

SAA Teaching Artist Profile

Theatre Artist: Jay Gipson-King

Grade Level: K–12, During or After School



About the Artist:

Jay Gipson-King holds a PhD in Theatre Studies and has taught theatre in higher education since 2004, working with both school-age students and adults. As a theatre artist, he has played the part of director, actor, playwright, and dramaturg. Since 2012, he has served as Performance Director (and performing company member) with Salem Playback Theatre, a small company that uses non-scripted performance to empower story-tellers and build community. In Summer 2014, he served as instructor of dramaturgy for Isinglass Theater's summer Egg program, an intensive theatre and leadership workshop for high school students. Jay excels at creating a fun, dynamic classroom environment that both welcomes and challenges students.

Objectives

Theatre is the most basic and universal of all the arts, and training in theatre lays the foundation for success in any field. Through theatre games, exercises, writing, and scene work, students develop:

- ◆ Emotional Intelligence
- ◆ Empathy
- ◆ Collaboration
- ◆ Creative Problem Solving
- ◆ And Work Ethic.

Upon successful completion of the basic acting workshop, students should be able to:

- ◆ Understand and apply basic performance vocabulary.
- ◆ Use the actor's instrument of body, voice, and mind to convey a performance or character at the basic level.
- ◆ Demonstrate basic improvisation techniques through theatre games and activities.
- ◆ Demonstrate the use of soft focus, awareness, and listening skills through theatre games and activities.

Activities

All Ages: Intro to Acting & Improvisation

Geared to each grade level, this basic workshop starts with theatre games, improvisation, voice, and movement, and leads up to basic tactics, text work, and simple scenes. The workshop introduces skills and exercises foundational for any actor, but it also opens up students to creativity, play, trust, and empathy. The workshop draws largely on the techniques of Viola Spolin (games and improvisation), Robert Cohen (acting), and Anne Bogart (*Viewpoints* movement work). Any number of hours.

Grades 2–5: Cootie Shots. *Cootie Shots: Theatrical Inoculations Against Bigotry for Kids, Parents, and Teachers* is a collection of short plays and songs suitable for performance and viewing by elementary grade students. The purpose of the plays is to draw out and discuss elements of prejudice, intolerance, and bullying in hopes of creating empathy and eliminating bigotry of all types. For the workshop, I would work with classrooms to read, discuss, and perform selected pieces and conduct in-class activities. The workshop could be limited to a single classroom, or students could rehearse pieces for performance for a larger group. 5–20 hours (depending on performance needs).

Grades 4+: Playwriting. Students will learn the basics of writing a script, including what makes a play different from other types of literature or performance. Students will practice in-class writing exercises, out-of-class assignments, and in-class readings (or improvisations) of their scenes. 10–20 hours.

Grades 6+: Joint Stock Method. A small group of students (15 or fewer) select a topic that is of concern to everyone. Each student will research the topic through reading or interviewing. Students will then improvise scenes around their research, putting the pieces together to create a story. Under guidance, students will revise and rehearse the improvisations to create a short play suitable for performance for the class or school. 20–30 hours over 10 weeks.

Workshop Size Limits

- ◆ For Acting workshops and *Cootie Shots*: Maximum of 30 students.
- ◆ Joint Stock: Groups of 15 students.
- ◆ Playwriting: Classroom size (30) or small groups (15).

Special Equipment

- ◆ Handouts for most classes.
- ◆ Journals or notebooks for Playwriting and Joint Stock Method.
- ◆ *Cootie Shots* and Joint Stock workshops will make use of found objects or materials on hand for production elements.

Space Needed

- ◆ For Acting workshops: A large open space, with enough room for all participants to move and walk around freely. For groups of 30, an open cafeteria or gymnasium would be ideal.
- ◆ For Playwriting and Joint Stock: A smaller room, with desks or tables for writing that can be moved out of the way for acting exercises.

Connections to the Curriculum

Theatre connects to multiple areas across the curriculum, including **Arts, English Language Arts,** and (in some workshops) **Physical Education**. Within Common Core, the basic acting workshop addresses **Reading, Speaking,** and **Listening**, while the Playwriting and Joint Stock workshops include **Writing** and **Research**. Plays and scenes can be selected to address any specific topic under study, such as a historical event, artistic style, or social issue.