

BESS WELDEN

17 Belfield Street, Portland ME 04103

978-505-9908

besswelden@gmail.com

www.besswelden.com

EDUCATION/TRAINING

National Theater Conservatory, Denver, CO

MFA, Theater Performance, Spring 1994

Playwrights Horizons Theater School/New York University, New York, NY

Acting, Voice, Musical Theater, Winter 1991

Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH

BA, Theater and Judaic/Near Eastern Studies, December 1990

Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

Overseas Student Program, Spring 1989

GRANTS/COMPETITIONS/AWARDS/JURIED RESIDENCIES

- 2021 "Madeleines" finalist, Bay Area Playwrights Festival
- 2021 "Madeleines" semi-finalist, National Jewish Playwriting Contest (Jewish Plays Project)
- 2020 "Death Wings" winner, Maine State Prize, Clauder Competition for NE Playwrights
- 2020 "Refuge Malja" winner, Tel Aviv Jewish Plays Contest
- 2020 Invited Artist - National Winter Playwrights Retreat/HBMG Foundation
- 2020 "Death Wings" finalist, Local Lab 2020, Local Theater Company Boulder, CO
- 2020 Invited Artist - PlayLab Unit, Company One Theatre, Boston
- 2020 "Refuge Malja" finalist, National Jewish Playwriting Contest & Tour (Jewish Plays Project)
- 2020 "Death Wings" semi-finalist, O'Neill Theater Center New Play Conference
- 2019 Maine Arts Commission Artist Project Grant for "Mergirl Saves the Waves"
- 2018 "Refuge/Malja" nominated for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for Women Playwrights
- 2017 Residency at Hewnoaks Artist Colony, Center Lovell, ME for "Refuge/Malja"
- 2017 Maine Humanities Council/Maine Arts Commission Arts & Humanities Grant for "Refuge/Malja"
- 2016 New Show Incubation Residency at the Celebration Barn Theater, South Paris, ME for "Legbala Is A River"
- 2016 "Death Wings" semi-finalist, The Bridge Initiative Playwriting Award
- 2015 & 2016 Maine Arts Commission Artist Project Grants for "Legbala Is A River"
- 2015 Alabama Arts & Humanities Grant for "Magic in the Attic"
- 2013 Puffin Foundation Grant for "Big Mouth Thunder Thighs"
- 2012 & 2013 Maine Arts Commission Artist Project Grants for "Big Mouth Thunder Thighs"
- 2008 ENVISION Retreat produced by Voice & Vision Theater at Bard College for "The Passion of the Hausfrau"

PROFESSIONAL ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

ORIGINAL PROJECTS

Refuge Malja

Writer

Fiercely independent Jewish-American photojournalist Jamie Winter meets refugee kids all the time, but when Waleed, a shoeless boy steps off the boat and in front of her lens, she is suddenly forced to confront her own cultural identity, family history, a complicated past relationship, and the undeniable compulsion to become the boy's rescuer. Arabic translation by Ali Al Mshakeel. Published by Smith Scripts, UK.

Development/Production History:

- LORT World Premiere, Portland Stage, Portland, ME Fall 2018, (Mainstage) director: Kareem Fahmy
- Studio Series Workshop Reading, Portland Stage, Portland, ME January 2018
- Week-long workshop, Little Festival of the Unexpected, Portland Stage, Portland ME May 2017
- Two developmental readings of 30-minute version of the script, Maine Playwrights Festival, Spring 2016

Death Wings

Writer (full length script in development)

Death Wings unfolds over the last 100 minutes of Grand's life - her memories, visions, feelings, and questions that help her discover the five sentences that tell her final story. She's dedicated her life to making wings that she believes helps others die, and to raising her granddaughter Rachel, a scientist who is determined to fly. Full of poetry, songs, and a radical re-visioning of the Daedelus/Icarus myth, Death Wings asks us to marvel at the wonder of flight - real and metaphorical - and the mysteries of human love, connection, loss, and letting go. A monologue from the play is published in The Best Women's Stage Monologues of 2021, Smith & Krauss Publishers.

Development/Production History:

- Workshop & Staged Reading, Fresh Ink Theatre, Boston, MA, Summer/Fall 2019
- Studio Series Workshop Reading, Portland Stage, Portland ME, May 2019
- Three-day developmental workshop at Colby College, October 2017.
- Reading, Real Live Theater in Northampton, MA, March 2017
- Reading, Dramatic Repertory Company, Portland, ME November 2014

Madeleines

Writer (full-length script in development)

Debra, a struggling food writer, has returned to her childhood home in Ohio's rust belt to care for her declining mother Rose, an exacting cookie baker. When Jennifer, Debra's very successful older sister, arrives for Rose's funeral, shared memories and old sibling grievances boil to the surface. As the sisters confront their loss, a startling secret about their mother's most-treasured Passover recipe emerges, which changes everything they thought they knew about their family. Three years later Debra returns triumphant to New York promoting her newly published cookbook-memoir to find Jennifer in a treacherous downward spiral. Spiced with poetry and smatterings of Yiddish and Spanish, Madeleines tells the story of a family of Jewish women grappling with how to love each other through haunted pasts, shared grief, and the solace of baking together. With Spanish translation by Christina Ruiz de Luque.

Development/Production History:

- Workshop & Reading, Colby College, Fall 2021

- Zoom reading, North Shore Readers Theatre, March 2021
- Zoom reading, Maine Playwrights Festival, November 2020
- One-act version, Maine premiere, Portland Stage Studio Series Production, Portland, ME November 2015 director: Ann Tracy

Hausfrau: The Web Series

Co-writer/adaptor, Performer, Producer

Hausfrau: The Web Series is based on the one-woman comedy about the sublime ridiculousness that is being a stay-at-home parent. Embracing the DIY scrappy-style of an early 2000s mommy vlog, this newest version of the Hausfrau harkens back to the original zine, written and illustrated by Nicole Chaison, focusing on misadventure mama stories and hand-drawn (now-animated) cartoons. Seven episodes on YouTube.

Mergirl Saves the Waves

Writer (full-length script in development)

A feminist, environmentalist, slightly futuristic, funny re-imagining of Andersen's classic *The Little Mermaid*. When mergirl Pisces Doris, mostly known as Pi, rescues a human boy from their shared polluted ocean, she not only makes a friend, but also learns what it means to use your voice to make a difference. With three original songs. For youth actors or a multi-generational cast from 10-25+ performers.

Development/Production History:

- Zoom reading with JCompany Youth Theater, San Diego, CA April 2020
- Workshop with A Company of Girls, February 2020
- Two-week development workshop with youth actors, Portland Stage's Theater for Kids, Portland, Summer 2018

The Future Is

Co-writer with Fabiola Decius

In early November 2019 three college students organize to get the first-ever non-binary candidate elected Student Government President. Fast forward exactly one year to the night before the 2020 presidential election, now separated by COVID quarantine each friend grapples with how much they're willing and able to risk to exercise the hard-won right to vote. Originally written for a Zoom production, this small play packed with big questions can also be performed in person.

Production/Development History:

- Commissioned and originally produced by Company One Theatre, Summer 2020, as part of The Great Demand: Confronting the 19th Amendment

Meet Cute Podcast Episodes

Writer

"Under My Skin," an audio rom-com where an older magazine writer getting her first tattoo finds that the artist has left an impression deeper than ink. Released Summer 2020.

"What I Miss Most," a short-form audio rom-com where two seniors in an assisted living facility find unexpected companionship. Released June 2020.

Celebrity Exit

Writer (one-act script in development)

Charlie, a young college professor, plans a marathon writing weekend to meet an overdue publishing deadline, but when a freak storm knocks out all the power, a mysterious phone call leaves everyone contemplating the possibility of communication from the great beyond.

Legbala is a River

Writer/Performer/Producer

A multi-disciplinary performance piece about a woman whose doctor-husband has volunteered to treat Ebola patients in West Africa. It is an intimate, lyrical, and achingly honest tale about marriage, motherhood, commitment, separation, and the tension between public service and personal sacrifice. The script includes a retelling of a traditional West African folktale interspersed with dialogue, poetry, and traditional monologue forms.

Development/Production History:

- Maine Premiere, Mayo Street Arts, Portland, ME June 2017 director: Daniel Burson
- Staged reading, Portland Stage, Portland, ME June 2016
- Reading, Snowlion Repertory Company's PlayLab Program, Portland, ME, Spring 2015

Not Always Happy

Director/Dramaturg

First-time story performer Kari Wagner-Peck can't wait to introduce you to the mighty Thorin, who also happens to be her nine-year-old son. Based on her sassy, irreverent, sometimes angry and often hilarious blog (atypicalson.com) and memoir, "Not Always Happy" is a true life adventure tale about adopting, raising, and loving a kid who lives with Down syndrome.

Development/Production History:

- Developmental readings during PortFringe Theater Festival, June 2017.
- Maine premiere, Portland Stage Studio Series Production, November 2017.

Big Mouth Thunder Thighs

Writer/Performer/Co-Producer

A solo vaudeville about body, food, and the inner critic. The show includes: stand-up comedy, personal narrative/storytelling, country-western singing, flamenco dancing, an Inuit folktale, a series of death-defying acts (one of which includes chocolate cake).

Development/Production History:

- Touring performances at UMaine-Augusta, Colby College, Mad Horse Theater Company, Penobscot Theater 2013-2015
- Maine Premiere, Portland Stage Company Studio Rep, Portland, ME February 2013 director Jennie Hahn
- Staged Reading, PortFringe 2012 director: Jennie Hahn
- Week-long workshop, Little Festival of the Unexpected, Portland Stage, Portland ME May 2012
- Reading, Snowlion Repertory's PlayLab Program, Spring 2012

Magic in the Attic

Writer

A children's theater piece about a modern American sister and brother who magically meet their great-great grandma and learn the art of the Yiddish insult. Based on Eastern European/Yiddish folktales.

Development/Production History:

- Production, JCompany Youth Theater, San Diego CA, November 2020

- Production, Camp Kinderland, Massachusetts, Summer 2017
- Premiere production, Theatre LJCC in Birmingham, AL. June 2015 director: Bess Welden
- Workshop reading, Portland Stage's Theater for Kids, Spring 2012
- Workshop reading, Children's Museum and Theater of Maine, Summer 2012

Eagle Girl

Librettist/Narrator

A multi-media performance piece for narrator, eight musicians and projected illustrations created in collaboration with composer, David Stock and illustrator, Leticia Plate.

Development/Production History:

- World Premiere, Strings Music Festival, Steamboat Springs, CO. August 2011 conductor: David Stock

The Passion of the Hausfrau

Co-writer/Performer

A solo comedy about the hilarious misadventures of a mom who discovers that the roller coaster ride of raising her young kids is actually the path to creating her own masterpiece. Features nearly 100 original cartoon projections drawn by Nicole Chaison, author and illustrator of the graphic novel *The Passion of the Hausfrau, Motherhood Illuminated* published by Villard/Random House.

Development/Production History:

- Over 40 touring performances in Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Minnesota.
- World Premiere, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME March 2009 (Studio Theater) director: Annette Jolles
- Week-long workshop, Little Festival of the Unexpected, Portland Stage, Portland ME May 2008

A Little Miracle

Librettist

A monodrama for mezzo-soprano and symphony about survival during the Holocaust, the mystical bond between three generations of women, and the healing power of music. Collaboration with award-winning composer David Stock,

Development/Production History:

- World Premiere, New York Chamber Symphony, Lincoln Center, NYC, 1999 conductor: Gerard Schwartz
- Recording – Milken Archive/Naxos, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, 2006

The Handshake

Co-Writer/ Performer/Co-Producer

A one-woman play based on the true story of a young American and a Soviet refusnik whose paths miraculously converge in Jerusalem.

Development/Production History:

- Produced in Womenkind VII: The Annual Festival of One-Woman Plays in New York City, 1996. director: Annette Jolles

Keeping the Word

Co-Writer/ Performer/Co-Producer

A one-woman theater piece that explores the role of women in Judaism through folktales from North Africa and the Middle East.

Development/Production History:

- Produced/toured in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Washington DC, Michigan, Massachusetts, and California. 1994-1996 director: Annette Jolles

The Bond

Adaptor/Performer

A one-woman performance piece based on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

Development/Production History:

- Presented at the Denver Center Theater Company/National Theater Conservatory, 1993.
- International Women's Theater Festival, Denver CO, 1994.

PERFORMANCE

PORTLAND STAGE COMPANY

<i>Big Mouth Thunder Thighs</i>	Solo show	Jennie Hahn
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Mrs. Cratchit	Anita Stewart
<i>The Passion of the Hausfrau</i>	Solo show	Annette Jolles
<i>Comedy of Errors</i>	Courtesan	Michael Schwartz
<i>Manifest</i>	Anna/Ella	Christopher Grabowski
<i>Little Festival of the Unexpected</i>	Multiple Roles/6 seasons	

FENIX THEATRE COMPANY (with Dramatic Rep)

<i>A Bright New Boise</i>	Pauline	Keith Powell Beyland
---------------------------	---------	----------------------

DRAMATIC REPERTORY COMPANY

<i>Fabuloso</i>	<i>Sam/Kate</i>	Daniel Burson
<i>False Flag</i>	June	Cait Robinson
<i>Gidion's Knot</i>	Corryn	Cait Robinson
<i>Swimming in the Shallows</i>	Barb	Daniel Burson

FREEMPORT SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

<i>Macbeth</i>	Witch 3	Lon Church
----------------	---------	------------

PORTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRATA

<i>Ellis Island: The Dream of America</i>	Polish Immigrant	Anita Stewart/Robert Moody
---	------------------	----------------------------

MAD HORSE THEATRE COMPANY

<i>The Cryptogram</i>	Donnie	Chris Horton
-----------------------	--------	--------------

THE OPERA HOUSE AT BOOTHBAY

<i>Indoor/Outdoor</i>	Samantha	Daniel Burson
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Viola	Daniel Burson

DENVER CENTER THEATER COMPANY

<i>Mad Forest</i> (NTC rep)	Florina	Christopher Grabowski
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Belinda Crachit	Laird Williamson
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	First Fairy	Laird Williamson
<i>As You Like It</i> (NTC rep)	Adam	Tony Church
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i> (workshop)	Pearl	Jamie Horton

SHAKESPEARE SANTA CRUZ

<i>Pericles</i>	Thaisa/Bawd	Christopher Grabowski
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Maid	Tim Ocel

MONTANA SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKS

<i>Comedy Of Errors</i>	Luciana	Bill Brown
<i>Henry V</i>	Katherine/Boy	Joel Jahnke

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATER FESTIVAL (Act One Company)

<i>Antigone</i>	Ismene	Aimee Michel
<i>The Revenger's Tragedy</i>	Ambitioso	Stephen Bennett
<i>A History Of American Film</i>	Ma Joad/Allison	Steve R. Lawson

MABOU MINES/P.S. 122

<i>The Oldest Profession</i> (workshop)	Maid/Prostitute	Erin B. Mee
---	-----------------	-------------

NEW YORK THEATER WORKSHOP (Just Add Water Festival)

<i>My Agamemnon</i>	Electra/Polixena	Christopher Grabowski
---------------------	------------------	-----------------------

THE HANGAR THEATER (Lab Company)

<i>Whirligig</i>	Michelle	Erica Gould
<i>Something Borrowed Something Blue</i>	The Bride	David Bucknam

TEACHING EXPERIENCE**Colby College, Waterville, ME**

Lecturer	Introduction to Playing Character & Action, Fall 2020 Introduction to Scene Study, Spring 2021 Beginning Playwriting, Fall 2020 The Confident and Connected Voice, Fall 2010-2017 Unlocking Shakespeare (Acting), Spring 2011 British Dialect Scene Study, Spring 2012-2017, Fall 2018 Shakespeare's Supernatural, Spring 2014 Acting Shakespeare: Conflict & Combat, Spring 2016, Fall 2019 The Actor Prepares, Spring 2018, Spring 2020
Visiting Assistant Professor	Directing I, Spring 2019 Acting 2, Spring 2019 Beginning Playwriting, Fall 2019
Guest Actor	Halvard Solness in <i>The Master Builder</i> , November 2016 Rachel Carson in <i>In the Garden of Live Flowers</i> , April 2016
Guest Director	Mainstage production of <i>Tartuffe</i> , Spring 2012 Mainstage production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , Jan/Plan 2015

Jan Plan Faculty
Solo Performance Intensive, JanPlan 2012
Standard British Stage Dialect Intensive, JanPlan 2014
Activist Storytelling Workshop Intensive: "The Passion Project,"
JanPlan 2018, 2019

Guest Artist
Voice/dialect workshops and coaching for faculty-directed productions,
2007-present
Workshop presenter for New Play Practicum, Winter 2009

Independent Workshops/Classes/Residencies, Portland, ME

Workshop designer/facilitator
Your Inner Critic As Character, 2013-present
Voice/Public Speaking for Adults, 2015-present
The Big Mouth Collective Residency, Summer 2015
with A Company of Girls

University of Southern Maine, Gorham, Maine

Adjunct Instructor
Acting II: Stage Voice, Fall 2005/Spring 2006

Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

Adjunct Instructor of Drama
The Actor's Voice, 1997-2000

Guest Artist
Solo Performance Workshop Series, Winter 1998
Workshop presenter for Intro Theater course, 1997-2000

Dialect/Audition Coach
Dialect coaching for department productions. One-on-one sessions with
students auditioning for summer and graduate programs, 1997-2000

School for Film and Television, New York, NY

Instructor of Voice & Speech
First-year voice and speech classes in a two-year conservatory
program, Fall 1999/Spring and Summer 2000

Powerhouse Theatre Training Program/NY Stage & Film, Poughkeepsie, NY

Instructor of Voice
Weekly vocal production classes in intensive summer training
program at Vassar College, Summer 1999

University of California, Santa Cruz, CA

Guest Artist
Text/speech workshop for a course on acting Shakespeare,
Summer 1996

Stern College - Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Guest Instructor
Workshops on storytelling, text adaptation, and creative drama
for an oral interpretation course, Fall 1994 and 1996

Kent State University, Kent, OH

Guest Artist

Storytelling and text interpretation workshop for a movement class for actors, Spring 1995

Portland High School Shakespeare Club, Portland, ME

Co-director

Ninety-minute version of *Much Ado About Nothing* with student actors, Fall 2015

Freeport Shakespeare Festival, Freeport, ME

Guest Director/Adaptor

Sixty-minute version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with student actors, Summer 2010

Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME

Director

Affiliate Artist reading events, 2004 - present
Play Me a Story programs for Theater for Kids, 2009-2018

Teaching Artist

Week-long acting courses, 2005 – 2018
Text/movement workshops for Theater for Kids, 2009-2018

Dialect Coach

Mainstage and Studio Theater productions: *Manifest, Arcadia, Hallowed Ground, Intimate Apparel, Fully Committed, The SantaLand Diaries, The 39 Steps*

Mad Horse Theatre Company, Portland, ME

Dialect Coach

The History Boys, Spring 2009

Acorn Productions, Westbrook, ME

Guest Artist

Stage voice master class for students enrolled in a year-long acting Shakespeare course, Fall 2010

Teaching Artist

Voice for the Stage Masterclass series, Your Inner Critic As Character Workshop, Winter/Spring 2017
Shakespeare Conservatory, Fall 2017

NON-PROFIT ADMINISTRATION

Executive & Artistic Director

Maine Jewish Film Festival – Portland, ME

2002-2006

Responsible for all administrative and programming aspects of this small non-profit whose major activity is the production of a 10-day film event at multiple venues in downtown Portland. Planned and implemented a comprehensive development program including an annual campaign for individual donors, corporate sponsorships and grant writing. Created all publicity copy and collaborated with designers to develop marketing materials including print and website. Recruited and coordinated over 100 volunteers involved in film selection, essay writing, brochure distribution, ushering, etc. Worked

observance. Worked with adults in the congregation to develop social action activities and recruit volunteer participants.

Program Officer/Asst. to the Executive Director

The Covenant Foundation - New York, NY

1994-1997

Grant proposal coordinator/evaluator for non-profit that makes national grants to innovative projects in Jewish education as well as awards to individual Jewish educators. Helped with planning and execution of the foundation's annual Covenant Awards Luncheon at various venues in NYC.

SERVICE

- Board of Directors, Dramatic Repertory Company, Portland ME
2017 - present
- Theater Advisory Committee, Childrens Museum & Theatre of Maine, Portland ME
2019 - present
- Volunteer, In Her Presence, Portland, ME
2020 - present
- Volunteer, The Locker Project, Portland, ME
2017 - present
- Volunteer, Olympia Snow Women's Leadership Institute, Portland, ME
2018 - present
- Advisory Committee Member, Theater Ensemble of Color, Portland, ME
2016 - 2018