

**RESUME**  
**MARY JANE PORIES, M.A.T.**  
**Actors' Equity Association**  
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**I. PROFILE**

Experienced, entrepreneurial, and innovative storyteller interested in moving audiences to greater empathy by causing them to laugh, cry, gasp, and fall in love with characters facing ordinary and extraordinary challenges. Previous work experience includes writing, producing, directing, and performing in short films, stage plays, and sketch comedy shows along with years of teaching and owning a business. Specific skills include meeting deadlines, research, problem-solving, communication, creativity, collaboration, budgeting, and project management.

**II. WRITING EXPERIENCE**

**Noteworthy Residencies and Classes**

February 2021 – Associate Artist, Writing Residency at Atlantic Center for the Arts, with Master Writer Randall Silvis, best-selling novelist, playwright, essayist, and screenwriter. A Senior Fulbright Fellow, and Pabst Endowed Chair for Master Writers, Silvis' awards include the prestigious Drue Heinz Literature Prize, three National Playwrights Showcase Awards, and two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts.

October 2020 – class in the art of memoir with Carol Rottman, Ph.D. A regular contributor to various periodicals, her book, *Writers in the Spirit*, received acclaim from Former President Jimmy Carter.

February 2019 – Associate Artist, Writing Residency at Atlantic Center for the Arts, with Master Writer Bonnie Jo Campbell. A recipient of the AWP prize for short fiction, Campbell has been awarded a Pushcart Prize, was a finalist for the 2009 National Book Award in Fiction, and her novel, *Once Upon a River*, is now a feature film.

August 2019 - Big Apple Writers Workshop in conjunction with Jim Levine, of the Levine Greenberg Rostan Literary Agency, Global Applied Improv Network.

March 2012 - Writing Workshop with Alan Zweibel.

**Published and/or Produced Works**

- Nonfiction book, *Yes, And! Harnessing the Power of Improvisation to Transform your Life and Work*
- One-woman show *Epiphany 3:29 a.m.* (writer/director/producer/actor)
- Ten-minute play, *Catch Phrase*, for 24-Hour Theater (writer)
- *The Homestretch*, full-length award-winning documentary (associate producer)
- *Seven Passages*, Play and Film (devising team member/actor)
- Innumerable corporate and public sketch comedy shows (writer/director/producer/performer)
- One-act play, *Lakefront Property*, Winner of the Ben Franklin Playwright Contest (writer/director)
- Five full-length mainstage shows for *The Second City – Detroit* (writer, actor)
- Short Film
  - *United Way Campaign* - stop motion animation (writer/producer)
  - *My Friendly Companion* – single shot in two-parts for Herman Miller product launch (writer/director/videographer/actor)
  - *Vocation Quest* – for area college (writer/director/producer)
  - *Film Fest 7* for ABC Detroit (writer/actor)

### **Writers Groups**

- Active participant of Grand Rapids Writers Group for close to twenty year attending bimonthly meeting, retreats, and workshops.
- Regular attendee in local opportunities with area colleges and universities, Festival of Faith and Writing, Great Lakes Commonwealth of Letters, Crazy Wisdom Poetry Circle, and more.

### **III. TEACHING**

High School – Courses in Creative Writing, Film, Literature (American, British, World)  
College/University - Improvisational Storytelling, Speech, Design Thinking Using Applied Improvisation

### **IV. EDUCATION**

M.A.T., Calvin University, 1984

B.A., English and Art, Calvin University, 1978

### **V: ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE**

#### **President, Fishladder Inc., 1999 - present**

Workshops, coaching, keynotes, and customized shows using applied improvisational techniques to equip leaders and their teams to navigate change. As Founder and President, Mary Jane has been repeatedly recognized for her contributions to the field and success with local, national, and international clients.

As CEO of a small business, Mary Jane also served as COO and CFO with responsibilities to design, develop, market, sell, and deliver all Fishladder Inc. services.

### **VI. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Numerous Workshops in Plein Air, Oil, and Watercolor Painting  
Diversity Workshops including Cultural Quotient Assessment and Training, Congregations Organizing for Racial Reconciliation, Book studies including *Waking Up White*, *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome*  
Design Thinking, Stanford University - D School, One-Day Seminar Fall 2012  
Process Improvement, Standardize-By-Design, August - December 2012  
Business Coach, Goss and Company, L.L.C., 2009  
Sales Training, Integrated Sales Solutions, L.L.C., 2010  
Leadership Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Class of 2008  
Mind Your Own Business, Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women, 1999

### **VII. PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Major change initiatives for General Motors, Amway, Steelcase, Herman Miller, Gentex, and Butterball Farms among other companies – wrote and performed customized sketch comedy.

NeoCon International Furniture Design Show – wrote and performed character sketches to showcase the Herman Miller Aeron chair.

Orlando Trade Show – wrote, directed, and performed sketch comedy to showcase innovations in technology for Polyvision.

Steelcase Sales Convention – wrote, directed, and performed sketch comedy to an audience of approximately 2,000 global sales personnel and dealers.

Herman Miller Product Launch – wrote, directed, and performed a short film, several sketches, and trainings for the Mirra Chair Launch. Performances held in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago.

Herman Miller Product Launch – wrote, directed, and performed for product launch of the Cella Chair in Chicago at the House of Blues for the national sales team.

## VIII. LICENSES / CERTIFICATION

Actors Equity Member since 1998

Licensed Distributor Inscape DiSC

Teaching Certificate

## IX. PUBLICATIONS / PAPERS

Make A Mess TEDx style talk, Applied Improv Network Global Conference, Oxford, England Summer 2016

Nonfiction Book, *Yes, And! Harnessing the Power of Improvisation to Transform your Life and Work*, Fishladder Press, ISBN 978-009859017-0-7, 2015.

Applied Improviser Caught Playing with Standardized Assessment: The Shocking Truth, Break Out Session, Applied Improv Global Conference, Austin, TX Fall 2014

Quit Winging It: Improvise! TEDx style talk, Applied Improv Network Global Conference, San Francisco, CA, Fall 2012

The Impact of Improvisation on Culture, Break-Out Session, Applied Improv Network Global Conference, Baltimore, MD, Spring 2011

All promotional materials and content for workshops, coaching, keynotes and shows for Fishladder Inc. including workbooks, handouts, curriculum design and delivery, quick reference guides, key learning cards, etc. from 1999 - present.

From Gefilte Fish to Banket, Spark Magazine, 2002

Sketch material for Fishschtick comedy shows and all Fishladder corporate shows, 1999 - present.

Sketch material for mainstage performances at *The Second City* – Detroit, 1997-1999

Various articles and illustrations as Assistant Editor/Art Director for TOUCH Magazine, 1979 - 1983

## X. AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Ernst & Young, Finalist for the Entrepreneur of the Year Award, 2013

GR Business Journal Top Area Corporate Training Companies, numerous years

Top Women-Owned Business Finalist, GR Business Journal, 2009

Silver Townie Award, Best Improv Troupe, 2003 - 2006

Business of the Year, Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women, 2003

Neighborhood Business Award: Best Reuse of a Building, 2002

Shaker Heights High School, Hall of Fame, Awarded 2002

Neighborhood Business Award: Best Response to an Idea or Need, 2001

Actors' Theatre Ben Franklin Award, best original play *Lakefront Property*, 1999

## XV. NOTEWORTHY PERFORMANCES

*The Second City – Detroit* (writer, mainstage cast member with Keegan Michael-Key, Larry Joe Campbell, and Marc Evan Jackson, among others. Guests included Horatio Sans and Bob Saget

*The Second City* – Chicago, Anniversary Shows

### Film/TV

*Seven Passages* – Full-length play and film (devising team member/writer/actor)

*The Sandwich Days* - Independent Film (actor)

*The Gospel According to Roy* - Independent Film (actor)

*Living with the Fosters* - Independent Film (actor)

*Vocation Quest* - Short Film (writer/director/ producer/actor)

*Film Fest 7* Television Show with *The Second City* (writer/actor)

*Graduation Day*, Film for Calvin College (actor)

*Eh J.J. Show*, Vision Television, Toronto (actor)

**Regional Theater**

*LaughFest* from 2010 – present (stand-up, storytelling, improv, and sketch performances including appearances with Martin Short, Alan Zweibel, and Kevin Nealon among others)

*Epiphany 3:28 a.m.* - Original one-woman show (writer/director/producer/actor)

*The Government Inspector* (Osip)

*Tony and Tina's Wedding* (Sister Albert Maria)

*Kindertransport* (Helga)

*Tartuffe* (Dorine)

*Madrigal Dinner shows* (Court Jester)

*Harvey* (Maid)

*Robbie Burns Birthday Party* (Jenny Clow)

*The God of Isaac* (Chaya)

*No Frills Review* (Company)

*Lost in Yonkers* (Aunt Gert)

*Actor's Nightmare* (Ellen Terry)

*The Mystery Cycle* (Eve, Company)

*Rhinoceros* (Waitress)

**XVI. VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

Ally for CirclesUSA – a community program to end poverty

Anti-Racism Committee at Neland Christian Reformed Church

Board Member, Applied Improv Network

LaughFest, Gilda's Club Creative Team Member

Cyndi Lauper True Colors Youth Homelessness Project Team Member

Board Member, Heartside Ministries

GEMS Girls Club Counselor

Interfaith Hospitality Network

Grand Rapids River Clean Up

Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women

**XVII. SKILLS / INTERESTS**

Writing

Visual Art

Sailing/Kayaking

Environmental and Sustainability Issues

Travel

Politics