

Ashley Elizabeth White

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Artistic Philosophy

I direct to create vibrant and insightful storytelling experiences. My work includes contemporary plays, musicals, and reimaged classics, inspired by the works of Dave Malloy, Stephen Adly Guirgis, César Alvarez, Harrison David Rivers, and Anne Washburn. Driven by a deep commitment to nurturing new work development, I continually seek compelling new scripts. While I am drawn to edgy and provocative narratives, I value the power of a well-placed moment of laughter to add levity. By creating work that resonates emotionally, whether through laughter, tears, or introspection, I aim to create a shared, connective experience for audiences.

As a director, I see my responsibilities as multi-faceted: To the art form, I uphold artistic integrity of the production, ensuring the vision aligns with respect to the playwright. To the artists, I foster close collaboration, cultivating an environment where creativity flows freely and communication is open. My leadership style is grounded in collective intelligence, where every voice is heard and valued in a supportive space.

My directing approach balances artistry and analysis, ensuring an understanding of every nuance within the script. I am known to get the play quickly up on its feet. I purposely incorporate stylized movement and visual choreography emphasizing a fully-embodied performance. Throughout rehearsal, I cultivate an atmosphere of exploration and experimentation, encouraging actors to organically discover character development. I attentively listen to and observe the actors. Their instincts and ideas often shed light on and may even reshape my prior script analysis and blocking. Additionally, I value the unique, multitalented skills of each performer, seeking opportunities to highlight their individual artistry. If an actor plays guitar, for example, I may discover a moment in the script to integrate their musicianship, enriching the world of the play and showcasing the intersectionality of their talents.

I approach storytelling with creative design elements, bold and saturated lighting, and atmospheric soundscapes. My aim is to create immersive spaces that transport audiences into the world of the play, regardless of the theater's size or configuration. Drawing inspiration from art installations, I infuse my work with surprises—light emanating from unexpected places and objects transforming into something new that captures the imagination while remaining grounded in the narrative. Fabric and found objects become tools of creative alchemy in my process. I challenge myself and my collaborators to reimagine the potential of materials, ensuring every choice elevates and supports the story, while staying within budgetary considerations.

My core directing value is championing an anti-racist, trauma-informed, and consent-forward space, fostering a safe and inclusive environment where all feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Establishing a space that is collaborative and compassionate is of paramount importance in inspiring meaningful creative exploration. From pre-production to the final performance, I aim to realize the best possible production within the theater's resources. Guided by gratitude, grace, and an understanding of the shared privilege of creating together, I ensure every individual in the room feels supported in bringing their authentic selves to create a safe, innovative, and productive artistic space.