
Administrative Leadership

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Jim Helsinger

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Artistic Director - Orlando Shakespeare Theater 1995-Present

Executive Snapshot

- 31+ Years as Artistic Director
- \$6M Annual Budget
- 35 Full-Time / 100+ Seasonal Staff
- 53,000 Sq. Ft. Arts Complex
- 256+ Productions Produced

Description

Provide artistic leadership for a \$6 million professional AEA regional theatre producing year-round programming across four performance spaces. Lead season planning, artistic hiring, new-play development, directing, education initiatives, institutional partnerships, fundraising, and long-range artistic strategy. Orlando Shakes operates a 53,000-square-foot performing arts complex serving more than 75,000 visitors annually.

Responsibilities Include:

Selecting production season, budgeting, hiring artistic and production personnel, directing, acting, playwrighting, developing new plays, teaching classes, attaining funding, managing staff, supervising rentals to non-profit and retail groups, working with board of directors, associate board, guild, committees, and volunteers, developing long-range plans, conducting capital campaigns, maintaining relationships with UCF and major donors, and creating vision for the theater.

Organizational Growth

- Expanded pre-existing one-month Spring season of 2 Shakespearean plays (1994) into year-round season of mainstage productions for adults, children's plays, concert series, new play festival, and special events.
- Hosted national and international conferences of the National New Play Network (NNPN) and the Shakespeare Theatre Association (STA)
- Founded *The Harriett Lake Festival of New Plays*. Keynote speakers have included Anna Deavere Smith, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Olympia Dukakis, Theresa Rebeck, John Pielmeier, and Pulitzer Prize Winner Robert Schenkkan.
- Maintained budgets throughout tenure.

Artistic Achievement

- Reviews include Wall Street Journal: *"Broadway worthy... Theatrically Potent... Exciting, Absorbing... Sumptuous... a company that deserves to be far more widely known outside Florida."* Orlando Shakes national recognition includes NBC's *Today*, ABC's *Good Morning America*, CBS Sunday Morning, American Theatre, Southern Living, TheaterWeek, Washington Post, Playbill, Backstage, PBS, NPR.
- Created special events, star performances, and speakers including Sir Patrick Stewart, Michael Dorn, Denée Benton, Norm Lewis, and Roger Rees.
- Produced 256 plays and musicals, 180 + new play readings, and extensive educational programming.

Facilities & Capital Projects

- Created vision, located site, and supervised capital campaign and building of \$3,500,000 renovation of former science center to create new Shakespeare center for the theater including two new indoor theaters, 4 rehearsal halls, scenic, props and costume shops, patron's room, administrative offices, box office, catering kitchen, lobby areas and outdoor courtyard. Project was fully funded and completed on budget.
- Currently completing \$8M replacement of roof and HVAC system of 53,000 sq ft complex, funded by the City of Orlando, with a matching grant from Orange County Government.
- Conducted capital campaign, design and renovation (\$158,000) of Mandell Studio Theater and Santos Dantin Theatre (\$100,000).

Fundraising

- Fundraising includes donor cultivation, sponsorships, and grant writing (ex: National Endowment for the Arts, Shubert Foundation, Dr. P. Phillips Foundation, Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation, Edyth Bush Foundation, Orange County TDT grant, Florida Theatrical Association).
- Fundraising events: annual gala, bowlathon, golf tournament, poker tournament, musical fundraiser, etc., capital campaigns, endowments, and annual fundraising drive.

Education

- Increased educational programming to include 2 full-time staff, community classes, intern training program, summer camps, and K-12 programming.
- Established new MFA in Acting, a partnership between UCF and the OST.

Associations

- Cape May Stage — Artistic Advisory Board, 2009–Present
- Shakespeare Theatre Association — Past President and Board Secretary
- National Theatre Conference — Past Board Member

Awards

City of Orlando - Jim Helsinger 30th Anniversary Celebration Day		City of Orlando, 2025
Director, <i>The Comedy of Errors</i> - Best of Honoree		Orlando Sentinel
Director, <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> - Best of Honoree		Orlando Sentinel
Director, <i>Noises Off</i> - Best of Honoree		Orlando Sentinel
"50 Most Powerful People in Orlando," 2019 & 2021		Orlando Magazine
Sidney Berger Award		Shakespeare Theatre Assoc. 2016
<i>China: The Whole Enchilada</i>	Most Outstanding Musical	New York Fringe Festival
<i>Gross Indecency...</i>	Best Actor in a Play	Central Florida "Lilly" Award
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<i>Compleat Works of Willm Shkspr (Abridged)</i>	Best Play	Central Florida "Lilly" Award
<i>The Taming of The Shrew</i>	Best Play	Central Florida "Lilly" Award
<i>Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus</i>		Cincy Enquirer "Acclaim" Award

Related Skills

Computer Skills

Very familiar with Windows and Apple systems. Programs: Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, Spektrix, Theatre Manager, Adobe Creative Cloud, QLab, Vectorworks, QuickBooks.

Fight Choreography

Training with Rick Sordolet, David Boushey, Bruce Cromer, James Donadio, Stephen Hayes, Tony Simotes, Geoffrey Kent

KING LEAR	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM	Orlando Shakespeare Theater

Voice, Diction and Accent Coaching

Training in Lessac, Skinner, Linklater, Blumenthal techniques

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES	Theatre of The Open Eye, NYC
PRIVATE LIVES	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
A TUNA CHRISTMAS	Actors Theatre of Louisville
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
A CHRISTMAS CAROL	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
THE TRIAL OF EBENEZER SCROOGE	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
NOISES OFF	University of Central Florida

Sound Design

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
STONES IN HIS POCKETS	Cape May Stage
BLYTHE SPIRIT	University of Central Florida
DRACULA: THE JOURNAL OF JONATHAN HARKER	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
CHINA: THE WHOLE ENCHILADA	New York Fringe Festival

Graphic Design

All show posters and postcards - 58 shows (co-design)	Harriett Lake Festival of New Plays – 206-010
Original Poster – Antony and Cleopatra	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
Website Design 1999-2006	Orlando Shakespeare Theater
Original Poster – Same Time Next Year	Cape May Stage
Original Poster – King Mackerel and the Blues are Running	Cape May Stage
18 Computer manuals, flyers, etc.	Documentation Manager, Spectrum Concepts, NYC 1988-93