

MATTHEW SHAFFER

DIRECTOR-CHOREOGRAPHER

SDC • AEA • SAG-AFTRA • AGMA • AGVA

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I am a storyteller drawn to touchstones in society that examine family dynamics, investigate how we manage grief, and question how commercial artists can share LGBTQ+ stories. Working with patterns and repetition I create narratives that are informed through the harmony of conversation and interaction—physically, verbally, and written.

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 behavior-driven movement, action, and transitions that become the pulse of the show.

I believe every object in life dances—an idea that informs how 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.

"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."

—Allen Adams of *The Maine Edge*

Matthew Shaffer wrote, directed, and starred in his first production when he was 7 years old and has been sharing stories ever since. After attending the prestigious Orange County School of the Arts, Matthew continued his professional career with the world-renowned company, *Giordano Dance Chicago*. Since, Shaffer has collaborated on over 40 projects between *Broadway*, *Film*, and *Television*. *Full CV available upon request.

On the heels of a global pandemic, Matthew returned to graduate school to earn his Master of Fine Arts in directing and choreography from Wilson College. There, Matthew turned his attention to exploring gender, identity, and grief related to narratives in theater and commercial art.

Whether directing and choreographing *Matilda the Musical* with a half-million dollar budget or working with emerging artists in community theaters and festivals, we are all looking to connect, feel validated, and heal, and it is my lifetime quest to create purposeful, all-encompassing, art grounded in the belief that emotion is genderless. Art is an equitable and accessible space for all.

