

Don Shandrow

Professional Biography

Don Shandrow is a national award-winning theatre producer, actor, and the co-founder and Executive Artistic Director of the Coalescence Theatre Project. Renowned for their championing of equity-focused narratives, community organizing, and digital media innovations, they have spent decades shaping the cultural landscape of Illinois.

Artistic Leadership & World Premieres

- **New Play Development:** Shandrow is an accomplished producer of new works, having spearheaded several prominent world premieres. Notable premiere productions under their leadership include #notacult , Walking With My Ancestors, So You Think You Can Stay, and Measure of a Man.
- **Collaborative Productions:** Demonstrating a deep commitment to playwright-centric collaboration, they recently co-produced the world premiere of Measure of a Man alongside its playwright, India Nicole Burton, So You Think You Can Stay with playwright Ariel Cippola, Walking with My Ancestors: Cape Coart Castle with Playwright Ama Ofiriwaa Aduonum, and #notacult with playwright Kate Brennan.
- **Coalescence Theatre Project:** As co-founder and artistic director, they steer a mission-driven company dedicated to amplifying historically marginalized and unheard voices, focusing strictly on works by BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and women playwrights. Under their leadership, the theatre expanded its regional reach to establish a footprint in Chicago, and recently joined the National New Play Network (NNPN) as a member theater.
- **National Recognition:** In 2019, Shandrow collaborated with playwright Ama Oforwaa Aduonum to adapt her TED Talk into a fully realized stage play. This critical success earned Coalescence a selection as one of only 12 theatres nationwide invited to showcase at the National AACTFest.
- **Digital Media & Virtual Theatre Pioneer:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, Shandrow placed Coalescence at the cutting edge of digital performance by producing ten full virtual productions. This initiative successfully cultivated a national audience and earned a 2021 Young-Howze Award nomination for Best Drama presented virtually.
- **Theatrical Ecosystem Cultivation:** A cornerstone of the regional theatre community, Shandrow has lent their foundational leadership to the establishment of multiple arts institutions, including the Heartland Theatre Company and Illinois Voices Theatre. They also serve as an artistic producer for THEAPPS, an online performance salon.

Interdisciplinary Interventions & Child Welfare Advocacy

- **Standardized Client Simulations:** Expanding their theatrical expertise into vital social services, Shandrow established a pioneering program with the Illinois State University School of Social Work. Under a comprehensive statewide contract, they recruit, train, and supervise professional actors for standardized client simulations, providing crucial experiential learning for child welfare professionals.

Board Governance & Community Advocacy

- **Illinois Theatre Association (ITA):** Shandrow is a past board member of the Illinois Theatre Association, where they held vital governance roles as the Community Theatre Representative, Executive Committee member, and a strategist on the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Culture Committee.
- **Humanitarian Honors:** In 2020, the Bloomington Human Relations Commission presented them with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award, recognizing their profound community impact and dedication to dismantling systemic oppression through the arts.

Education & Professional Affiliations

- **Academic Credentials:** They hold a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from Pacific Lutheran University and a Master's degree in Theatre from Illinois State University.
- **Guild Affiliations:** Shandrow maintains active professional membership in the Dramatists Guild of America.