

# SARA BICKWEAT PENNER

(917) 309-7648 – [sara.penner@rochester.edu](mailto:sara.penner@rochester.edu) [www.sarabickweatpenner.com](http://www.sarabickweatpenner.com)

## EDUCATION

2006 **Master of Fine Arts**, The Actors Studio / New School for Drama at New School University, New York, NY (Summa Cum Laude)

- Studied with Arthur Penn, Arthur Storch, Elizabeth Kemp, Ron Leibman, Robert Lupone, Christopher Shinn, Paul Rudd, Nova Thomas and many others.
- Worked in session at The Actors Studio - worked in sessions moderated by Ellen Burstyn, Elizabeth Kemp & Lee Grant

2004 **Bachelor of Fine Arts** in Acting, Music and Dance, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY (Summa Cum Laude)

2001 **Bachelor of Fine Arts Candidate** Music Theatre, Webster University Conservatory of Fine Arts, St. Louis, MO (Provost Scholar)

2024 **Advanced Certification in Intimacy Director for Live Theatre**, Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, NYC

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2022-Present **University of Rochester International Theatre Department**, Senior Lecturer

2018-2022 **University of Rochester**, Lecturer Theatre

2018-Present Movement for the Actor (FA)

Utilizes Alexander Technique, Viewpoints, Mask Work, Laban, Physical Characterization and many other exercises and explorations. Students gain an awareness of their own habits and physical tensions, learn alignment and relaxation techniques, let go of inhibitions and then learn to make physical choices to create diverse and inventive characters. Students learn to read the body language of others and acquire tools to use in their own lives to physically adjust, respond and relate to the world in new ways.

2018-Present The Actor's Voice (SP)

- Linklater based voice class with a focus on freeing the body and voice to create optimum physical and vocal versatility and healthy, free vocal production. The class is student centered and emphasizes ensemble work as well as individual awareness and personal growth.
- Focus on how voice contributes to character work and action. Integrating and applying vocal technique to the text to make full, free, responsive, and specific choices.
- Explore and strengthen speech skills with an introduction to IPA, sound changes, resonance, and intonation. We talk about how all dialects are a combination of physical shape, resonance, and

melodic pattern. Students gain awareness of their own speech and the ability to make choices vocally to adapt to the character and the world of a play and take ownership of the clarity and expressiveness in their speech and interpretation of text.

#### 2022- Present Advanced Acting

- Scene study and text analysis course. This class delves into text analysis, some theatre history, physical characterization, and sensory work. In this audition-only course students with particular interest and some experience work with other dedicated students to build an actor's tool kit to approach a variety of texts and styles and the acting tools facilitate their work.

#### 2023- Present Directing Mentor & Producer of the One Act New Play Festival

#### 2022- Present Consent & Performance

*(Developed as part of the Teaching Innovation Grant awarded 2022-2024)*

- Students learn the history and foundation of consent in performance, power dynamics and how to support a consent-forward rehearsal space. Students explore and practice articulating their own boundaries and receiving the boundaries of their classmates. The course contains guest lecturers in victim lead fight and feminist theory. Students learn boundary practices and create their own consent-forward performances in small groups.

#### 2022- Present Performance Lab (Acting & Voice Coaching)

- Performance Lab are 1-credit "courses" that are attached to individual "mainstage" productions. Their purpose is to provide support for the director of, and the student actors in, the work in production, helping the latter achieve appropriate levels of performance in acting and vocal areas, and providing directors with an added resource to support students who may have limited acting experience or technique (and supporting those actors who have abilities and technique to deepen and enrich their performances).
- The instructor of the performance lab works alongside the director, making sure to support the director's objectives, interpretation, visions and aims, while giving students the additional support and time they might need to realize production performance goals.

#### 2022 & 2024 Devising for The Theatre

- In Fall 2024 through grants from the Office of Community Engagement we created community partnerships where students devised art engagement events at area businesses to collect data and engage with community members about the current election. Students used this research to create a performance piece at the end of the semester.
- Students learn about the tenets of various types of devised theatre.
- Students as an ensemble create their own devised performance piece.

**Eastman School of Music, Institute for Music Leadership, Instructor**

2023 Consent in Performance (Established this Course by Request from ESM Administration, passed it over to Lindsay Warren Baker in SP 2025)

- Students learn about the history and foundation of consent in performance, power dynamics and how to support a consent forward rehearsals and learning spaces.
- Students explore and practice articulating their own boundaries and receiving the boundaries of their classmates.

**2014- 2020 Lecturer of Theatre, Finger Lakes Community College**

Acting I

- Taught Acting Fundamentals, Improvisation, blocking and theatre movement, beginning text analysis and character work.

Acting II

- Taught scene study and text analysis class required for all Theatre majors and elective for other students. This class included more text analysis, physical characterization and sensory work.
- Students studied and explored plays from Classic American, Classical (Shakespeare & Moliere), Ibsen, Chekhov, Absurdist and Contemporary Theatre.

Voice and Diction

- Explored and implemented Linklater voice technique with a focus on freeing the body and voice to create optimum physical and vocal versatility and healthy, free vocal production. The class employed student-centered learning, emphasized ensemble work as well as individual awareness and personal growth.
- IPA (reading and transcription)
- Taught Speech and Diction - Students gained awareness of their own speech habits and choices and the tools to speak in dialects different from their own with clarity and fluency.

**2013- 2023 Writers and Books, SummerWrite**

Shakespeare

- Taught and directed Shakespeare workshops for elementary, middle and high school students. *As You Like It, Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Scottish Play, Richard III, Much Ado About Nothing, The Tempest.*

Devising

- *Let's Play* was a devising and playwriting workshop for students 7-10 years old.

**2017- 2018 Early Childhood Arts Connections**

#### Arts Inclusion Specialist

- Taught Dramatic Arts and Music inclusion to UPK teachers and students in the Rush Henrietta School District.

#### 2012 **Theatre Arts Camp Director, JCC of Greater Rochester**

##### Director of Youth Theatre Programs

- Directed and wrote shows for students K-12 students.
- Hired and trained staff. Ran 6 summer camp sessions, 3 class sessions and 2 vacation camps.
- Taught classes, directed and wrote shows, handled registrations and parent communication.
- Designed the summer program, planned and marketed programs throughout the year.

#### 2011 **The Music Theatre Company, Chicago, IL**

##### Acting Instructor

- Designed and taught Acting and Voice for the Stage classes for elementary, middle and high school students. Covered principles of Viewpoints, physical and vocal characterization, ensemble work, Mask and body-based vocal work.

#### 2006- 2009 **New York Film Academy, New York, NY**

##### Adjunct Voice & Movement Instructor

*(Voice & Movement, Speech, Accent Reduction & Dialects)*

- Developed the first accredited curriculum for First Year Voice and Movement and the Academy's new Advanced Movement course.
- Taught body-based voice and movement. Using Linklater, Alexander Technique, Viewpoints, Mask Work, Laban and Bartenieff fundamentals focused on freeing the body and voice to create optimum physical and vocal versatility and healthy, free vocal production. Employing a student-centered approach, emphasized ensemble work as well as individual awareness and personal growth.
- Organized performance field trips, and school wide trips to the Bodies Exhibit and the Met. Emphasized with students the importance of living in and learning from the world around them.

##### Accent and Diction Coaching

- Coached One on One Accent Coaching with students from all over the world, ages 18 to 60.
- Taught Speech classes dealing with IPA, sound changes, resonance, and intonation.

##### Dialects Instructor

- Taught Dialects to second year students. Using the international resources of fellow students at NYFA, the class taped and musically analyzed the accents of their peers. Focused on learning accents as well as teaching students how to teach themselves in the future.

#### 2007- 2008 **Broadway Bound, New York, NY**

Director & Instructor- Acting, Movement, Dance & Musical Theatre

- Taught & directed private and public school students K-8 in both private and public schools around NYC. Devised, choreographed, and directed shows twice a year for parents and the community.

## CONFERENCES

### 2025 Arts and Change Conference

University of Rochester

- Presenter / Session Co- Leader  
*“Closure Practices and Self Care for Theatre Makers”*

### 2024 Carolyn Bowman Theatre Symposium

Roberts Wesleyan University

- Workshop Presenter & Panel Speaker  
*The Basics of Boundaries & Intimacy Direction Panel*

### 2024 Neighborhood Democracy Conference

University of Rochester & Hobart William Smith College

- Presenter / Session Co- Leader  
*“Creative Practices in Community Engagement”*

### 2024 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF)

- Panel Moderator

*“Making the Leap in Consent Forward Theatre: Preparing today’s students for intimacy in the professional industry”*

### 2023 Eastman School of Music’s Inaugural Context Conference

*“Consent Forward Music Making”* Presentation

## GUEST LECTURES AND PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOPS

### 2024 Geva Theatre Summer Academy

Theatrical Resume Workshop

### 2023 Geva Theatre Summer Academy

Intimacy Director for Live Theatre Workshop

### 2023 SUNY Brockport College

*“Consent- Forward Artist Workshop”*

### 2023 U of R Program of Dance & Movement Faculty Training

*“Creating a Consent- forward Classroom”*

### 2023 National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)

Intimacy Direction Workshop

2022 **Blackfriars Theatre**

“Consent & Intimacy in Theatre” Workshops

2022 **Laurie McFarlane and Dancers**

“Linklater Voice Workshop”

**Research and Creative Activities:**

INTEREST AND SPECIALITIES

1. Direction and Movement Direction
2. Vocal Coaching. Dialect Work
3. Intimacy Direction for Live Theatre
4. Community Engagement through the Arts

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. In partnership with Caitlin Dreisbach, Ph.D., RN, Dr. Nicholas Mercado, and collaborators from Mass General: Informed Consent & Obstetrics: Fostering informed consent and shared decision-making in obstetric nursing with the advancement of artificial intelligence., for the Journal of Maternal and Child Health. The article has been accepted for publication but is not out yet.
2. I am intimacy directing for *Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812* directed by Nigel Maister, Choreographed by Sean Curran and Music Directed by Joseph Janover.
3. In Spring 2025 I am Intimacy Directing *American In Paris*, a partnership between JCC CenterStage and The Rochester City Ballet. I will also serve as French Dialect coach on the production and am starting periodic dialect sessions with the cast next month.
4. In June- July 2025 I will direct *The Secret Garden* at JCC Center Stage. The theatre’s summer musical production.

**GRANTS:**

2024-2025 Community Engagement Course Development Grant

In July 2022, I was awarded a Teaching Innovation Grant from the University of Rochester to bring Intimacy Direction, Consent Forward Theatre Practices, New Course Design on Consent in Performance and Instructional Touch Policies to The University of Rochester’s International Theatre Program. The grant has opened up continued support for intimacy direction across Theatre Program mainstage productions and Eastman Opera productions requiring intimacy work from students. With Penner at the helm the

University of Rochester was the first in our area to invest in consent forward theatre as an integrated part of their program policies and coursework in addition to bringing in intimacy directors in on productions. Since its implementation at UR, consent-forward theatre practices have impacted the work of hundreds of students through syllabus language, faculty and student workshops, incorporating tools into syllabi, performance classes, rehearsals, productions, fittings and stage management training.

2026-28

(Pending) NEA Research in the Arts Grant

Project Title: *Consent ROCs: Bringing Consent Forward Theatre tools Rochester Area High Schools*

Project Summary: We propose to study how the creation and delivery of Consent-Forward Rehearsal Tools through workshops with area high schools shifts when incorporating a participatory design model. We will work with schools to create a curriculum for consent-forward theatre workshops to teach area high school students and directors about consent-based rehearsal practices, tools and the importance of intimacy direction. We will study the difference between schools receiving a “pre-formulated workshop” that we design as a “fits all” model and one designed with collaborative input from the director/ arts educator at the community school. We will randomly select 50% of the participating schools to receive the “pre-formulated” workshop and 50% to receive the modified workshop. We will write about and publish our findings to create a “guide” for others to replicate our work and build an on-going center/ program based at the U or R for Consent and Performance Education in community high schools. This project will engage undergraduate University of Rochester student mentors, faculty at The University of Rochester’s International Theatre Program and Eastman School of Music, 12 in-service high school theatre directors, arts administrators, 200+ high school students from New York State in development, implementation, analysis, and evaluation.

2004

Community Engagement Course Operational Grant

Funded a partnership with guest artist, DeLanna Studi; Cherokee Actor, Playwright, Artistic Director of Native Voices at the Autry, and Advocate and resident Playwright at Geva in my From Scratch: Creating Devised Theatre course to work with students and I on creating our own devised production called “Who Decides?” The project was created based on student research surrounding the upcoming election. Students partnered with area businesses to create arts engagement activities to help register voters and collect data. The final performance was held at 2PM on December 10<sup>th</sup>. We partnered with the Arts and Activism Dance Class taught by Rose Pasquerello- Beauchamp.

2023& 2024 Course Operational Grant, Community Engagement Office University of Rochester: This grant funded a collaboration with The Theatre Program, Ants to Gods Improv Troupe, Frederick Douglass House and our Improvisation course. (AWARDED Fall 2023 and Fall 2024)

2022 Consent Policies and Practices in Theatre Education. Teaching Innovation Grant, University of Rochester (AWARDED) (2022-2024)

## UNIVERSITY SERVICE & COMMITMENTS

- 2024-2025 “Todd Talks” As part of a growing partnership between Geva Theatre Center and the University of Rochester I have created a 5talk series with Literary Manager and Artistic Associate, Fiona Kyle and Playwrights and Theatre Makers on important topics in the contemporary theatre landscape. These include; *Harrison David Rivers: Changing the Lens on Disability with Tiny Tim’s Story in Geva’s A Christmas Carol*, *Xandra Nur Clark: Documentary Theatre Making*, *Rachel Alderman: Long Warf Theatre Co.*, *Vickie Ramirez: Lifting Native Voices*, *Barron Vaughn: Comedy and Contemporary Theatre*.
- 2022-Present Resident Intimacy Director. I intimacy direct all University of Rochester International Theatre Program Mainstage productions. This ranges anywhere from about 12- 40 hours (3-4 shows per academic year) per production and includes director meetings, stage management training, actor calls and check ins, workshops with the cast, choreography rehearsals and some tech and dress rehearsals.
- 2023-Present I mentor/ oversee the One Act New Play Festival. This includes in Fall Semester info meetings, reading play submissions, organizing reading nights, mentoring student stage managers, and assigning student directors. In the Spring it includes mentoring student directors and stage managers, collaborating with Casey McNamara (who mentors student designers), group rehearsals and tech. In Spring 2024 I did this in place of a third 4 credit class. In Spring 2025 I will teach two four credit classes, mentor the festival and intimacy direct the mainstage musical.
- 2024 I volunteered my time to help organize Ayanna Thompson’s visit in October 2024. She is the 2024-2025 Visiting Humanist. I am collaborating with Geva Theatre, Writers and Books, RCSD School of the Arts and Edison Tech to create a Community Engaged event during her visit.  
(This visit is now postponed until 2026)
- 2022-Present I serve as a respondent for The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Region 2
- 2023 Trans and Non-Binary Representation in Theatre and Literature



I organized a lecture for the University Community and the Public with Janet Wurther (They/ Them), Lecturer of Queer Performance Theory to discuss the themes and interpretations of Orlando by Sarah Ruhl, URITIP's then current mainstage production.

2023 & 2024

Ants To Gods Improv Troupe Residency. I wrote a course operational grant to fund a collaboration between Ants To Gods Improv Troupe (a Rochester-based professional all Black improv troupe), Tim Ryan's Improv class and Frederick Douglass Leadership house. After working with Frederick Douglass House in 2022-23 it was important to me that we follow through on our commitment to students in the house to bring arts collaborations to campus that were of interest to them. The students expressed interest in Improvisation, but many could not spare credits to take the four-credit class. I organized bringing the guest artists to campus, workshops at DLH and in the Improv Course and an on-campus performance open to all students.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

### **DIRECTING & INTIMACY DIRECTING**

#### **2025 JCC CenterStage**

Director

➤ *The Secret Garden (Upcoming)*

#### **2025 JCC CenterStage**

Intimacy Director & Dialect Coach

➤ *An American in Paris The Musical*

#### **2025 The University of Rochester International Theatre Program**

Intimacy Director

➤ *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*

#### **2025 The Company Theatre**

Intimacy Director

➤ *MacBeth (Dir. Philip Detrick)*

#### **2024 The University of Rochester International Theatre Program**

Intimacy Director (Dir. Nadia Guavera)

➤ *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

#### **2024 Blackfriars Theatre, The Hourglass Playreading Series**

Director

➤ *Actually*

#### **2024 The University of Rochester International Theatre Program Voice and Acting Coach (Dir. Jo Cattell), Consent Facilitator**

➤ *Oedipus*

**2024 RCP Shakespeare Program**

Intimacy Director (Dir. Kathryn Rebholz)

➤ *Pericles*

**2024 The University of Rochester International Theatre Program**

Intimacy Director & Voice and Acting Coach (Dir. Nigel Maister)

➤ *Othello*

**2024 Blackfriars Theatre**

Intimacy Director (Dir. Carl DelBuono)

➤ *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*

**2024 RCP Shakespeare Program**

Intimacy Director (Dir. David Kensek)

➤ *The Winter's Tale* (Childbirth and Romantic Intimacy)

➤

**2023 The University of Rochester International Theatre Program**

Intimacy Director & Voice and Voice Coach (Dir. Will Pomerantz)

➤ *Orlando*

**2023 The Company Theatre**

Intimacy Director (Dir. Carl DelBuono)

➤ *The Seagull*

**2023 University of Rochester International Theatre Program** Voice & Acting Coach &  
Intimacy/ Movement Director (Dir. Joe Calarco)

➤ *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman

**2023 University of Rochester International Theatre Program** Intimacy

Director (Dir. Vernice Miller)

➤ *The African Company Presents Richard the Third*

**2023 National Technical Institute for The Deaf (NTID)**

Intimacy Director (Dir. Malik Parris)

➤ *Deaf Republic*

**2023 JCC CenterStage**

Consent Forward Theatre Consultant (Dir. Esther Winter)

➤ *Ragtime*

**2022 University of Rochester International Theatre Program**

Acting Coach & Intimacy Director (Dir. Nigel Maister)

➤ *The Crucible*

**2022 Nazareth College**

Intimacy Director (Dir. Hunter Foster)

➤ *Into The Woods*

**2022 RCP Shakespeare in the Park**

Intimacy Director (Dir. Carl DelBuono)

➤ *Antony & Cleopatra*

**2022 GEVA Summer Academy**

Movement Director/ Choreographer

➤ *There's A Place for Us*

**2022 Magical Journey Through Stages**

Director

➤ *Thirteen the Musical*

**2018 Finger Lakes Community College**

Director/Choreographer

➤ *Little Shop of Horrors*

(TANYS Award for Excellence in Production Concept and Execution)

**2017 TYKES/ Hillel School**

Director & Playwright

➤ *The Princess & The Pea* with K-6th grade students

**2016 Fingerlakes Community College**

Director/Choreographer

➤ *Godspell.*

*(This show, featuring a historically diverse cast for FLCC, was the most well attended production in over a decade. We sold more seats than they had tickets printed.)*

**2013-2021 Writers & Books Summer Shakespeare**

Director/ Teaching Artist

Shakespeare performance workshops for elementary, middle and high school students.

➤ *As You Like It, Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Scottish Play, Richard III, Much Ado About Nothing, The Tempest.*

**2012 Candentia Theatre Company, NFP., Chicago, IL**

Director/ Producer

➤ *The Sea* by Mashuq Mushtaq Deen.

**2010 Candentia Theatre Company, NFP., Chicago, IL**

Producer/ Director

➤ *The Spark Project!*

• Produced and directed this new play festival highlighting contemporary writers

from New York and Chicago.

- Cast and coordinated rehearsals for 5 pieces, 4 writers, 10 actors and 3 directors.
- Screened writers and submissions to choose 5 writers with diverse and unique voices. Playwrights included writers of color, a female comedian, a transgender artist and a writer/composer.
- Collaborated with production team on all technical elements including sound, costume, lighting, set design & construction, etc.

2008-2009 **NY Film Academy**, New York, NY

Coach and Collaborative Director

Industry Showcase

- Worked with final semester students creating and preparing for their final industry showcase performance scenes, monologues and films for agents & casting directors.

2006 **Snug Harbor Performing Arts**, New York, NY

Assistant Choreographer/ Dance Captain

➤ SCROOGE

2003 **Adelphi University**, Garden City, NY

Choreographer

➤ *Bat Boy: The Musical*, Directed by Tim O'Donnell

2003 **Adelphi University**, Garden City, NY

Director

➤ *Lessons of My Father* by Catherine Filloux

2002 **Adelphi University**, Garden City, NY

Director

➤ *The Most Massive Woman Wins* by Madeleine George

2002- 2003 **New Dramatists**, New York, NY

Literary and Directing Intern

- Participated in readings and worked with resident directors and playwrights including Melissa Kievman, Lynne Nottage, Christopher Shinn, Dianna Son, Catherine Filloux, Brooke Berman, Neena Beber and many others.

## **VOCAL & DIALECT COACHING**

2023 **University of Rochester's International Theatre Program**

Voice & Dialect Coach

➤ *Orlando* directed by Will Pomerantz

(*Russian, Standard British (RP), Romanian, Cockney*)

2023 **University of Rochester's International Theatre Program**

Voice & Acting Coach

➤ *Metamorphoses*, dir. Joe Calarco

**2023 JCC Center Stage**

Dialect Coach

➤ *Austin's Pride*

(*Standard British (RP), Derbyshire, Irish*)

**2022 University of Rochester's International Theatre Program**

Voice & Acting Coach

➤ *The Crucible*

**2021 Webster Schroeder HS**

Dialect Coach

➤ *Cabaret*

(*Cockney, German & Yiddish*)

**2019 JCC Center Stage**

Dialect Coach

➤ *Survivors, dir. Sandy Henschel*

(*Polish, German, Russian, French*)

**2019 Blackfriars Theatre**

Vocal Coach

➤ *The Undeniable Sound of Right Now, dir. Alexa Scott-Flaherty*

(Vocal Coaching for actors in the show on Vocal Production and Projection.)

**2018 Webster Theatre Guild**

Dialect Coach

➤ *Fiddler On the Roof, dir... J Simmons*

(*Yiddish*)

**RELATED EXPERIENCE**

2010-2012 **Candentia Theatre Company**, Executive Director/ Producer

2003- 2005 **Bravo Network / Inside the Actors Studio**, New York, NY

Head Production Assistant & Network to School Liaison

➤ Facilitated tapings and editing sessions. Handled everything from hosting Elton John's entourage to watching Jennifer Connelly's baby, to editing the bump off Barbara Streisand's nose.