

# Ethan Shaw

Non-union

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## Artistic Statement:

As I continue to learn and grow as an Actor/Director/Educator, my personal observations in the world of theatre – and of the world at large- echo the thoughts of one Atlantic Theatre Company founding member Karen Kohlhaas: that ‘Medium’ is rarely effective. Kohlhaas uses the idea of ‘Medium’ when it comes to ‘Sizes and Speeds’ in monologue work for actors: that ‘Big’ and ‘Small’ and ‘Slow’ and ‘Fast’ are not only infinitely more interesting but more effective in an actor’s work. I find this idea to be applicable not only in acting, but in research, theatre history, playscript analysis, direction, composition, music, playwrighting, and every subset of theatre. ‘Medium’ works. Working to understand, articulate, and create more towards the fringes of the artistic spectrum helps academics, audiences, and artists digest age-old themes in ways that are newly impactful. When I work – no matter the discipline – I believe it imperative to understand and articulate what is going on at the fringes of the study, your art, and The Art to create effectively.

As an actor, the writings and pedagogies of great theatre makers such as Donnellan, Hagen, Stanislavski, Chekhov, and others are ingrained into my artistry, as much of Western Theatre is. They articulated disdain for this ‘medium’ work in many ways. As a director, understanding of “Big/Small/Fast/Slow” antirealism of Tzara, Marinetti, Brecht, and others has never once failed to upgrade my work on the often “Medium” realism, nor the understanding of realism through those such as Shaw, Chekhov, and Ibsen on my absurdist, farcical, or non-realistic work. My primary *medium*, acting, has found most of its growth in pushing past being a “medium” theatre maker. Going past what is familiar and creating as a musician, fight choreographer, producer, accent and dialect coach, and educator has always paid high yield in my acting. Understanding phonemes improves understanding in IPA, though understanding the phoneme is often deemed optional. Understanding the anatomy of the arm improves the execution of an unarmed blow *and* the execution of a complex *passado* or dagger/rapier disarm, though anatomy is often omitted in Stage Combat and Voice classes. How can one be expected to replicate a safe scream or complicated dialect on demand, consistently, from year to year when “arytenoid” and “cricothyroid” are alien concepts? It is mastery of the concept that creates quality art, not medium comfortability with the subject; mastery of the concept that is the child of fundamentals. This is what allows me to practice so many parts of the art successfully and create more honest and complex pieces – from one-man shows to hanging/focusing lights to teaching four-year-olds how to pursue objectives through song. This is what I bring to my work.

As we are more wont to fall to the level of our preparation than rise to the occasion, intense understanding that comes through a marriage of research and practice is what I hold as my North Star as I create. It has consistently set me apart from my peers and helped me work on professional projects with companies such as the Lyric Rep. Theatre, Kingsmen Shakespeare Co., Utah State University, Oklahoma Shakespearean Fest., Theatre at Monmouth, and Tennessee Shakespeare Co., and has continued to give me opportunities, such as my upcoming contracts at Texas Shakespeare Fest. and my return to Theatre at Monmouth this summer. Demand of excellence in understanding is a beautiful thing we will never attain if we pursue honestly, making it such a reliable compass. After all, what would happen if we finally “arrived” at ‘North’?