

## **Dr. John Zibell, PhD, MFA [He/Him]**

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*Director (film, theatre, and mixed-media), practitioner/scholar researching and training in devising as embodied practice, performance artist, filmmaker, and conservatory-trained actor.*

### **CURRENT POSITION**

**Lecturer in Film Production (Directing, Devising Cinema, Final Film Projects)**, The University of Salford, England. Teach BA and MA students, PaR, practical filmmaking, embodied filmmaking, specializing in devising and directing. Developed and launched MA in Film Production (First Cohort 2022)

### **EDUCATION**

PhD **University of California, Davis**, Performance Studies (Theatre and Dance, Cinema & Digital Media), Designated Emphasis in Practice as Research (PaR), June 2018

**“In Preparation: Training for Acting or Training to Play on the Digitized Body in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”**

Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli (chair), Lynette Hunter, Kris Fallon, Tarek Elhaik

MFA **UC Davis**, Theatre and Dance, Spring 2011

Directing (Focus on Postdramatic Theatre, Embodied Media, and Devised Performance)

BA The University of Connecticut, English/Communications, June 1988

The New Actors Workshop, New York, June 1993

Two-year professional acting conservatory graduate

Trained with Mike Nichols, Paul Sills, and George Morrison

### **RESEARCH AREAS**

Devising as decolonial practice; Embodiments, Theatricality, and Cinema; collaboration; image/representation/picture; the digital camera as dis-unified body; body as ecology and as archive; spatiality and the ‘not-knowing’; instrumentalization of the body and propaganda; Exhaustion and the *physical action*; the event, the Film/Video Essay.

### **SELECTED FILMMAKING EXPERIENCE**

#### **Feature Films**

*Sex & Violence* (2001, MiniDV)

Devised, directed, and edited award-winning independent feature film shot on location in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Winner Best Directorial Debut and Audience Award at New York International Indie Film Festival. Also acted in the film.

*Laughing River* (1998, 16mm)

Wrote, directed, and acted in independent feature film shot on location in Connecticut. Also supervised post-production.

## Shorts, Docs

Urban Box Office/Indie Planet - Director/Producer 2000-01. Developed and directed more than 20 mini-docs, artist profiles, and marketing packages for an internet startup founded by Motown's George Jackson and Adam Kidron. Also produced, supervised post production and was one of the leads on the development team for a long form cable series.

*Ōta's Elements in Bogota.* Short documentary film on the 2017 UC Davis production of Ōta Shōgo's play *Elements* for the Bogota production of the play in 2018. Internally funded by UC Davis and connected to (Re)Sounding Bodies: A Research Symposium held in Davis.

*Traditional Movement for Relieving Psychological Stress Among Immigrants.* Short documentary for Interdisciplinary Frontiers for the Humanities and the Arts (IFHA) for the American Medical Association Website.

*Classroom in Motion.* Short documentary on ESL programs for the Rhode Island Socio-Economic Development Corporation for Southeast Asians (SEDC).

## SELECTED PRACTICE AS RESEARCH (PaR) PERFORMANCES, FILMS, AND INSTALLATIONS

### Director

**Victim Capital and GeologyEcology: Victim Capital II, The McLaughlin Fires, 2018-present.**

Ongoing research/performance collaboration with international artists (UK, US, Argentina, Colombia) around devising with the camera and non-hierarchical organizational structures. Iterations of the workshop/collaboration have been held in London at Greenwich University, at The University of Salford, and The McLaughlin Natural Reserve in Lower Lake, California.

**Glitch-body & Nanostalgia, UC Davis, April 2015.** Designed and facilitated a week-long collaborative mixed media workshop with internationally acclaimed Performance Artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Funding by the Davis Humanities Innovation Lab, Mellon Research Initiative in Digital Cultures, Interdisciplinary Frontiers in the Humanities and the Arts (IFHA) Cluster on Gamification, and the UC Davis ModLab.

**Scoring Beckett, UC Davis, May 2014.** (conceived, devised, directed) a multimedia, mixed-reality performance project developed in collaboration with an international company of trans-disciplinary players (dancers, actors, improvisers, and computer scientists) using an immersive virtual reality environment, the UC Davis KeckCAVES. Funded by the Davis ModLab, the DHI and the IFHA Cluster on Gamification.

**The Moby-Dick Variations, The Mondavi Center, Vanderhoef Studio Theatre, May 2011.**

Conceptualized and directed mixed-media, poly-vocal performance installation devised with the company, based on Melville's novel.

### Deviser/Collaborator

**Unstories I and II, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, September 2017 and UC Davis, June 2018**

Two-year collaboration with a multi-national, trans-disciplinary company of artist/scholars using *Affective Devising* – a research, writing, and theatrical methodology developed by anthropologist Cristiana Giordano and theatre director Greg Pierotti.

**Listening to the Earth II/Temporality, Museum of Art and History, Santa Cruz, May 2012.**

Collaborated on a 14-hour environmental performance art installation occupying the first floor of the MAH featuring artists Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle; Thingamajigs performance group with poet Stephen Ratcliff; Nita Little; Kevin O'Connor; and Duskin Drum.

**Membrane, 2012.** Land-based Dance film shot in the Santa Cruz mountains with choreographer Nita Little. Director, cinematography, collaborated on some of the script/dance scores with Little.

**The Matter of Taste, Wyatt Theater, UC Davis, May 2010.** Assistant director/video projection designer/player. Unique devised performance and food event employing first-person narrative storytelling, live music, food tastings, and live cooking as part of the performance.

**Corpo Ilicito: The Post-Human Society 6.9, SOMArts, San Francisco, August 2009.** Collaboration with Guillermo Gómez-Peña and La Pocha Nostra on a week-long workshop to develop a Multi- and Mixed media performance installation around hybrid identities, non-binary thought and “queering the image.”

## SELECTED THEATER

**Elements** by Ōta Shōgo (director, Peter Lichtenfels) *Teatro Vreve, Bogotá, Colombia, Sept 2018.* Done in conjunction with an international symposium funded by the Institute for Exploration in Theatre, Dance and Performance (ITDP) and the Davis Humanities Institute (DHI).

**Romeo and Juliet, UC Davis, March 2016.** Co-director. A new take on the so-called ‘world’s greatest love story,’ calling forward the subtext of disillusioned youth in conflict with hierarchy and authority in proto-capitalist economies.

**Plastic Rose, Edinburgh Fringe, August 2014.** Director of Experimental Projection Technologies, also acted in a leading role. (Directed by Peter Lichtenfels). Developed and devised live-feed Google Glass installation and conceived and directed video projections for Ōta Shōgo’s play.

**Come Hell and High Water, UC Davis Mainstage, February 2011.** Cinematographer and collaborated on projection design on the piece written and directed by Dominique Serrand (Tony Award-winning Artistic Director of Theatre de la Jeune Lune, and The Moving Company).

**Gallathea, UC Davis Main Stage, November 2010.** Co-Director/Projection Design, (directed by Peter Lichtenfels). Trained and choreographed players generating live feed projections during John Lyly’s precursor and possible source for Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Funded by the ITDP.

**A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Wyatt Theater, UC Davis, February, 2010.** Directed and acted in mixed media theatrical interrogation of gender and identity in a free adaptation of Shakespeare’s “fairy romp” done with a 6-person cast.

**On The Line, Cherry Lane Theater, April 2006.** Originated the role of Jimmy Patraglia in Joe Roland’s off-Broadway play, produced by Mike Nichols and Bob Boyette.

## PUBLICATIONS

Journal Issue: Co-editor (with Lynette Hunter, Heather Nolan, and Alex Lichtenfels) *Copresence with the Camera*, published in *Performance Matters* May/June 2020. Edited collection of peer-reviewed articles and interviews on Practice as Research in cinema.

“Action with Camera: Making the Future Audience Present” (with Heather Nolan). *Performance Matters*, Vol 6. No1, June 2020. <https://performancematters-thejournal.com/index.php/pm/article/view/263>

## **In preparation**

“Special Operations: Combat and Non-combat modes of warfare in Ukraine (working title).” Trans disciplinary Project on propaganda as it relates to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Co-creating with a colleague in Terrorism Studies (for security reasons they have requested to work on the project anonymously) a series of articles and a video essay on western and Russian propaganda systems and the instrumentalization of the body. Intending to submit to: *International Security, World Politics, European Journal of International Relations* as well as *Performance Matters*.

*The Corpse of War: Thought Images and Bodies in Control*. A Devised Video Essay currently in development on the body-as-medium for propagation of images. Based on research and practices developed for “Special Operations” articles above.

“Devising and Decolonial Pedagogies”. Article on horizontal structures in collaborative work developed from the research done during and alongside of the series of devising for cinema workshops (above).

“Technicity’s ‘lure’: Pulling theatre technology into process in a production of Ōta Shōgo’s *Elements*” (with Dr. Lynette Hunter and Peter Lichtenfels). Under consideration at *International Theatre Research*.

## **CONFERENCES (PRESENTER)**

“No-Motion as *bodied* Method.” **Performance Studies Graduate Student Symposium: Methods, Making & Madness**, UC Davis, October 2018

“Eye, Camera, Rhizome” in collaboration with Heather Nolan. PaR film and performance lecture developed and presented multiple times over a series of colloquia titled **Co-presence with Camera** and at **Visual Practices: Practice as Research in Film, Video and Intermedial Visual Arts**, UC Davis, 2016

“The Appropriated: Beckett and Critical Training.” **Performance Studies Graduate Student Symposium: Practicing Bodies, Performing Ecologies**, UC Davis, October 2015

“Beckett’s Bodies: Tech, Appropriation and the ‘Not-knowing’ in Scoring Beckett”. **The Art of Appropriation Colloquium**, UC Davis, March 2014

“Scoring Beckett: Emergence, Exhaustion, and Event.” **DHI Studies in Performance and Practice Research Cluster Symposium: The Art of Appropriation**. March 2014

“Present Formulation Part One: Ghost and Trace in Beckett’s ‘Footfalls.’” **PFS Graduate Student Symposium: Praxis, Performance, Document**, UC Davis, October 2013

“Haunt: Dance for 3 bodies and 2 cameras,” (with Emelie Mahdavian and Kevin O’Connor). **PFS Graduate Student Symposium: Praxis, Performance, Document**, UC Davis, October 2013

“Passion for the Real.” **Performance and Social Change Symposium**, UC Davis Performance Studies, December 2011

“Me Generation: Body Cartographies” PaR performance. **Interdisciplinary Graduate Professional Symposium**, UC Davis, April 2011

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

**Design and Development of MA in Film Production** (First Cohort 2022). On a small team that wrote the curriculum, gained university and academic approval for, and launched the Practice as Research Masters' Program

**International Exchange Coordinator** (University of Salford Film Production). Facilitator for study abroad students in Film Production. Liaison between students and the partner institution. Collaboration with students on their course selection as well as developing their pedagogical and creative aims for their studies while in the host country.

**Lead on Decolonizing the Curriculum Working Group** (Film Directorate). Collaborated on research and fact-finding about various international decolonizing initiatives in higher education and elsewhere. Developed a philosophical framework for the collaboration. Assembled the first draft of the report back to the film directorate and provided collaborative editing strategies.

**Mentor on MA** (University of Salford). Mentor for three graduate students (2021-22). Providing support and guidance to students around development of their research agendas and strategies to integrate them into practical filmmaking work.

**Co-Organizer, PFS Symposium: Methods, Making, & Madness**, October 2018  
Co-wrote call for papers, programmed, and coordinated logistics for this 2-day, annual UC Davis symposium for graduate students and affiliated faculty.

**Graduate Organizer** (with Dr. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli), *The Art of Appropriation*, March 2014  
Two-day academic conference at UC Davis, funded by Davis Humanities Institute Studies in Performance and Practice as Research Cluster and The Center for Science and Innovation Studies. The conference brought together legal scholars with visual media scholars and practitioners to discuss the relevance of appropriation to public culture and the arts.

**Co-Organizer, PFS Symposium: Praxis, Performance, Document**, October 2013  
Co-wrote call for papers, programmed panel discussions, curated performances and films, and coordinated logistics.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Salford University, UK – Film Production**

**Lecturer** – Equivalent to Assistant Professor in the US

### MA Level

**Collaboration and Co-creation (Devising for Cinema) – Module Leader, Lecturer**, Spring 2022  
Designed, wrote the specs for, and delivered this advanced MA-level Practice as Research course using embodied and devising practices inviting students to reimagine theoretical, organizational, and creative aspects of small-scale filmmaking at industry standard levels.

### BA Level

**Directing Fiction (Upper Division Undergrad – Module Lead, Lecturer)**: Fall 2019, 2020, 2021  
Rewrote the specs and pedagogy for this upper division directing module designed to foreground narrative and story as tools for critical thinking around wider social contexts into which student directors situate their work.

**Final Film Project Prep (Upper Division Undergrad – Lecturer):** Fall 2019, 2020, 2021  
Module Prepares students to undertake individual and group tasks for the craft role they will assume on their final films through the development of the film’s pitch and an individual practice as research project and portfolio.

**Final Film Project (Upper Division Undergrad – Lecturer):** Spring 2020, 2021, 2022  
Supervised several crews each year during the students’ final trimester in the production of a high quality short film that is the culmination of their degree work.

**Producing and Directing (Upper Division Undergrad – Module Lead, Lecturer)** Spring 2020, 2021

Exploration of the collaborative practices of the producer/director relationship in the service of cinematic storytelling. Students also explore aspects of innovative pitching, distribution, and exhibition strategies.

**University of California, Davis –** Departments of Theatre and Dance, Cinema and Digital Media, Technoculture Studies, and Film Studies 2010 – 2019

### **Associate Instructor (AI)**

**Foundations of Filmmaking,** Summer 2019

Introductory undergraduate lower division film/media making course focusing on the craft, techniques, and processes around camera, sound, and lighting. Special focus on collaboration within a single-camera work flow.

**Epic Television: Another “Golden Age” of TV?** Spring 2019. Upper division undergraduate course focusing on key critical debates in post-broadcast television studies. Students trained in close reading and “thick description” for written critical analysis directed toward serial TV forms and their cultural implications.

**Understanding Performance: Contemporary Theatre, Dance, Film and Performance Art,** Fall 2013, ‘17, ‘18

Developed PaR course with Dr. Lynette Hunter. Assembled games, exercises, and flip activities to engage embodied practices of knowledge-making through performance in various media and genres. Strong focus on trans-cultural media and performance.

**Theatre, Performance and Culture,** Spring 2018

Introductory survey course with strong PaR component exploring methods and practices for performance in various settings and media.

**Acting For Camera,** Winter 2016 – upper division, cross-disciplinary course taught in conjunction with *Small-Scale Film Production* (below).

Taught film craft and industry practices to directors and actors – modifying (at the level of scripting, shooting, and editing) for skeleton crews. Trained directors and actors in industrial work-flows – actors train to think like directors and vice versa for collaboration across disciplinary boundaries.

**Acting for Non-majors,** taught and co-taught 5 times 2009 – 2018

Taught scene study and close-reading of scripts for various media – focused on TV, Film, and Theatre. Used improvisation and devising practices to introduce students to acting as an embodied interrogation of social and cultural forms.

**Media/Theatre,** Winter 2013, and Spring 2014

Upper division undergraduate course that I redesigned to focus on media-production as embodied practice for those behind and in front of the camera. Students produced three

mixed-media performance pieces from script to final presentation. Workflows involved design/scripting, capture, edit, and often projection design.

**Advanced Acting Intensive (Realism), Summer 2009**

Upper division course practicing with Stanislavski's Physical Action, a later development of his which is largely left out of US translations of his work.

**Advanced Acting Intensive (Non-Realism), Summer 2009**

Upper division course on "physical theatre" built on Jerzy Grotowski's plastiques and various US devising practices.

**Graduate Instructor / Teaching Assistant (TA)**

**Small-Scale Film Production** (with Keith Wilson), Winter 2016

Taught collaboration, industry practices and production workflows to upper division undergraduate cinematographers, directors, and actors.

**Media/Theatre** (with Prof. Ellen Bromberg), Spring 2013

Upper division course focusing on projection mapping for dance and non-realist theatrical productions and performance art.

**Introduction to Film** (with Prof. Sheldon Lu), Winter 2013

Introductory survey course on contemporary world cinema.

**Theatre, Performance and Culture** (with Prof. Jon Rossini), Fall 2012

Introductory survey course exploring methods and practices for performance in various settings and media.

**Technoculture and the Popular Imagination** (with Prof. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli), Fall 2012

Introductory course tracing AI and biotechnology through the scientific imaginary – from 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism to the present.

**Principles of Directing** (with Susannah Martin), Winter 2011

Introduction to directing for the theatre with a focus on staging, scene analysis, and composition.

**Principles of Directing, Acting for Camera** (with Prof. Sarah Pia Anderson), Spring 2010

Upper division and MFA course that puts actors behind and in front of the camera to train in production processes from story boarding to picture lock and basic sound editing.

**Workshops and Other Teaching / Training Experience**

**Yolo-Foster and Kinship Care**, Woodland Community College, July 2018

Media workshops for youth and young adults living with foster families or in group homes. Focuses on the self-portrait, critical making practices, and media fluency. Funded by University of California Humanities Research Initiative, Yolo County Health and Human Services, and Performance Studies UC Davis.

**Devising Workshop (Film)**, Greenwich University, London, January 2018-Ongoing

Collaborative workshop for actors and filmmakers. Draws on embodied theatrical devising strategies and the flexibility of digital tech to foster better conversations between filmmakers and actors. With Dr. Alex Lichtenfels. Resulted in the short film, *Victim Capital*.

**Home School Community Devising/Theatrical Workshop**, 2017-2019

Developed and conducted weekly theatre, collaboration, and story-telling workshops with a diverse group of home school students ages 7-17. Space donated by Performance Studies, UC Davis.

**Professional Acting Coach, New York City, 2005**

Coached Actor and Pulitzer-Prize-Winning Playwright Ayad Akhtar during preparation/shooting for his leading role in the Indie Spirit Award Nominated film *The War Within*. 2005

**Foundations of Theatre Games and Improvisation, New Actors' Workshop, New York City, 1994-1996**

Introduction to the improvisation training of Viola Spolin, Keith Johnstone, Del Close and others for professional actors.

**Theatre Games for Young Players, Blue Circle Theatre Co.**

Taught free community workshops based on Viola Spolin's Theatre Games for children ages 7-12 alongside Spolin's son, director Paul Sills – Sturgeon Bay, WI Summer of 1993

**AWARDS**

Granada Award for Teaching Excellence and Dedication to Students, Department of Theatre and Dance, UC Davis, 2011

Best Directorial Debut, NY International Indie Film and Video Festival for *Sex & Violence*  
Audience Award, NY International Indie Film and Video Festival for *Sex & Violence*

**FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS**

University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI) Emerging Humanities Grant, for media workshops with Yolo-county Foster Care Youth. Lynette Hunter, PI. 2018

Provost Dissertation Year Fellowship, UC Davis, 2015

Margrit Mondavi Summer Research Fellowship, UC Davis – to fund research into performances with camera drones. Summer 2015

Interdisciplinary Frontiers in the Humanities and Arts (IFHA) Cluster on Gamification Fellow, UC Davis. Academic Year 2014

Mellon Research Initiative in Digital Cultures Summer Fellowship, UC Davis – to fund PaR work on *Scoring Beckett*. Summer 2014