

MATTHEW SHAFFER

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ARTIST STATEMENT

Harnessing my background as a director, choreographer, and writer, I am excited to continue my exploration into identity and gender as it relates to satire and narratives in media. Collaborating with a diverse range of seasoned artists who identify as, or support the LGBTQ+ community, I examine and reimagine the way the entertainment industry presents gender and identity as it relates to themes and content.

As a director and choreographer I orchestrate a dialogue between the performers and creative teams. Together, we curiously unearth the root of the story to cultivate an exchange of narrative-driven movement, action, and transitions that become the pulse of the show. I am first and foremost a storyteller, and I believe every object in life dances. This idea informs the way I direct and choreograph every element of the play. From props and set pieces to every member of the cast, I'm inquisitive about how to make these elements move with emotion and purpose to motivate the story. In the Maine professional premiere of *Matilda the Musical*, we needed to get sixteen school desks on and off stage within a thirty second blackout. Rather than hiring additional crew I decided to have the actors use their school desks as dance partners, dancing into place in a sequence that brought the schoolyard into the classroom. Sometimes magic is more rewarding when we see it happen in front of us, and are still surprised when a new picture appears.

Allen Adams of *The Maine Edge* says this of my work, "There's a breadth and a brightness to the movement of the show, to the almost balletic sense of many parts moving precisely when and where they are meant to."

My writing weaves stories that celebrate the myriad of ways we dance through the absurdities of life with humor, humility, and tenacity. With the goal of inspiring commercial filmmakers, artists, and educators to reimagine the inclusivity of queer and female voices in nontraditional roles, I use satire to analyze, articulate, embody, and inform narratives regardless of gender.

In short, I'm on a lifetime quest to create meaningful, all encompassing, commercial art that is grounded in the idea that emotion is genderless, that we're all looking to connect and feel validated, and that art should be an equitable and accessible space for all.