

Justin Poole, Ph.D.

Theatrical/Directing Portfolio



Contact Information

Email: wannerlusttheatre@gmail.com

Phone: 610-585-16663

Website: <https://www.justinpooleart.com/>

Artist Statement

Theatre is a magical artform that allows people to wrestle with the big questions of life. My work is inspired by chiaroscuro, the painting technique that emphasizes strong tonal contrast of dark and light. This paradoxical style can be gritty and clean, unsettling and uplifting, making my productions highly engaging. They always feature unique design elements, kinetic movement, and live music. I frequently collaborate with people across disciplines, such as cinema, visual art, and music, learning from them as they learn from me. I am a deviser, never content to present a play in a familiar way and always wishing to surprise the audience by delivering them a compelling, challenging, and intimate spectacle that they will not forget.

Portfolio Organization

- *I placed original work and directing/producing work towards the front of my portfolio. Projects are listed chronologically, with ongoing touring projects listed first, regardless of when they premiered.*
- *I placed additional original work, which I wrote and continue to perform as a solo actor after the directorial work.*
- *Additional theatrical work and acting work is listed after my original solo pieces.*
- *For each project I include one photograph that I believe best encapsulates the piece plus a link to a Google folder with additional photos that are organized by project. Underneath the primary photograph are lists of awards/recognition and press links.*
- *You may also visit my website, which includes some samples of my visual art and a brief bio in addition to some more information on my theatrical work. <https://www.justinpooleart.com/>*

Bonhoeffer: Cell 92 (Spring 2022-Present)

Co-Created by Justin Poole and Jerry Holsopple



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/qkBFarrv8haYgnpA7>

Description: This is a touring cinematic theatre piece on the life of the WWII-era German dissident theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It features three large projection screens that showcase a two-hour film with a cast of 20 actors who are characters from Bonhoeffer's memories. One live actor, portraying Bonhoeffer, interacts with the film on these screens for the entire performance. Justin Poole is the live performer, he also co-wrote the script, casted the actors and directed them in the cinematic portion, and produced the piece.

International Performances: The Austro-American Institute of Education with the US Embassy in Vienna, New City Wien, Vienna Community Church

Domestic and Upcoming Performances: Eastern Mennonite University, Asbury United Methodist Church, Court Square Theatre, Hesston College, Bluffton College, Conrad Grebel University

Recognition:

Marpeck Foundation Grant for a National Tour of the Production (Spring 2024)

Arts Council of the Valley Creative Inspiration Grant to Showcase the Production in Harrisonburg Venues (Spring 2022)

Press Links:

<https://www.whsv.com/2022/03/11/bonhoeffer-cell-92-production-courtsquare-theater/>

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2022/bonhoeffer-cell-92-opens-at-emu-slated-for-spring-tour-in-austria/>

https://www.dnronline.com/news/lifestyle/emu-professors-play-on-nazi-dissident-to-hit-stages-in-harrisonburg-vienna/article_a1f32991-69b4-5dfe-b52f-27914539b7b1.html

U2 Romeo and Juliet: An Original Rock Musical (EMU, Fall 2021)

Co-Created by Justin Poole and Jerry Holsopple



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ydwNjvULBUfNj7ncA>

Description: This production is a mashup of Shakespeare's text and the music and lyrics of the band U2, which specifically sanctioned the piece. The piece featured the popular local band Prince Bellerose, who performed all of U2's songs live. This work was co-adapted by Jerry Holsopple and Justin Poole with stage direction by Justin Poole, who also produced it. It was performed in Fall 2022.

Recognition:

KCACTF Certificate of Merit to Justin Poole and Jerry Holsopple for New Play Creation

Press Links:

https://www.dnronline.com/news/lifestyle/features/emu-romeo-and-juliet-musical-echoes-u2s-call-for-world-peace-reconciliation/article_bcced9e6-7688-516e-9443-2d04fbddcf8b.html

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2021/emus-original-rock-musical-u2-romeo-juliet-is-a-gritty-rapturous-tale-of-love-in-chaos/>

<https://www.theweathervane.org/news-and-feature/u2-romeo-and-juliet-examining-human-nature/>

<https://augustafreepress.com/news/emu-presents-original-rock-musical-u2-romeo-juliet/>

Distant Witness: Social Media, the Arab Spring, and a Journalism Revolution (EMU, 2016)

Adapted/Written and Directed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/1LG527vrWC8rfE6a7>

Description: This is an original play based on an NPR journalist's account of following the Arab Spring through social media. The production incorporated actual footage from the revolutions, which was edited together with a colleague and students from the visual and communication arts program. The performance also incorporated two videographers who held cameras that projected the stage action onto a giant screen in order to further simulate the distancing effect created by social media. Justin Poole adapted the memoir by Andy Carvin and directed the production.

Recognition:

Arts Council of the Valley Creative Inspiration Grant to Develop the Piece and Perform it for EMU's Summer Peacebuilding Institute

KCACTF Certificate of Merit to Justin Poole for Play Adaptation and Directing

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2016/distant-witness-adapted-from-journalist-andrew-carvins-book-immerses-audience-in-arab-spring/>

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2015/emu-stage-adaptation-of-andy-carvins-distant-witness-immerses-audience-in-tech-driven-revolution-of-arab-spring/>

Disney's The Little Mermaid (EMU, Spring 2024)

By Alan Menken, Howard Ashman, Glenn Slater, and Doug Wright
Directed, Produced, and Set Co-Designed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/9TSC5XTDwSFBW3VN8>

Description: A company of only 17 actors played all the roles, often switching between multiple characters, and created all the environments using found objects on a shoestring budget. This approach lent itself to many innovative choices.

Video Links:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19OZSpFu3v3SciS4JHu-SL3rpqSbXIU3B/view?usp=sharing> (Storm at Sea Sequence)

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2024/emu-theatre-breathes-new-life-into-classic-little-mermaid-tale/>

Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812 (EMU, Spring 2023)

By Dave Malloy

Directed, Produced, and Set Co-Designed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/PJhnZpWvKFJs6mVp7>

Description: EMU was one of the first universities to present this piece. Paul Pinto, who originated the role of Balaga and who played the role on Broadway, was featured as a talkback speaker for two of the performances. This was staged environmentally in an intimate blackbox space.

Recognition: KCACTF Certificate of Merit for Ensemble Play Development, Recommended for Inclusion as a Region 2 Invited Production

Press Links:

<https://www.whsv.com/2023/03/24/emu-prepares-natasha-pierre-great-comet-1812-spring-musical/>

https://www.dnronline.com/features/emu-one-of-first-u-s-universities-to-present-natasha-pierre-the-great-comet-of/article_1cf036d0-64ca-54db-9035-b652a96d2ab1.html

The Crucible (Spring 2023 and Fall 2022)

By Arthur Miller

Directed, Produced, and Set Co-Designed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/z8ktR7uP1Cp1ye2D6>

Recognition: KCACTF Regional 2 Invited Production, National Awards for Perry Blosser and Joseph Harder for Original Composition and for Elizabeth Eby for Excellence in Performance

Press Links:

<https://www.whsv.com/2022/10/26/eastern-mennonite-university-production-crucible-opens-this-weekend/>

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2022/emu-theater-stages-the-crucible-in-the-round-as-immersive-allegory-for-our-time/>

https://www.dnronline.com/news/emu-presents-encore-of-the-crucible-play-to-raise-funds-for-kennedy-center-festival/article_e1a8a439-91dd-5d8a-8afa-7ba065e39f65.html

<https://www.theweathervane.org/news-and-feature/emus-the-crucible-hits-the-big-stage/>

Noye's Fludde (Spring 2022)

By Benjamin Britten

Directed, Produced, and Set Co-Designed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/8zj4Q5jJ1naQF4TV7>

Description: This production of the one-act opera by Benjamin Britten incorporated over 20 musicians and a cast of approximately 50 people including children from the internationally-recognized Shenandoah Valley Children's Choir, EMU students, and older adult community members. It was staged in EMU's large concert hall to make use of the organ and the expansive playing area.

Recognition: KCACTF Certificate of Merit for Ensemble Play Development, Recommended for Inclusion as a Region 2 Invited Production

Press Links:

<https://www.whsv.com/video/2022/04/05/emu-theater-music-department-performs-noyes-fludde/>

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2022/spring-opera-noyes-fludde-brings-message-of-grace/>

Shrek the Musical (Spring 2021)

By Jeanine Tesori and David Lindsay-Abaire
Directed, Produced, and Set Co-Designed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/o8wFdk1bTdM9kjjCA>

Description: After the original production was shut down due to COVID in the spring of 2020, special permission was sought and achieved to remount this production outside using a massive outdoor playspace. The outdoor stage and terrace leading up to Campus Center, EMU's main administrative building, and Campus Center's outdoor mezzanine section were transformed into the castle, dungeon, forest, and other locations from this magical musical. Shadow puppets were projected from within the building and a massive industrial lighting system was carted in to provide the required lighting for the large space. Actors performed masked and distanced 6 feet apart, according to COVID regulations. Audience members attended the show free and sat on the lawn in designated squares. It was a joyful experiment in industriousness!

Disney's Beauty and the Beast (Spring, 2019)

By Alan Menken, Howard Ashman, Tim Rice, and Linda Woolverton
Directed, Produced, and Set Co-Designed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/EJXhAs5CpDteJpDa9>

Recognition: KCACTF Certificate of Merit to Justin Poole for Directing

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2019/emu-and-community-to-perform-disneys-beauty-and-the-beast/>

<https://www.whsv.com/content/news/1on1-EMUs-production-of-Beauty-and-the-Beast-507174261.html>

Measure for Measure (Fall 2018)

By William Shakespeare

Original Music by Jim Clemens

Directed, Adapted, Produced, and Set Co-Designed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/uyEWdeHQMePU86aR6>

Description: Justin Poole adapted the script to include an original musical score composed by Jim Clemens and portions of text that were sung by a small cast of actors.

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2018/shakespeares-morality-play-measure-for-measure-set-for-november/>

<https://www.whsv.com/content/news/1on1-Shakespeare-play-at-EMU-499886142.html>

The Spitfire Grill (Spring 2018)

By James Valcq and Fred Alley

Directed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ExrMuuVpgdvJqQTA9>

Recognition: KCACTF Certificate of Merit to Justin Poole for Directing

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2018/emus-spring-musical-the-spitfire-grill-tells-the-story-of-second-chances-in-a-midwest-town/>

The 39 Steps (Spring 2017 and Spring 2018)

By Patrick Barlow
Directed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/AGZDJv56o6nBaASH7>

Recognition: KCACTF Region 2 Invited Production, Certificate of Merit to Justin Poole for Directing, National Awards to Phil Grayson for Props Design and Ezrionna Prioleau for Stage Management

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2018/39-steps-hosts-three-benefit-performances-heading-kennedy-center-theater-festival/>

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2017/comedy-rules-spring-production-alfred-hitchcock-spoof-39-steps/>

Twelfth Night (Fall 2014)

By William Shakespeare

Original Music by Jim Clemens

Directed and Adapted by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Brqzty9GjZz4dx2i6>

Description: This piece was staged environmentally using 5 swings and a piano on wheels. It incorporated original music by Jim Clemens.

Recognition: KCACTF Certificate of Merit to Justin Poole for Imaginative and Groundbreaking Conceptualization

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2014/upcoming-production-of-shakespeares-twelfth-night-is-a-richly-carnivalesque-comedy/>

<https://www.newsleader.com/story/entertainment/2014/11/19/emu-theater-presents-twelfth-night-harrisonburg/19270571/>

Into the Woods (Spring 2014)
By Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine
Directed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/NFeB2Kb5ppnon3Pg6>

Recognition: KCACTF Certificate of Merit to Justin Poole for Directing, Recommended for Inclusion as a Region 2 Invited Production

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2014/emu-theater-production-into-the-woods-brings-brothers-grimm-fairy-tales-to-life/>

Selected Original Solo Acting/Duet Performance Work

Description: For each of these pieces Justin Poole wrote the text and performs all the characters while a live musician, who composed original music, plays on stage alongside of him. These are highly physical theatre pieces that present biblical narratives in a gritty, surprising way borrowing visual motifs from Baroque painters, especially Carravaggio. These are ongoing, touring productions. The Gospel Project has been featured at the Austro-American Institute, New City Wien, and the International Christian School of Vienna in Austria as well as in domestic venues such as Eastern Mennonite University, Eastern Mennonite School, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, and other churches in Virginia and Pennsylvania.

King David (In Progress/Premiering Soon)

Written and Performed by Justin Poole
Featuring Original Music Composed and Performed by Perry Blosser
Directed by Stan Swartz

The Gospel Project: A Theatrical Journey through the Life of Jesus Christ (Spring 2016-Present)

Written and Performed by Justin Poole
Featuring Original Music Composed and Performed by Perry Blosser



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/YrpSS8f5Y22Zxekw6>

Recognition:

Partially supported by and originally presented as part of Asbury United Methodist's Sacred Arts Series

Press Links:

<https://emu.edu/now/news/2021/dn-r-play-tells-the-story-of-jesus-at-arts-incarnate/>

<https://www.theweathervane.org/review/voxti-and-the-gospel-project-captivate-audiences/>

<https://www.whsv.com/video/2022/09/28/double-feature-coming-emu-mainstage-theater-voxti-gospel-project/>

Firebrand: The Life of Paul (Fall 2018)

Written and Performed by Justin Poole

Featuring Original Music Composed and Performed by Jim Clemens



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/RwvT2MEu7jdWoSsF7>

Recognition:

Partially supported by and originally presented as part of Asbury United Methodist's Sacred Arts Series

Press Links:

<https://www.theweathervane.org/news-and-feature/poole-presents-firebrand-the-life-of-paul/>

Performances Directed by Justin Poole as Part of EMU Summer Musical Theatre

EMU Summer Musical Theatre Website:

<https://emu.edu/summer-musical-theatre/>

Description: EMU Summer Musical Theatre is an educational theatre program for kids in fourth grade through recent high school graduates. Justin Poole co-directs the program with Ellie de Waal, EMU's Resident Choreographer. He also directs the full-scale musical productions for the senior program and co-writes the scripts for the junior program musical theatre revues.

Link to Video Showing Justin Poole Devising Work with Junior Program Students:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EkNX_cQC38OLvuTqVSOAnJgzsf31K3qu/view?usp=sharing

Seussical The Musical (In Process/2024)

By Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens

Directed by Justin Poole

The Addams Family (2023)

By Andrew Lippa, Marshall Brickman, and Rick Elice

Directed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ibKRt1QHqJPbWh19>

Mamma Mia! (2022)

By Benny Anderson, Bjorn Ulvaeus, and Catherine Johnson
Directed by Justin Poole



Link to Additional Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/zQ3SukrTbkyycvTF8>

Press Links:

https://www.dnronline.com/features/local-high-schoolers-take-a-chance-on-new-summer-musical-theater-program-at-emu/article_65150082-5f36-5fac-a05e-267532a76a67.html

https://www.dnronline.com/arts_and_entertainment/emu-summer-musical-theater-program-ready-to-take-the-stage/article_3cdd92bd-a34b-5b58-a52c-0546b18a3410.html

<https://www.whsv.com/video/2023/04/26/eastern-mennonite-university-summer-musical-theater-programs-return-2023/>

Selected Community-Based Devising Work

Harrisonburg City Public Schools (2015-2016)

Description: Supported by the Kennedy Center's Any Given Child Program and a grant from the Arts Council of the Valley, Justin Poole devised original plays with ELL/newcomer students from Harrisonburg's immigrant/refugee communities.

Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture (2009-2013)

Description: Justin Poole worked for five summers devising original plays with Arab American students for this NEA-funded Arab arts and culture organization in Philadelphia. This resulted in the presentation of a paper at the Mid-Atlantic Theatre Conference entitled *Understanding the Ethics of Cross-Cultural Collaboration: A Western-Centric Practitioner's Approach to Developing Theatre for an Arab Culture Organization*.

Website: <https://www.albustanseeds.org/>

Selected Other Directing Work

Twelfth Night: A Musical Remix (Capital Fringe Festival, Washington DC, 2015)

By William Shakespeare

Original Music by Jim Clemens

Adapted, Directed, and Produced by Justin Poole



Description: This was a scaled down version of the play that was originally produced at EMU. It featured 6 actors who played multiple roles and performed zany costume/character changes on stage in full view of the audience. Original music was composed by Jim Clemens for this production and large portions of the text were sung. This production was named Best of Fringe by one publication.

Press Links:

<https://dctheaterarts.org/2015/07/09/2015-capital-fringe-review-twelfth-night-a-musical-remix/>
<https://dctheaterarts.org/2015/07/26/dcmetrotheaterarts-special-capital-fringe-honors-announced/>
<https://emu.edu/now/news/2015/twelfth-night-a-musical-remix-to-be-performed-at-capital-fringe-festival/>

The Wizard of Oz (Radnor Middle School, 2012)

Description: This production featured a cast of over 50 middle school students and a live orchestra. Justin Poole was selected to direct at this award-winning middle school.

Children of Eden (Villanova Student Musical Theatre, 2011)

Description: Justin directed, designed, and choreographed this production for the university student-led theatre organization, which employs professional directors from the Philadelphia theatre scene.

Everyman (Wanderlust Theatre Company/Philly Fringe Festival, 2010)

Description: The old English morality play was presented in an historic neo-gothic Unitarian church in Center City Philadelphia. Audiences followed actors through the entire cavernous space, sometimes in total darkness. Mood setting music, shadow puppetry, and choreography helped tell the tale. Justin Poole adapted, directed, designed, and produced this piece. He also played the role of Death.

A Midsummer Night's Dream (Wanderlust Theatre Company/Eastern University, 2007)

Description: Justin Poole adapted Shakespeare's play, transforming it into a dance theatre piece with original music and extensive choreography. He also designed, produced, and played Oberon/Theseus.

A Russian Arts Festival (Wanderlust Theatre Company, 2006)

Description: Three Chekhov one-act plays were presented alongside live Russian music and poetry readings. This featured members of Philadelphia's Russian community. Justin Poole was the producer for the whole event and directed two of the one-acts. He also performed the title role in *The Bear*.

Assistant Directing

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

(Director Blanka Zizka, The Wilma Theatre, Philadelphia, 2010)

Selected Acting Experience

Actor's Statement: *I am always eager to collaborate with others as an actor. I believe in the primacy of the actor/audience relationship. Honing my own acting skills helps me to better teach my acting students and to direct actors in productions. Acting under the direction of accomplished artists also improves my overall skills as a theatre artist and helps me to be a better collaborator.*

Union Affiliation:

Screen Actors Guild Eligible

Television: The Wire (HBO), The Jamie Kennedy Experiment (WB), Hack (CBS)

Commercial: Bosch Security, Time Warner, White Marsh Mall

Film: Time Elevator (prod. Declan Baldwin), In the City of Brotherly Love

Print: Military Helmet Advertising Campaign, Plymouth Yarn, Rascal Scooters, Elsevier Medical Company, Department of Veteran Affairs

Student Film: [Life As Art](#) (JMU, Received Award of Excellence from the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts), [Big Boys Don't Cry](#) (JMU)

Theatre: Death in *Everyman* (Wanderlust/Philly Fringe), Theseus/Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Wanderlust), Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* and the Priest in *The Visit* (Villanova Theatre), Kafka in *Kafka's Wick* (Idle Contemplation, Philadelphia)

Selected Theatrical Works in Progress

Untitled Original Solo Piece on Homer's Odyssey

Description: Justin Poole is writing this solo performance piece about a washed up classics professor desperately trying to save his career by presenting an outlandish lecture series on Homer's *Odyssey* using found objects, shadow puppets, masks, and old classical records. It is a zany spectacle designed to push the limits of Justin's endurance as a physical/comedic actor while illuminating some profound truths embedded in this classical text.

Untitled Original Musical on the Life of Mother Maria Skobtsova

Description: This is an original musical on the life and works of the twice-divorced, chain smoking Russian poet nun who was killed in a concentration camp for her work aiding Jewish people during the period of Nazis persecution. Justin Poole is writing the book and providing stage direction. Jerry Holsopple is writing the music and lyrics, and providing the tech direction.

Untitled Original Play on the Velvet Revolution and Czech Folklore

Description: Justin Poole is writing this piece that explores non-violent revolution in the former Czechoslovakia through the allegorical lens of old Czech legends. He plans to direct this piece, which will incorporate puppetry, music, choreography, and video design.

Jane Eyre

Description: Justin Poole has co-adapted this piece based on Charlotte Bronte's classic novel with Hannah Landis, a recent EMU Theatre graduate. He plans to direct it as soon as time permits.