he upsets his homophobic department chair: "It still freaks Steve out that I have a wife. These straight people are all so simplistic they think sex is everything. I'm proud to say I haven't touched Naomi [his wife] in twenty years and we have a beautiful marriage. And more, we are not going to end up in divorce court like Steve and his wife, and Stu and his wife, and Steve and Doris [the student with whom Steve is currently having an affair], and Stu and whomever he marries next."

"In a cosmetic universe the most unbearable fact is to be different," John explains in *Ulysses*. For Innaurato, as much damage is caused by gay liberationists who insist that one perform one's sexuality in recognizably "proud" ways as by homophobes who disdainfully reduce gay men to effeminate, sex-hungry aberrations of nature.

Innaurato's protagonists take pride in refusing to conform to anyone else's expectations of their sexuality, body size, or ethnicity. When time-traveling Al meets his nineteen-year-old grandfather shortly before the latter emigrates to the United States, they discuss the difficulty that others have pronouncing their family name, which both insist they will not change.

Television Writer, Journalist, Teacher, Opera Developer

In addition to his plays, Innaurato has also written successfully for television. He was nominated for an Emmy Award for his teleplay for the PBS Great Performances series, *Verna: U. S. O. Girl* (1978), which starred Sissy Spacek and William Hurt. In 1989 and 1990, he wrote scripts for the NBC/Lifetime series *The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd*.

He also writes about opera and on popular culture for such publications as the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *New York Magazine*, and *Opera News*. He has taught playwriting at a number of universities, including Columbia University, the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Temple University, and Rutgers.

In 2005, Innaurato returned to Philadelphia to serve as a writer in residence at Philadelphia's Prince Music Theater, where he also co-produced and developed projects for the company, including the musical based on *Gemini*.

He currently serves as Artistic Director of Creative Development Projects at City Center Opera Theater in Philadelphia, where he has worked on the development of new operas such as *Love/Hate* by Jake Perla and Rob Bailis, and Michael Ching's *Slaying the Dragon*. He also works as a dramaturg and coaches young singers on acting and interpretive technique. In addition, he has directed several operas for the company.

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