

Kent Thompson

Theatre Producer | Director | Consultant | Writer | Educator

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About Kent

KENT THOMPSON is a theatre industry leader, director, consultant, writer and educator. He served as producing artistic director of two major LORT theatres, the Denver Center Theatre Company (2005-2017) and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (1989-2005) as well as artistic director of the Virginia Shakespeare Festival (1979-1981). He has produced nearly 300 LORT productions and directed 70.

In Denver, he created the Colorado New Play Summit (a premier national festival for new American Plays), Off Center (innovative, immersive, and interactive programming for millennial audiences), and the Women's Voices Fund (1st endowment of its kind to support new plays by women). Over 12 seasons, DCTC commissioned 39 new plays, workshopped 48 new plays and musicals and produced 29 world premieres, include: The Book of Will by Lauren Gunderson, Fade by Tanya Saracho, The Nest and Our House by Theresa Rebeck, The Legend of Georgia McBride by Matthew Lopez, black odyssey by Marcus Gardley, Just Like Us by Karen Zacarias, The Whale by Sam Hunter, Lydia by Octavio Solis, 1001 by Jason Grote, Sweet & Lucky by Third Rail Projects, among others. Commissions and premieres have gone on to more than 85+ follow-on productions across the U.S. at theatres, including Goodman Theatre, Yale Rep, Playwrights Horizons, Seattle Rep, Victory Gardens, Northlight Theatre, Primary Stages, Center Theatre Group, Old Globe, among others.

"Kent Thompson's creation of the Colorado New Play Summit has had a national impact for the Theatre Company." He created the Women 's Voices Fund, which directly challenges the problem of parity in the American Theatre by supporting the commissioning and development of plays by women. And he created Off-Center, dedicated to creating the next generation of artists, audiences and theatrical performances. In short, Kent Thompson is one of the most visionary, successful and admired artistic directors in the country."

**Playwright Robert Schenkkan,
Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning playwright.
(All The Way, The Kentucky Cycle)**

At the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Thompson created the Southern Writers Project, a new play commissioning and development program for Southern and African-American playwrights, which led to 16 world premieres, including *A Lesson Before Dying* by Romulus Linney from Ernest Gaines' novel, *The Dreams of Sarah Breedlove* and *A Night in Tunisia* by Regina Taylor, *Gee's Bend* by Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder, *Vernon Early* by Horton Foote, *Thunder Knocking on the Door* by Keith Glover, *Iago* by James McLure, *The Negro of Peter the Great* by Carlyle Brown, *Disguises* by Craig Warner, *Venus de Milo is Armed* by Kia Corthron, among others.

"it appears that Thompson's Southern Writers Project may well have started producing what the artistic director dreamed it could produce—modern masterpieces enjoyed not just by those who come to Montgomery, but by the world.

Rick Harmon, Montgomery Advertiser, 12/21/1998

"There really isn't any other comparable event that showcases Southern writers. This is the main place to come."

Chris Jones, Variety

An early adopter of non-traditional casting at ASF, Thompson has developed a career-long commitment to increase the hiring of women and diverse artists and leaders in the professional theatre. He has expanded the focus to programming, artistic leadership, staff, trustees and audiences in Alabama and Denver.

"[Kent's] hiring me [as associate artistic director] was so important to me because very few of us African American directors get opportunities to stage full-blown productions of the classics. He made sure I got to direct one Shakespeare every year as well as big musicals like 'Godspell.' Hiring actors and directors of color is a really exciting part of his legacy in Alabama.

Kent Gash, Denver Post, 12/12/2004
Founding Director of NYU Tisch School of the Arts'
New Studio on Broadway

"Women are more than half our audience and more than half the human race. But for some reason, the rest of the American Theatre is still catching up with Kent's vision."

Playwright Theresa Rebeck

Thompson is an acclaimed director of a wide variety of theatre, including Shakespeare and the classics, new

plays, musicals and contemporary work. He has directed for several professional theatres, including Cleveland Play House, Goodspeed Musicals, Denver Center Broadway, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and Delaware Theatre Company. His production of *A Lesson Before Dying* by Romulus Linney from Ernest Gaines opened the 10th Anniversary Season of Signature Theatre Company in New York. His production of *Macbeth* was chosen by the NEA and the Department of Defense to tour 13 U.S. military bases. He directed *Lizard* by Dennis Covington which was featured in the Cultural Celebration at the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics Games.

He served for eight years on the Board of Directors for Theatre Communications Group (the National Organization for the Not-for-Profit Professional Theatre), also serving as its president for three years. He has served on peer review panels for The National Endowment for the Arts (also chair), Theatre Communications Group, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Fulbright Scholars Program, The Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, The Doris Duke Foundation, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. He is currently a member of the Playwright Awards Advisory Committee for the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust.

As a consultant, Thompson focuses on transition management and leadership, development of new play/musical/works programming, strategic planning based upon artistic vision and organizational sustainability, and executive coaching.

His book, *Directing Professionally: A Practical Guide to Developing a Successful Career in Today's Theatre*, will be published by Bloomsbury/Methuen Drama in early 2019.

As an educator, Thompson has led two conservatory programs, The National Theatre Conservatory MFA Acting Program and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival/University of Alabama M.F.A. Professional Theatre Training Program. He has taught a wide variety of courses.

In 2002, Thompson was awarded the Thomas DeGaetani Award by the United States Institute of Theatre Technology. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the College of William & Mary and was a Draper's Company Scholar to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, England.