

Kyiv (Bonsai) HS festival artist biographies

Artist biographies



Vicki Close – Rep

After four years of teaching at my hometown high school in Canada, I felt the need for a little adventure. A two year leave of absence to teach in Bahrain turned into 19 years (and counting) of international school adventures in Norway, Thailand and The Philippines. I currently call Prague home.

I am primarily a teacher-director with a passion for collaborative and ensemble theatre. A required Introduction to Theatre Crafts course in university opened my eyes to the creative and organisational challenges of technical theatre, stage management, design and directing. I left the world of performing and never looked back.

One of the absolute highlights of my time overseas has been travelling with students to ISTA festivals, Week Without Walls trips and cultural conventions as well as organising and hosting these events at my own schools. I've worked as a Performing Arts director, programme leader for Dance, Drama and Film, theatre manager and lead advisor for ninth grade. I am also a team leader and examiner for IB Theatre.

Student ensemble leaders (SEL)



Anna Andresen

I'm an actor, writer and director based in London. Since graduating from both the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and Drama Centre London I've worked extensively across the industry. From West End theatre, television and film to writing, producing and performing a one-woman comedy show for Edinburgh, coaching students applying for drama school and leading workshops in both London and New York.

I'm especially interested in theatre as a storytelling medium and take inspiration from ordinary and extraordinary places, people and real-life events to vividly recreate experiences and memories in a unique theatrical medium. Much of my work has involved immersive-style performance to take an audience on a journey that entertains but also connects them in a more immediate and educational way.



Daniel Sarstedt

I have an MA in English from Copenhagen University supplemented with Theatre studies at Rose Bruford College and I am currently teaching Theatre and Theory of Knowledge at Copenhagen International School. Apart from various freelance music

and theatre projects, I am part of a group of close collaborators – writing, recording, producing and performing mainly electronic music, as well as recording on my own.

I believe strongly in the importance of collaboration in the arts. While I love writing songs and music when it's just me and a piano or computer, it is through working with other artists that I really feel I thrive. This goes as much for working with a group of young artists at an ISTA festival as for working in the studio with the band finalising a track.



Mike West

I was a teacher for over thirty years. After teaching just about every subject under the sun, it seems, including being a fifth grade class teacher, for the last fifteen of those years I was uniquely a theatre teacher. I developed the theatre programme at the International School of Luxembourg for both the middle and upper schools and at IB level.

During that time I produced and directed over seventeen shows and musicals with students covering quite a range: comedy, light opera, Shakespeare, farce, some very dark plays and some very frothy ones. I am a keen, frequent actor in Luxembourg in both plays and musicals and if you watch enough television you might even catch a glimpse of me in a few films made here in Luxembourg (I once was killed by a mummy!). Since 2015 I have been a student ensemble leader at TaPS events across the globe.

External workshop leader biographies

Gretchen Foster

I am a teacher, performer, musician, director, choreographer and creative being. I am a music teacher who has worked internationally with students ranging from 3-18. I am originally from the United States and currently live in Kyiv, Ukraine.

I value all forms of expression and love helping others explore their own creativity through different artistic experiences. I believe that the arts have the power to inspire and support students on their personal journeys, as well as, help them create connections and relationships with others.

Cory Haugen

I am an International Thespians alumni and a member of the Educational Theatre Association. I have taught theatre and technical theatre for over 10 years. I am driven by my desire to make good art and help students explore the process of doing so.

Romana Isabella

I am a playwright, performer, and producer. My plays include *HYENA!*, which was performed at La MaMa in New York City, the International Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the United Solo Festival (winner of 'Best Experimental Show') and *Martys*, which premiered in La MaMa's Spring 2018 season. I am also a 2017 Fellow of the Lambda Literary Writers Retreat for Emerging LGBTQ Voices.

My goal as a person and artist is to dismantle the status quo. I explore the conflict between image and reality by reveling in the unique qualities of theatre and use them as catalysts for irreplicable and intimate connection.