

Lear deBessonnet Biography

Director Lear deBessonnet has been developing new works for theatre in New York since 2003. Her new music-theatre piece, *On the Levee*, is being developed under commission from Yale Repertory Theatre with playwright Marcus Gardley and composer Todd Almond. In May 2009, her site-specific *Don Quixote*, a collaboration with playwright Lucy Thurber and the punk-gypsy ensemble The Psalters, will premiere in Philadelphia. She has assisted Martha Clarke, Anne Bogart, Marianne Weems, and Bartlett Sher, and was named one of Time Out New York's "25 People to Watch" in 2006.

Recent productions include Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* at Performance Space 122, a collaboration with country-blues singer Kelley McRae, and *transFigures* produced Off-Broadway by Women's Project in 2007 (originally a site-specific performance at Calvary Church in 2003). Through her production company, Stillpoint Productions, she also conceived and directed Deborah Stein's *Bone Portraits* at Walkerspace and *Death Might Be Your Santa Claus*, a site-specific work performed at an abandoned bank next to the NY Stock Exchange. Other New York credits include *The Eliots* (Center Stage), *The Female Terrorist Project* (HERE Arts Center), *Flying on the Wing* (NY Fringe, Outstanding Solo Show), and *A Short Time After* (a site-specific piece by Caridad Svich). Her production of the musical *OLIVER!*, which re-imagined Dickens' classic in the context of global sex trafficking, opened at New York University's Experimental Theatre Wing this fall.

Internationally, Lear conceived and directed a new tri-lingual musical for the National Opera Theatre of Kazakhstan (*In the Dark Ages*) and conducted a workshop production of a new piece (*Revisions*) exploring immigrant identity at the Focus Theatre in Dublin. Freelance directing work includes *When I Was A Ghost* (Guthrie Theatre, Dowling Studio), *A Year With Frog and Toad* (Dorset Theatre Festival) and *Equus* (Hangar Theatre). She has trained with DAH Theater of Yugoslavia and the SITI Company in New York, and has worked as an assistant director at Lincoln Center Theatre, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

In 2008, Ms. deBessonnet was honored with the first annual Presidential Award for Artistic Excellence by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council alongside Mayor Bloomberg and Edward Albee. She is a member of the Women's Project Directors Lab and an alumnus of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, a Drama League Directing Fellow, and a Jefferson Scholar.

Ms. deBessonnet has paired her work in the theatre with active community organizing. In 2006, she created and ran the TICKETS FOR THE PEOPLE program through the Culture Project- an initiative to distribute 20,000 theatre tickets to low-income New Yorkers. As part of this pilot program, she created the Artist Ambassador program, in which 40 artists were paired with 20 non-profits to bring new audiences into the theatre.

Lear deBessonnet teaches acting at New York University. She is a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and resides in Brooklyn.