

## **Biography**

James Vesce is a director, musical director, composer, and sound designer. He has directed community-based, university, and professional theater, including works in New York at the International Fringe Festival and the Kraine Theater, in Boston at the Strand Theatre, the Institute for Contemporary Art, the Lyric Stage, the World Trade Center, and the Shubert Theater, and at New WORLD Theater. His musical work has been performed by Notorio Dance Company in New York venues including the International Dance Festival at the Duke on 42nd Street, Joyce Soho, and The Kitchen and at Jacob's Pillow in Beckett, Massachusetts. He has also composed music featured at First Night Boston, New WORLD Theater, and the National Black Theatre Festival.

James was co-founder and Artistic Director of the Dimock Street Voices, a multicultural inner-city performing arts company in Boston. Over a period of eight years the Voices created and performed over twenty-eight new or restaged classic works and musicals from the multicultural canon. Much of that work was devoted to voicing many of the social and cultural concerns in Boston's neighborhoods, particularly youth and gang violence, substance abuse, and the concerns of youth-at-risk. The Voices also built collaborative associations with many local institutions, including the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the City of Boston, the Strand Theatre, the University of Massachusetts College at Amherst, the Harvard School of Public Health, the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, the Massachusetts College of Art, and Roxbury Community College.

Its training program graduated a number of artists now working as professionals in the performing arts. The original work of the Dimock Street Voices integrated performing arts, public health, and community-based cultural programming into its mission. James also served for two years as the Artistic Director of Lyric Stage's Neighborhood Theatre, primarily but not exclusively a high-school and college-aged performing arts company.

In 2001, James created Twilight Repertory Company, a multicultural performing arts company based in Charlotte, North Carolina. Originally known as City Voices, it was conceived as an outreach program to provide theatrical training and performance opportunities for underrepresented area youth and included partnerships with the Charlotte Area Health Education Center, Fighting Back, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and the Afro-American Cultural Center. In 2004, Twilight Rep established itself as a multicultural performing arts company committed to the presentation of underrepresented theatrical and dance forms, new work from playwrights of color, and deconstructed plays from the multicultural repertory. Its inaugural production, *Simple Thoughts*, based on the Langston Hughes character Jesse B. Semple, debuted at the Connelly Theatre in New York as part of the 2004 New York International Fringe Festival.

Twilight Rep has developed three other new works: *empty*, a dance/theater piece based on the myth of Echo and Narcissus by New York-based artist Joe Salvatore; *The Move*, a play based on Mexican playwright Vicente Leñero's *La Mudanza*; and *Requiem for New Orleans: A Hip Hop Eulogy*, a compelling piece which recalls the social and political events immediately before, during,

and after Hurricane Katrina. Requiem premiered in New York at the Actor's Playhouse in August 2006.

Vesce's areas of interest and expertise include postmodern theater and performance, the direction and creation of new and experimental work in theater and musical theater, and community-based performance. His work frequently explores the visual boundaries between theater performance and design and movement and is evidenced in many of his previous productions - from classic works like Antigone and Romeo and Juliet to innovative and topical works like the politically charged *The Roots of Coincidence*, *Street Song: The Rhythms of Langston Hughes* (described critically as a visionary piece), and most recently *The Tempest*.

James is presently Associate Professor of Directing and Chair of the Department of Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is an associate member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), a Respondent for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF), and a member of both the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) and the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC). He holds a BA from Loyola University, an MTS from Harvard Divinity School, and an MFA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.