

Sharon Ott

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Summary Vitae (Detailed vitae follows)

An experienced academic leader as well as an award-winning stage director and artistic director, with a proven track record of extraordinary achievement, Sharon Ott has proven herself to be an exceptionally capable leader of professional and academic institutions, leading several through periods of dynamic growth and change.

Professional Experience

- Chair/Associate Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University 2017- 2021
- Artistic Director and Professor, Savannah College of Art and Design 2007-2016
- Artistic Director, Seattle Repertory Theater 1997-2005
- Artistic Director, Berkeley Repertory Theater 1984-1997
- Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Resident Director 1980-1983
- Theatre X, Milwaukee, Co- Artistic Director 1976-1980

Awards

- Tony Award (outstanding regional theater) Berkeley Repertory Theater 1997
- Paine Knickerbocker Award (Distinguished Leadership, Berkeley Rep) 1996
- Obie Award (with Theatre X) *A Fierce Longing* 1979
- Bay Area Critics' Award (Best Director), *You Nero* 2010
- Suzy Bass Nomination- Atlanta (Best Director),...*said Said* 2006
- Seattle Times Footlight Award (Best Director), *Restoration Comedy* 2005
- Bay Area Critics' Award (Best Director), *Heartbreak House* 1997
- Hollywood Dramalogue Award (Best Director), *Ballad of Yachiyo* 1996
- Elliot Norton Award- Boston (Best Production), *The Woman Warrior* 1994
- USA Today- 10 Best Productions, *The Woman Warrior* 1994
- Hollywood Dramalogue Award (Best Director), *The Lady from the Sea* 1993
- San Diego Theater Critics' Nomination (Best Director), *Lulu* 1998
- Hollywood Dramalogue Award (Best Director), *Twelfth Night* 1986
- Bay Area Critics' Award (Best Director), *The Tooth of Crime* 1985

Education

- Bennington College, BA 1972.
- California Institute of the Arts, 1972. One semester, MFA Acting Program.
- Marquette University, 1980-82. MA Program (Dept. of Speech/Drama), major coursework completed.
- Savannah College of Art and Design, MFA Performing Arts, 2015 (4.0 GPA)

Affiliations

- National Theatre Conference-Member 2011-2021
 - NAST- Nominating Committee 2018-2019
 - Stage Directors and Choreographers, National Executive Board 2006-2019
- I currently serve on the Finance, Academic Advisory and Workplace Conduct Committees
Received President's Award for Distinguished Service, 2019
- Actor's Express, Atlanta, GA., Advisory Board 2006-2011
 - Hedgebrook Retreat for Women Writers (Washington), former Board Member 2004-2005
 - Theatre Communications Group- former Board Member, currently Emeritus Board 1991-1995
 - I have served on California Council of the Arts, Georgia Council of the Arts, and National Endowment for the Arts panels over various years.

Academic Experience

- Virginia Commonwealth University-Chair/ Associate Professor 2017- 2021
- Savannah College of Art and Design, Professor/ Artistic Director 2007-2017
- University of Washington, Guest Lecturer 2006
- University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee, Adjunct Professor, Acting 1975-1976

Recent Productions (see detailed vitae for full resume)

- *Blithe Spirit*- Clarence Brown Theatre (University of Tennessee) 2020
- *Antony and Cleopatra*- American Shakespeare Center 2019
- *King Lear*- Utah Shakespearean Festival 2015
- *The Guard (White, Red Ochre, Black)*-Ford's Theatre, Washington, DC , *World Premiere* 2015
- *Much Ado About Nothing*- Great Lakes Theater/Idaho Shakespeare Festival 2013
- *The Tempest*- Georgia Shakespeare Festival 2012
- *You, Nero*-South Coast Repertory/ Berkeley Repertory, *World Premiere* 2010
- *Restoration Comedy*- Seattle Repertory, California Shakespeare, *World Premiere* 2006
- *Don Giovanni*- Opera Colorado 2002

Detailed Curriculum Vitae

Education

- Bennington College, BA 1972.
- California Institute of the Arts, 1972. One Semester MFA Acting program.
- Marquette University, 1980-82 MA Program (Speech/Drama) major coursework completed.
- Savannah College of Art and Design, MFA Performing Arts 2015 (4.0 GPA).

Professional Experience

Chair/ Associate Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017- present

- I was hired by VCU as a result of an external search. Major accomplishments as Chair include curriculum revision of both undergraduate and graduate programs to meet SCHEV (state of Virginia guidelines), as well as NAST re-accreditation process. I worked with the faculty to create a new Concentration in Musical Theatre, an Interdisciplinary Minor in Sound Design and Minors in Musical Theatre and Theatre. I have been an active fund raiser for the department, being the key player in a large equipment donation from Meyer Sound (Berkeley California), as well as two \$5,000 gifts to support productions, one grant (co-written with the Dance Department) for \$20,000 for guest artists, and two scholarship funds of \$25,000 apiece. I have overseen Promotion and Tenure processes, and worked with the VCU School of Medicine to hire the first interdisciplinary Theatre/School of Medicine Instructor. I have expanded the collaboration between the Department of Theatre and the Virginia Repertory Theatre. I teach in both the undergraduate and graduate theatre departments, and also serve as the Artistic Director for the department, managing the mainstage production season.

Classes Taught (see later page for descriptions): *Undergraduate:* Acting II (Shakespeare), Directing I, Business of Theatre. *Graduate:* Pedagogy of Acting

Productions Directed: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Shakespeare), *The Wolves* (Sarah DeLappe)

Major Initiatives:

- Revision of both undergraduate and graduate curriculum to meet SCHEV and NAST standards.
- Concentration in Musical Theatre developed- received NAST accreditation, May, 2021.
- Development of Interdisciplinary Sound Design Minor as well as Minors in Theatre and Musical Theatre.
- Fundraising for the department through family foundations, Carpenter Foundation, planned giving, and Meyer Sound Labs, Berkeley, CA.
- First joint hire with VCU School of Medicine.
- Decolonization of individual syllabi as well as changes in major curriculum to include new classes that specifically relate to Black performance techniques.
- Expansion of partnership with Virginia Repertory Theatre.

Artistic Director/Professor, Savannah College of Art and Design, 2007-2017

- I served as the Artistic Director for the Performing Arts Department as well as teaching a full load of classes and directing plays. As the Artistic Director, my responsibilities included season selection, directing 1-2 productions annually, selecting artistic teams for main stage productions, oversight of production teams, ensuring high quality productions, student lab series mentorship, student advising, teaching 3 classes per quarter, attracting guest artists, career placement and direction, audition oversight, and student coaching.

Classes Taught (see later page for descriptions): *Undergraduate:* Directing, Theory/ Acting for the Classics, Advanced Acting for the Classics, Scene Study, Audition Techniques, Survey II, Introduction to Performance, Women in Dramatic Arts, Diverse Voices: Multicultural Theater in America, Senior Project. *Graduate:* Classical Acting I, Contemporary Drama

Productions Directed : *Clybourne Park* (Norris) , *Intimate Apparel*(Nottage), *Almost, Maine*(Cariani), *Fahrenheit 451*(Bradbury), *The Three Musketeers*(Ludwig adapted from Dumas), *Oliver Twist*(Bartlett adapted from Dickens), *Dead Man's Cell Phone*(Ruhl), *Impossible Marriage* (Henley), *Everything that Rises Must Converge/Greenleaf* (Coonrod, adapted from Flannery O'Connor), *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Giurgis), *Machinal* (Treadwell), 2 Citations from Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival for Outstanding Direction.

Major Initiatives

- Part of team tasked with revision of both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. Assisted in hiring of five new faculty members, personally recruiting two. Raised national profile of university. Program rated in "Top 25 Theater Schools" - Hollywood Reporter 2016
- Created new syllabi and course content for nine classes.
- Developed relationships with major internship programs (Milwaukee Rep, Actor's Theater of Louisville, American Players Theater, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Cincinnati Playhouse).
- Coached Kennedy Center American College Theater Award participants. Students have won the National Award (Dan Molina (2012), won Regional Award and participated in National Award (Max Reinhardsen (2013), Matt Webb (2014). Kristen Sabo (SCAD MFA production design) won National Award (2015).
- Wrote first grant for the department from Georgia Council of the Arts for school touring production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and produced subsequent school tours of Shakespeare to local schools.
- Organized and directed first NYC Showcase and have assisted in all Showcase productions since.
- Produced and directed Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, bringing together 9 departments to create multi-media production of classic work. Transferred production to Roundhouse Theater in Bethesda, Md. (Kennedy Center Citation- Direction)

Artistic Director, Seattle Repertory Theater, 1997-2005

- I served as Artistic Director of this nationally recognized theater for 8 seasons. Responsibilities included programming for two theaters, maintaining a subscription audience of 14,000, season selection, directing productions, development and oversight of education department, staff management, budgeting and fundraising, oversight of marketing efforts, casting, production, audience development and relations, maintenance of national and international reputation for excellence, developing co-productions with other regional theaters and Broadway producers, board relations, and completion of a major endowment campaign.

Major Accomplishments:

- Increased audience by 30% (from 140,400 to 185,000 overall annual at peak)
- Instrumental in successful completion of \$15 million endowment campaign, partnering with Board leadership, also obtained \$1mil Kreilsheimer grant for Shakespeare productions, and \$2 mil grant from the Gates Foundation.
- Lowered average audience age by 5 years, and significantly increased both earned and contributed income.
- Hired Education Director Andrea Allen, who built department into national recognition with pioneering programs such as Girlspeak (project for at-risk girls), and Unknown Voices (project with Ping Chong).
- Brought internationally recognized artists to SRT, including August Wilson, Stephen Wadsworth, Mary Zimmerman, Nilo Cruz, Ping Chong, George C. Wolfe, Peter Brook, and Joe Mantello.
- Produced 15 world premieres, garnering one Tony nomination and a Pulitzer Prize.

Productions Directed:

- *Alligator Tales*- Anne Galjour (co-produced with Manhattan Theater Club, NYC)
- *A Doll's House*-Henrik Ibsen
- *Sisters Matsumoto*- Phillip Kan Gotanda (co-produced with Huntington Theater) *World Premiere*
- *Golden Child*-David Henry Hwang
- *Pygmalion*-George Bernard Shaw
- *As You Like It*- William Shakespeare (co-produced with Arizona Theater Company)
- *New Patagonia*-Elizabeth Heffron, *World Premiere*
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*-William Shakespeare
- *The Beard of Avon*-Amy Freed
- *When Grace Comes In*- Heather McDonald (co-produced with La Jolla Playhouse), *World Premiere*
- *Romeo and Juliet*- William Shakespeare
- *Misalliance*- George Bernard Shaw
- *Living Out*-Lisa Loomer (co-produced with Kansas City Repertory Theater)
- *Anna in the Tropics*- Nilo Cruz

Artistic Director, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, 1984-1997

- Under my leadership, Berkeley Rep grew from a small, regional theater company with a budget slightly over \$1 mil to an internationally recognized, Tony Award winning company with a budget over \$6 mil. Responsibilities included season selection, oversight of all artistic matters including casting, staffing, identifying guest artists, contract negotiations, building an audience, working with a board and growing both board and staff as the theater matured, developing co-production relationships with companies throughout the country, building an education program, and general hands on participation needed to grow a company to national significance.

Major Accomplishments:

- Annual budget grew from \$1.5 mil to \$6 mil plus. Maintained all seasons but one in the black.
- Subscriber base increased to 15,000 with an annual renewal rate of 90%.
- Successfully partnered with Board in search and hiring of new Managing Director (Susie Medak, who is still with the company).
- Successfully partnered with Board in major growth of budget, board composition, company ambitions, and planned addition of second theater.
- Company developed a national reputation for adventuresome programming of new plays and fresh interpretations of classic repertoire, hiring internationally recognized artists such as Tadashi Suzuki, Mark Wing - Davey, Anna Deavere Smith, and Barney Simon (Market Theater, South Africa).
- Accepted 1997 Tony Award for outstanding achievement for a regional theater.

Productions Directed:

- *The Tooth of Crime*- Sam Shepard (with Richard ET White)
- *Twelfth Night*-William Shakespeare
- *The Revenger*-(adapted by Amlin Gray from Cyril Tourneur)
- *The Good Person of Szechuan*- Bertolt Brecht (with Timi Near) featuring deaf performer in lead role.
- *Yankee Dawg You Die*- Phillip Kan Gotanda (transferred to LA Theater Center, then to Playwright's Horizons) *World Premiere*.
- *The Winter's Tale*-William Shakespeare (co-production with Huntington Theater)
- *Fuente Ovejuna*- Lope de Vega.
- *McTeague*-Neal Bell (adapted from Frank Norris novel) *World Premiere*
- *Dream of a Common Language*- Heather McDonald, *World Premiere*
- *The Lady from the Sea*-Henrik Ibsen (transferred to Huntington Theater)
- *The Woman Warrior*-D. Rogin (adapted from novel by Maxine Hong Kingston), *World Premiere* (co-produced with Huntington Theater and Mark Taper Forum)
- *Ballad of Yachiyo*-Phillip Kan Gotanda (co-produced with South Coast Repertory)
- *Twilight: Los Angeles*-Anna Deavere Smith (national tour)
- *Heartbreak House*-George Bernard Shaw

Resident Director, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, 1980-1983

- Responsibilities included assistance with season selection, casting, directing 2-4 productions annually. I directed two plays for MRT that toured to Japan (*A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Buried Child*), and was invited twice to Japan to work with Tadashi Suzuki's company in Toga-Mura.

Productions Directed:

- *Of Mice and Men*-John Steinbeck
- *Mother Courage*-Bertolt Brecht
- *Dead Souls*-Gogol (adapted by Tom Cole) with John Dillon *World Premiere*
- *Kingdom Come*- Amlin Gray (adapted from O.E. Rolvaag) with John Dillon *World Premiere*
- *A Streetcar Named Desire*-Tennessee Williams (toured to Japan)
- *Buried Child*- Sam Shepherd (toured to Japan)
- *How I Got That Story*- Amlin Gray *World Premiere*
- *Blithe Spirit*- Noel Coward, Clarence Brown Theater (University of Tennessee-2020)

Freelance Directing (1990-2020)

- *Blithe Spirit*- Noel Coward, Clarence Brown Theater (University of Tennessee-2020)
- *Antony and Cleopatra*-William Shakespeare, American Shakespeare Center, 2019
- *The Guard*-Jessica Dickey, Ford's Theatre, Washington, DC (2015) *World Premiere*
- *King Lear*- Utah Shakespeare Festival (2015)
- *Much Ado About Nothing*- Great Lakes Theater, Idaho Shakespeare Festival (2013)
- *The Tempest*- Georgia Shakespeare (2011-remounted 2012)
- *Fahrenheit 451*- R Bradbury, Roundhouse Theatre, Bethesda, Md. (2011)
- *The Merchant of Venice*-Utah Shakespearean Festival (2010)
- *Crime and Punishment*- Dostoyevsky (adapted by C Columbus), Berkeley Repertory (2009)
- *You, Nero*-Amy Freed, South Coast Repertory/Berkeley Repertory (2008-2009) *World Premiere*
- *Ridiculous Fraud*- Beth Henley, South Coast Repertory (2006) *West Coast Premiere*
- *Restoration Comedy*-Amy Freed, Seattle Repertory, California Shakespeare (2006) *World Premiere*
- *...said, Said*- Ken Lin, Alliance Theater (2005) *World Premiere*
- *Man and Superman*- George Bernard Shaw, Kansas City Repertory (2005)
- *Don Giovanni*-Mozart, Opera Colorado (2002)
- *Salome*- R Strauss, Seattle Opera (2002)
- *Vanessa*- Menotti/Barber, Seattle Opera (1999)
- *La Boheme*- Puccini, San Diego Opera (1998)
- *The Conquistador*- San Diego Opera (1997) *World Premiere*
- *The Wash*-Phillip Kan Gotanda, Manhattan Theater Club/Mark Taper Forum (1990)

Teaching Resume

Virginia Commonwealth University:

- **THEA 214- Acting II**

Second semester sophomore acting: introduction to the study of Shakespeare and heightened text.

- **THEA 361- Directing I**

The study of the craft of the director, focusing on the development of a point of view, and including all of the basic principles of staging, and the development of a concept.

- **THEA 415- The Business of Theatre**

Preparation to enter the profession; study includes resume and website building, knowledge of theatrical unions, major regional theatres, not for profit and for profit business structures, administrative structures, and other jobs in the profession.

- **THEA 641: The Pedagogy of Acting**

Graduate course studying techniques for training the undergraduate actor including syllabus preparation, coaching actors, and developing inclusive pedagogical techniques.

Savannah College of Art and Design:

- **MPRA 160- Introduction to Character Development**

Freshman intro course for the Performing Arts Dept. Focuses on both scripted and non-scripted character development, as well as basic concepts of staging, monologue preparation, and various acting methodologies.

- **MPRA 204- Survey II**

This is the second of our two undergraduate theater history courses. We begin with the well-made play, and Ibsen, and progress through the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. Texts are analyzed as well as major production and staging innovations.

- **MPRA 250- Women in Dramatic Arts- *developed class***

Popular elective created as part of a proposed Women's Studies Minor. Beginning with Aphra Behn and women writers and actresses during the Restoration, we progress to 21st century women; feminist history is considered through the lens of dramatic works, and important women of the theater.

- **MPRA 300- Theory and Acting for the Classics-*developed class***

Study of classic text theory and Shakespeare in performance. Using Patsy Rodenburg's *Speaking Shakespeare* as the primary text, students study sonnets and the plays focusing on both solo and partnered work.

- **MPRA 375- Directing- *developed class***

Using Ibsen's classic, *A Doll's House* as the primary text, students learn about the history of the modern stage director. Students study various influential directors and their approach to the text. Course instruction includes dramaturgy, casting, developing a concept, working with designers, and rehearsing a play. Each student develops a concept book and directs a scene from the play.

- **MPRA 421- Advanced Acting for the Classics-*developed class***

In this popular elective, we focus on English Comedy of Manners genre, beginning with the plays of the Restoration, and moving to plays of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw.

- **MPRA 425- Audition Techniques and Materials**

The advanced student works on audition material, develops a professional resume and learns about various aspects of the profession they are about to enter, including unions, professional publications and organizations, agents, casting directors, etc.

- **MPRA 435- Diverse Voices: Multicultural Theater in America- *developed class***

In this elective, which often includes Dramatic Writing students, we examine the history and literature of our diverse American theater, including plays by African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American writers.

- **MPRA 495- Senior Project**

Capstone course for all Performing Arts students at SCAD. Students develop final workshop presentation showcases of scenes and monologues. One section of this includes our New York Showcase presentation, which I have directed once.

- **MPRA 717 and 725- Classical Acting I and II-*developed class***

Graduate classical acting courses, newly developed as part of the MFA revision. Emphasis is on development of style and performance techniques necessary to successfully interpret classical roles.