

Utah Performing Arts Fellowship Juror Statement 2022

Kevin R. Free

New York-based Multidisciplinary Artist, Actor, Writer, Director, and Producer

I had no idea that I would love Utah artists as much as I now do. What a vibrant world of artists: proposals from mundane to arcane to profane to insane; artists at the beginning of their careers; artists looking to sustain their middle careers; artists who are veterans of the Utah theater scene.

The common thread of each application was community - creating it, supporting it, sustaining it. After learning about an artist, I would find that that same artist had written a letter of recommendation for another artist who had applied for the fellowship. I was most impressed by this, as community is what I have sought to create in New York City, where there seems to be so many of us competing for the same very small piece of the pie. I found myself wanting to see shows at many of the places about which I learned: Plan B, Good Company, Salt Lake Acting Company and more. I am so honored by and grateful for and envious of them all. Think of these words as my official 'thank you' to them all for sharing their artistry and their community with me.

Penelope Marantz Caywood will write a book about her process of creating original musicals with children, and she will publish the work written by her students. And I will be the first to buy all of it. I wish I were her student to have been a part of the brave space she creates.

Re-establishing her roots in Utah, Shenelle explores worlds in which Latinx characters are visible, even in the 19th century. I found myself thinking about her work long after I stopped listening to her songs. One song begs us, "Don't Forget Me." As if we ever could.

I am excited by Camille Washington's work because it is non-linear. She makes plays that respond to the current moment, but doesn't follow "the script" in the way we expect. We read the news through her eyes, not knowing exactly where we are in it, but knowing, like when we enter any contemporary art exhibit, that there will be an exit - but not until the work washes over us and we feel changed or intrigued by it.

Mitsu Salmon makes performance art disguised as lectures. A newcomer to Utah, she wants to use the fellowship to support the work of other Utah artists. She is not a traditional theater artist, but the stories she tells, using her personal history as a loom to weave the stories of collective history and memory, are universal.

Kelsie Jepsen wants us all to show up for ourselves. As a theater practitioner who has gained weight and lost weight based on what I thought my career demanded, I wish I had taken the class she will teach with the fellowship funds years ago.

I am inspired by Teresa Sanderson's tenacity, talent, and artistry. As I researched every applicant, and the theaters who hired them, I saw her name everywhere. When I saw her name on this application, I was so pleased - not only because I loved her application, but also because I knew I would enjoy learning about her! Ms. Sanderson Knows where the bodies are buried and knows how to bring them all to life.