

Klaiserkorso 2
Berlin, Germany 12101
(773) 507-2694
SHAYNA@ALOFTCIRCUSARTS.COM

SHAYNA SWANSON-circus director

OVERVIEW

I have been involved in contemporary circus as a performer, director and producer for 26 years. My passion is in creating contemporary circus shows that combine artistic excellence with a unique audience experience, be that through proximity, activity or co-conspiracy.

EXPERIENCE

Brave Space, Immersive circus show –*Creator, producer, director*

June 2018 – PRESENT

- Producer and director of a critically acclaimed immersive circus show performed for an intimate audience involving the collective construction of the set as a part of the show.
- Organizing performance at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival at the Underbelly venue 2022 and 2023.
- Organizing touring to over 50 cities.
- Overseeing all aspects of creation from concept to production including casting, devising, costuming, set concept and design, choreography, promotion, marketing, branding and design.
- Featured at many international festivals including Montreal Completment Cirque in 2023 and future dates at Circustad (Netherlands), Olala (Austria), Pickle Factory (India) and more.

Sanctuary Cabaret, Underground Circus Cabaret –*Director, Producer*

FEB 2016-present

- Producer, director and host of an underground circus cabaret experience featuring world-class circus artists and live music in a magical setting in a 110 year church.
- Overseeing monthly casting, promotion and production of a 2 hour show.
- Organizing performance at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival at the Underbelly venue 2023.

Terra-Year One Final Show, Aloft Professional Training Program–*Director*

May/June 2023

- Guiding 13 first year students through a 4 week creation process, culminating in an immersive 75 minute circus show.
- Coordinating 13 diverse acts into one thematically cohesive show.
- Reimagining the performance space as the Earth's shifting tectonic plates, including moving performance islands and seating pods.
- Working with a lighting designer to bring the show to life.

Circus Flora “Quest for the Innkeepers Cask”—Assistant Director

May/June 2022

- Providing an outside eye and personalized direction to individual artists.
- Refining the storyline of the show.
- Acting as an intermediary between performers and the directing and dramaturgy team.

Chairing is Caring, Devising workshop and show —Director

JULY 2019

- Leading a group of 12 young artists from Circesteem Youth Circus through the development of a non-traditional circus show over a two-week period culminating in a 1 hour show.
- Responsibilities included introducing teens to new performance concepts, new devising techniques, dealing with behavioral issues, encouraging creativity and risk-taking, creating work with found objects and experimental apparatuses.

Work-a-day, Commission for DIRT — Director

JUNE 2017

- Director of a commission meant to highlight client's products' productivity enhancing qualities.
- Created 5 original circus vignettes to be performed at the annual conference at the Chicago Theater.
- Coordinating with union staff at the theater on projections, music and rigging.

Mercy on our Souls, Immersive Halloween party to benefit RAICES — Director, Producer

OCT 2017

- Coordinating live performances throughout the night, interactive space activations in non-traditional areas like closets, attics and crawlspaces; organizing staff and volunteers; sourcing food and beverages; graphic design, marketing and promotion; creating and constructing set design; overseeing hair, makeup and costumes.

48 Hour Project, Pop-up circus creation — Creator, Producer

MARCH 2016

- Produced a project as a part of MomentFest Circus Festival that selected 24 international circus artists and created 4 teams of 6 that created 20 min of circus work in 48 hours.
- Responsibilities included creating casting notices, deciding on qualitative metrics, scheduling rehearsals, choosing participating directors, promotion and production.

El Circo Cheapo Cabaret, Underground variety show —Producer, Director

FEB 2008–AUGUST 2016

- Producer and director of a punk rock variety show with renowned comedians and anything-can-happen circus in a secret warehouse location.
- Sold out every show over our 8 year run.

- Responsibilities included casting, show production, volunteer organization, guerilla marketing.
- Organized 2010 tour to sold out venues across the US.

Chicago Contemporary Circus Festival– *Founder, Producer, Artistic Director*

MARCH 2013–JUNE 2014

- Founder and producer of the first circus festival in the United States.
- Brought 7 national and international circus companies to Chicago for a week of shows and workshops at the Athenaeum Theater.
- Fundraised \$40,000 for the production of the festival R
- Reviewed applications from 50 companies and selected 7 to participate.
- Negotiated venue and artist contracts.
- Fulfilled on paying all contracts and ending the first year of the festival with a profit.

Sephira, commissioned by the Whole Life Expo – *Director*

APRIL 2013

- Director of a theatrical circus show commissioned by the Whole Life Expo and later toured independently.
- Responsibilities involved writing a script to the clients expectations while maintaining artistic excellence, casting 6 circus artists, developing acts, overseeing the creation of a rear-projected animated backdrop, overseeing the rehearsal process, transforming a conference hall into a theater, rigging installation, costume design and final production values.

Bigger, Interactive performance party – *Producer, Director*

AUG 2011

- Director and producer of an immersive performance party to celebrate the opening of Aloft Circus Arts' new studio.
- Coordinating bands, live performance, a stilt-walking fashion show, interactive guest experiences, food and beverage services, marketing and promotion.

Innovate Or, Commission for Mori Seiki – *Director*

SEPT 2010

- Director of a site specific circus show created for a corporate client to celebrate technological innovation.
- Responsibilities involved writing a script to the clients expectations while maintaining artistic excellence, casting 8 circus artists, working with musicians to create a live and original score, developing acts, overseeing the creation custom circus equipment including a life-sized aerial horse skeleton, overseeing the rehearsal process, transforming a conference hall into a theater, rigging installation, costume design and final production values.

Dinner of our Discontent, Contemporary circus show – *Producer, Director*

APRIL 2007

- Created a narrative contemporary circus show on a zero dollar budget with 8 performers.

- Responsibilities included storyboarding, dramaturgy, casting, set design, costume design, act creation and direction, rigging, rehearsal process, advertising and promotion and final production.
- Funded in part by a grant from the City of Chicago.

The Silentest Movie, Pop-up circus show – *Director, performer*

JUNE 2007

- Created a show about the Iraq war to pop in a Chicago City Park for the Around the Coyote Festival.
- Responsibilities included storyboarding, dramaturgy, casting, set design, costume design, act creation and direction, rigging, rehearsal process, and final production.

Rolling Blackouts, contemporary circus show – *Director, producer*

JUNE 2005

- Creating one of Chicago's first contemporary circus shows with help from a grant from the City of Chicago.
- Developing the concept of a show based on community response to crisis.
- Casting and training 12 artists with little experience in the circus arts over a period of 6 months. Choreographing all acts. Developing the throughline of the show and all acts, lighting and sound design based on the concept of having no electrical grid, therefore all lighting was through flashlights and lanterns. Rigging installation, overseeing costume design and construction.

EDUCATION

Circus Maniacs, Bristol England – *Professional Circus Development Program*

SEPT 2002 – FEB 2003, LOCATION

Training in the circus arts with the goal of entering the professional marketplace. Exposure to international standards of excellence for circus artists and productions. Focus on aerial hoop and tumbling.

Portland State University, Portland, OR – *Sociology BSP*

SEPT 1998 – JUNE 2002

Major in Sociology with a focus in social justice, globalization and fair labor. Minor in Spanish language. College radio Station Manager.

AWARDS

Brave Space chosen for presentation at Montreal Completement Cirque 2023.

2017 Chicago DCASE Grant Recipient for the creation of Brave Space.

USA Wheel Gymnastics National Championship–first place Cyr Wheel Women's division, 2012

CirCuba International Circus Festival 2011, Havana Cuba, "Award of Distinction of Circo Norteamericano"

American Aerial Acrobatic Arts Festival, Denver, CO, "Best Overall Performance"

Davis Choreography Scholarship winner to Aerial Dance Festival 2005.

2005 CAAP Grant Recipient for the creation of an evening length aerial dance performance.