

# John Simpkins

Stage Director

Professor & Head of Musical Theatre - Penn State University

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**John Simpkins** directed the three-time Drama Desk nominated Off-Broadway production of *Bloodsong of Love: The Rock and Roll Spaghetti Western* (by Tony nominee Joe Iconis) at Ars Nova. He also directed Iconis' *The Black Suits* at Center Theatre Group (Kirk Douglas Theatre – starring Annie Golden, Will Roland, Veronica Dunne). Upcoming projects with Mr. Iconis include the world premiere of *Love in Hate Nation* at Two River Theater.

New York credits also include the Off-Broadway productions of *The Bus* (59E59 Theatre); *ReWrite* (Urban Stages); *The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* (Theatreworks, USA-Lucille Lortel Theatre); *Things to Ruin* (which he co-conceived and directed productions of at Second Stage, Le Poisson Rouge, Zipper Factory, Joe's Pub, Ars Nova, NYMF) and *The Black Suits* (SPF at the Public Theatre – starring Annie Golden, Jason Tam, and Krysta Rodriguez).

International productions include the World Premiere of *Legendale* (music by Andrea Daly, words by Jeff Bienstock) at Fredericia Teater in Denmark. Upcoming International projects include the World Premiere of *A Hero's Tale* (music by Arthur Bacon, Book and Lyrics by Mads Nielsen) at Fredericia Teater in Denmark.

Regional productions include *Raging Skillet* (World Premiere – Theaterworks Hartford – starring Dana Smith-Croll, Marilyn Sokol, George Salazar); *Legendale* (American Premiere – Human Race Theatre Company – starring Max Crumm); *Hairspray* (North Carolina Theatre – starring Dale Hensley, Dirk Lumbard); *The Black Suits* (Barrington Stage – starring Ben Platt, Will Roland, Annie Golden); *Damn Yankees* (Engeman Theatre – starring André De Shields, Felicia Finley, Austin Miller); *A Wonderful Life* (Engeman Theatre – starring Will Reynolds); *Annie* (Sacramento Music Circus- starring Mark Zimmerman, Jim Walton, Adinah Alexander); *Cabaret* (Sacramento Music Circus- starring Teri Ralston, Jacquelyn Piro, Max von Essen); *Evita* (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma- starring Kate Chapman, Eric Michael Gillet, Dan Cooney).

John was Artistic Director at Sharon Playhouse from 2011-2016– where he directed *Quartet* (starring Tony Winner Elizabeth Franz), *Judge Jackie: Disorder in the Court* (Kooman/ Dimond – starring Klea Blackhurst), *Nine Wives*, *True Love*, *Georgie* (written by and starring Ed Dixon), *Merrily We Roll Along* (starring Jason Tam, A.J. Shively), *Big River*, *Falsettos*, *Les Miserables*, *They're Playing Our Song* (starring Lauren Marcus, Eric William Morris), *Damn Yankees*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Altar Boyz*, *Rent*, *A Funny Thing...Forum* and *The Wedding Singer*.

A strong supporter of the development of new work, he has commissioned and directed *Love in Hate Nation* (Joe Iconis), *The Last Day* (Mike Reid/ Sarah Schlesinger), and *The*

*Lucky Boy* (Kirsten Childs) through an initiative he created at Penn State Musical Theatre. He has also directed NYC and Regional workshops/ readings/ productions of *For Better, For Worse* (Reed Arnold); *Adam Lives* (Goodspeed Opera House); *ReWrite* (Goodspeed Opera House); *Hellraisers* (Barrington Stage); *Fantasy Football, the Musical*; *All the Kids Are Doing It*; *When the World Ends* (Blaemire- Ars Nova); *Ripper* (NAMT); *Party Come Here* (David Kirshenbaum/ Daniel Goldfarb); *Go-Go Beach* (NYMF – 37 Arts); *Pool Boy* (Tsakalacos/ Allard); *Next Thing You Know* (Berkshire Theatre Festival); *Queen Esther* (Merkin Hall); *Half Married* (Cunningham/ Antin); *Plastic!* (Maddock/ Iconis/ Jacobs - York Theatre), *You Don't Know Jack* (York Theatre), *Bad Kid School* (Barrington Stage), *29* (Alter/ Newman), *Lyrical Langston Hughes* (New Triad- Lincoln Center), *Blood Drive* (Rachel Sheinkin), *Beasts and Saints* (Mindi Dickstein) and *Like You Like It* (Buck/ Acquisto).

In addition to his directing life, John is Head of Musical Theatre at Penn State University. Prior to joining Penn State, he was a member of the faculty at NYU - where he directed *Sweet Smell of Success*, *Floyd Collins*, *A Man of No Importance*, *The Fix*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Violet*, *Urinetown*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *Parade*, *Fiorello!* and *A New Brain*. His production of *Parade* was preserved and is on reserve at Lincoln Center's Theatre on Film and Tape Archive. He holds a Bachelor of Music from Miami University and a Master of Arts from NYU. He is active in NAMT (National Alliance of Musical Theatre), where he is frequently a member of the Festival Reading and Selection Committee.

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