

# Sabrina Peck, MFA

**Director | Community-Engaged Theater Artist | Educator**  
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## **Original Works**

Sabrina Peck conceives, directs and choreographs original theater works infused with movement and music. She often travels to diverse communities to collaborate with professionals and local residents on visually stunning productions that reflect the history and lifeblood of those people and places. Productions include *Common Green/Common Ground*, with community gardeners from Brooklyn, East Village, Harlem and Hunt's Point in the Bronx (developed as Visiting Artist at NYU Tisch School of the Arts); *Speaking our Streets*, with former tobacco workers and residents of the West End in Durham, North Carolina; *Commodities*, with commodities pit traders on Wall Street; *Odakle Ste* with Bosnian Muslim refugees in Croatia; *Waiting*, with former Bosnian refugees at Wave Hill Gardens in New York; and *To the River*, with 40 children from Hell's Kitchen.

## **Directing**

As a director, Peck most often collaborates with living playwrights. She brings to the play development process a keen sense of narrative rhythm and shape; an instinct for telling a story with economy and originality; and a formidable command of lighting, sound, movement and other elements of heightened theatricality. Recently, Peck co-created and directed *Threshold* by Amy Brenneman, upcoming at South Coast Rep, developed at The Yard. Recent staged readings include *Julius Caesar* at Classic Stage Company, translated from the Shakespeare by Shishir Kurup for the Play On! Festival and Kurup's *Merchant On Venice*, an adaptation of the Shakespeare at Queens Theater in the Park. Peck directed Jessica Litwak's *My Heart is in the East* at LaMama Experimental Theater Club. She co-created *Mouth Wide Open* with Amy Brenneman at the American Repertory Theater. She also directed *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek* by Naomi Wallace at the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College. Peck and Playwright Chiori Miyagawa conceived and developed *Antigone Project*, a reimagining of the Sophocles by five contemporary women playwrights including Lynn Nottage, Karen Hartman and Caridad Svich. Peck directed the developmental readings of the pieces at The Public Theater, Second Stage, Classic Stage Company and The Vineyard Theater on Martha's Vineyard. The Women's Project presented the final production. Peck has also directed Dawn Saito's *Blood Cherries* at The New World Theater (with Jonathan Rosenberg); Stephanie Fleischmann's *Blue Hyacinths* for the Dawn Powell Festival in NYC; Lenora Champagne's *Wants* at the Ohio Theatre; and Amy Brenneman's *Interstates* at the So Grand Theater. She has also directed staged readings by Zohar Tirosh-Polk, Amina Henry and Chiori Miyagawa.

At New Dramatists in NYC, she developed with Todd London *The Trials of Monica Lewinsky*, based on the verbatim Grand Jury Testimony (later presented at HBO's U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen). For New Dramatists she also served as resident director, staging a reading of *Chimps*, a new play by British playwright Simon Block, among other projects. Passionate about music, Peck has also directed staged readings of several original chamber operas, including composer Philip Johnston and Fleischmann's *The Hotel Carter* at Mabou Mines, and composer Miki Navazio and Fleischmann's *Far Sea Pharisee* at the Public Theater. She is a member of both the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers and the Lincoln Center Theater Director's Lab.

## **Choreography**

Peck is equally at home staging large-scale music-theater as she is designing original movement for classic plays. In both cases, her choreography is inventive, dynamic, and always concerned with furthering the story or revealing the essence of a character. Most recently she choreographed *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. An interweaving of the two classic plays and the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, *MMC* was previously mounted at Yale Repertory Theater. She choreographed *The Clean House* at Lincoln Center Theater, written by MacArthur-winning playwright Sarah Ruhl and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Other musicals include *Eleanor: An American Love Story* (Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C.); *Heart Land* (Goodspeed Opera House at Chester); *The Good Person of New Haven* (Long Wharf Theater); *Kudzu* (Ford's Theatre); and *A Community Carol* (Arena Stage). Plays with movement include *Henry VIII* (New York Shakespeare Festival); *Richard II* and *Richard III* (Theater for a New Audience). Choreography for film/TV includes *Anita Liberty* for Bravo, and *Everybody Over Here* for Nickelodeon. Large-scale extravaganzas include Harvard's 350th Anniversary Stadium Spectacular.

For **Cornerstone Theater Company**, she has choreographed many inventive music-theater adaptations of classic plays, including *The Videostore Owner's Significant Other*, an adaptation of Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* in D.C. (recipient of a Helen Hayes award) and *The Maske Family Musical*. She has also choreographed many of Cornerstone's epic community collaborations, including *The House on Walker River*, an adaptation of the *Oresteia* on the Walker River Paiute Indian Reservation in Nevada; *Too (2) Noble Brothers*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Two Noble Kinsmen* with high school students on the Lower East Side (sponsored by the New York Shakespeare Festival); and *The Winter's Tale: An Interstate Adventure*, a nationally-touring adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* with 50 Americans ages 7-77 (the subject of the documentary *Cornerstone* on HBO Signature). Peck recently taught at the Cornerstone Institute, a training program for community-based theater artists.

## **Residencies and Teaching**

Peck has been an instructor at Columbia University, teaching Performance as Inquiry in the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. She has been a visiting artist at Harvard University, Duke University and NYU Tisch School of the Arts Department of Drama, creating original productions in collaboration with students. At Duke and NYU and Brooklyn College Department of Theater, she also taught courses in Community-Engaged Performance, educating college students about the history of community-engaged theater and bringing them into neighboring communities to create original theater in collaboration with local residents.

Peck is the Founder of CityStep, a performing arts-community engagement program based at several colleges that is a force for positive change in the lives of young people. Currently at Harvard, Penn, Princeton and Yale, CityStep brings college students into city schools to teach creative self-expression and mutual understanding through dance. Peck is currently Executive Director of CityStep.org, a federally-recognized nonprofit organization, formed in 2016 to aid the expansion of CityStep to more colleges and communities nationwide.

Peck has been a guest teacher at Bard College (JoAnne Akalaitis' Dangerous Theater class); Hunter College (Rebecca Connors' English class on the literature of the body); and Lincoln Center Theater's Education Program. She has mentored playwriting students at Bard College. She has also coached acting students in movement and choreography at the Yale School of Drama (while choreographing *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella*), the Juilliard School (while choreographing *The Time of Your Life* and *Native Speech*), and the A.R.T. Institute (while choreographing *The lady from Maxim's*).

She has been a panelist/presenter at the annual conference for the Association for Theater in Higher Education (ATHE): "Site-Specific Theater and the Transformation of Memory"; the NYC Arts in Education *Face to Face* conference; the IDEA festival at Dwight Englewood School; The Stage Directors and Choreographer's Society symposium, *Directing a New American Theater*; and the Theater without Borders' symposium, *The Future of International Exchange*.

## **Education**

Peck has an M.F.A. in directing from Brooklyn College. She received her B.A. in Social Studies from Harvard University, where she wrote her honors thesis on the Breton separatist movement in France and received a David McCord Prize for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts. She has a Movement Specialist Certificate from the New School and studied extensively at the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies. Her early training includes classical piano, ballet and Graham technique, and a year as Twyla Tharp's assistant.