

Ariya I. Hawkins

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Facilitator, performer, and accessibility-centered arts educator with extensive experience designing and leading inclusive theatre-based programming for youth, educators, and cultural institutions. I specialize in sensory-aware practice, embodied facilitation, and audience engagement, creating structured yet dynamic learning environments across classrooms, museums, conferences, and professional development settings. My work bridges performance and pedagogy, equipping educators and communities with practical tools for accessibility, equity, and meaningful artistic participation. Recognized for clear structure, relational warmth and grounded presence, and high-impact facilitation across diverse audiences.

FACILITATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Racial Healing Practitioner

July 2020 - Present

TRHT Greater Chicago, Chicago, IL (Remote)

- Facilitate racial healing circles using somatic, embodiment, and restorative tools
- Develop facilitator guides and session structures; maintain circle documentation
- Support Chicagoans and community organizations in navigating racial trauma and healing

MCA Learning Series, Guest Artist/Facilitator – “Accessibility in the Arts Classroom”

Museum of Contemporary Art

February 2026

- Designed and led a 2-hour professional development workshop for Illinois arts educators, session eligible for ISBE professional development credits through host institution
- Delivered interactive training on sensory-aware lesson planning, embodied facilitation, and inclusive arts practice
- Facilitated discussion and applied exercises for 30+ educators (50+ RSVPs)
- Recognized for structured design, clarity, grounded facilitation style and participant engagement

Workshop Co-Facilitator - Sensory Integration for Teaching Artists

Still Point Theatre Collective, Inaugural Applied Theatre Festival March 2025

- Co-designed and facilitated an interactive workshop for theatre educators on sensory processing and embodied accessibility practices
- Led participants through applied sensory integration exercises and contextualized the role of all eight sensory systems in arts education
- Provided practical frameworks for supporting interoceptive, proprioceptive, and vestibular regulation in classroom and rehearsal settings

Guest Artist – Accessibility in Theatre Education

University of Illinois Chicago

October 2024

- Delivered a lecture and facilitated demonstrations of accessibility-centered practices for learners with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)
- Promoted and held discussions on accessibility-centered theatre pedagogy for undergraduate and graduate arts students

Panelist – Teaching Artist Pathways & Mentorship

Northwestern University

November 2024

- Participated in a professional panel addressing teaching styles, mentorship models, and sustainable arts education careers
- Demonstrated applied classroom techniques and contextualized their pedagogical purpose

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT & MODERATION

The Enormous Crocodile, Student Matinee Host & Panel Moderator

Pemberley Productions / The Studebaker Theatre

February 2026

- Deliver scripted pre-show framing for student matinee audiences
- Facilitate post-show discussions, guiding youth toward deeper artistic analysis and production literacy
- Translate student curiosity into structured dialogue about design, puppetry, literary adaptations, collaboration, and storytelling
- Serve as a public-facing representative of the production and venue

LEAF, Performer & Student Matinee Moderator

Lifeline Theatre, KidSeries

February-March 2025

- Moderating post-show discussions for student matinee audiences, guiding youth towards social emotional learning (SEL) competencies such as empathy, inclusion, and relationship building
- Performed in KidSeries production and moderated post-show discussions for student matinee audiences
- Guided Grades K-3 students toward social-emotional learning competencies including empathy, inclusion, and relationship-building
- Contextualized adaptation, design, and performance elements (costume, set, puppetry, shadow work) to deepen artistic literacy

TEACHING ARTIST EXPERIENCE & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Chicago Children's Theatre

August 2022 - Present

- Teach drama and arts programming across CPS; design sensory-integrated curriculum
- Design and adapt curriculum to support sensory-integrated and accessibility-centered programming
- Support The Red Kite Project for students with autism and developmental disabilities
- Provide 1:1 student support, and coordinate classroom needs with school and program staff

Goodman Theatre

January 2023 - Present

- Teach choreography, music, and performance through Disney Musicals in Schools
- Mentor CPS teachers in building sustainable drama programs

Chicago Shakespeare Theater

September 2024 - Present

- Teach in the SLAM program, facilitating devised Shakespeare adaptations
- Mentor teachers and support youth in text analysis and performance creation

South Chicago Dance Theatre

August 2022 - Present

- Provide theatre/drama instruction to 400+ CPS students, Pre-K through 8
- Lead culturally responsive lessons centering Black & Brown youth experiences

A.B.L.E. Ensemble

August 2024 - December 2025

- Co-facilitate theatre and film creation with adults with Down Syndrome and IDD
- Develop rehearsals integrating improv, devising, movement, and ensemble-building

Congo Square Theatre Company

October 2023 - May 2025

- Design a multidisciplinary residency curriculum (poetry, movement, drama, SEL)
- Support storytelling techniques through a culturally grounded lens

Olney Theatre Center – National Players

June 2021 - June 2022

Olney, MD/ Nationwide

- Lead workshops in Acting, Movement, Improv, Voice, and trauma-informed practices
- Teach students with incarceration histories, adults with disabilities, and youth

ADMINISTRATIVE & FRONT-OF-HOUSE EXPERIENCE

Front Of House/Box Office Employee

June 2022 - December 2022

Theater Wit, Chicago, IL

- Process an average of 95-400 ticket sales per week, in-person and over the phone using box office software
- Manage patron inquiries and resolve issues with tact, professionalism and efficiency
- Facilitate transactions, troubleshoot system errors, and maintain accurate financial records

Company Manager

June 2021 - June 2022

Olney Theatre Center - National Players, Olney MD/ Nationwide

- Manage schedules, itineraries, weekly meetings, and cross-team communication for a team of 14 actors and staff members, along with over 55 venue partners and organizations
- Track expenses, complete reports, and coordinate travel logistics for a rigorous national tour spanning 49 cities over a 6-month period

Engager/Crowd Gatherer

November 2023 - Present

LiveMarketing, Evanston, IL

- Represent major brands, direct attendees to sales reps and meetings, address questions and inquiries
- Streamline communication between customers, reception teams, sales staff, and colleagues

Staff Assistant

Millikin University, School of Education, Decatur IL

November 2017 - May 2018

- Organize student records, create spreadsheets, and maintain filing systems

Head House Manager

February 2018 - March 2020

Kirkland Fine Arts Center, Decatur, IL

- Supervise, train, and schedule team of 27 employees hosting up to 1,900 patrons per performance
- Coordinate FOH operations with box office and backstage staff, ensuring safety and customer satisfaction

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING & CONTINUED EDUCATION

(upcoming) TYA/USA Conference & Festival 2026 - Alliance Theatre, 2026

Co-Creating Theatre for the Very Young - Ellie Levine & Jamal Howard, 2026

Intro to Hunter Heartbeat Method, from Kelly Hunter - Flute Theatre x Chicago Children's Theatre, 2026

Anti-Adultism: From Theory to Practice to Play! - Filament Theatre, 2024 & 2026

Free Street Theatre Workshop - Devising, found materials, joyful justice, 2025

ABLE Ensemble: ASL Crash Course - Introduction to ASL, Deaf culture and history, 2025

Chicago Children's Theatre PD Series - Sensory learning, lesson planning, music integration, 2025

Red Kite Training Program - Comprehensive training in accessibility for Teaching Artists of Color, 2022

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre, Magna Cum Laude 2016-2020
Millikin University, Decatur, IL

Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts) 2012-2016

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Teaching & Pedagogy • SEL Frameworks • Embodiment & Somatics • Accessibility & Inclusion • Youth Mentorship • Curriculum Development • Workshop Facilitation • Arts Administration • Event Coordination • Community Engagement • Microsoft Office • Google Workspace • Basic ASL • CRM Systems • Sensory-Informed Teaching • Teamwork • Adaptability • Communication • Leadership • Emotional Intelligence • Problem Solving • Creativity