

# PRE-SHOW / POST-SHOW

WITH

# MINDY COOPER

UC DAVIS



## ***I became a director/choreographer because...***

in part because I grew up in a family that loved theatre. My mom directed the high school musical, my dad designed and built the sets, and it was easier to bring me along than get a sitter. I have distinct and wonderful memories of playing in prop boxes and having a blast, learning every song and step and nuance, and being in awe of how interesting everything was.

I began my professional career in ballet companies at 18, and when I was feeling stifled years later, I reconnected to a time when I couldn't wait to get my driver's license. That independence meant the privacy to drive and roll up windows and sing every show tune I loved, loudly! I segued to Broadway as a dancer and became immersed in this new storytelling, using so much more than bodies. I assisted everyone in the Broadway community I could because I missed process, which had been such an integral part of dance company life. Assisting and being a dance captain on Broadway and Off-Broadway was an amazing learning experience. And I realized one day that my own ideas were potent and I needed to follow my instincts and create my own work.

## ***The best thing about working on a college campus is...***

tapping into a unique creative energy, unlike any other I've known. UC Davis is a large campus in a small town. It's an incubation/think tank, full of forward-thinking, broad-minded intellectuals. I love the collaborative nature of interdepartmental ideas and the cross-pollination we can create. I also love the young and potent mindset of the brainiac undergrads. They bring so much to the proverbial table. I have these amazing double majors in my classes and productions who teach *me* so much about the world and areas of expertise I know little about. It's truly refreshing to work with a student who is full-throttle passion and watch their skills develop and grow. It's also important to me that I feel I'm training the next generation of theatre lovers—the folks who will take this passion for theatre and become donors and doers and door-openers.

## ***As a director, I am drawn to scripts that...***

hit nerves, make us think, make us feel. Why remount the same old, same old? I love the challenge of breathing new life into something tried-and-true—and also the challenge of a new script that has so much to offer and yet needs structural work to clarify its messages. I run a new works festival, Ground and Field Theatre Festival, dedicated to cultivating new theatre voices and pieces. With hundreds of submissions each year to read, you hone the skills of finding writing that grabs you and makes you care. I am drawn to the ones where I find myself letting the teapot boil, the cellphone ding, and the dog bark just so I can see how the scene plays out. I love to learn from a script, voyage into parts unknown, and come out the other end richer and alert.

## ***One of my favorite courses I teach is...***

a comedy class. I have always relied on a sense of humor in life, through ups and downs, healthy years and cancer years. I love the foundation a deep-rooted sense of humor can bring. And so I developed a comedy class for today's actor, with large dollops of history and envelope-pushing from long ago, that teaches students to create humor aurally, physically, and visually—from the roots of radio shows and slapstick to a tight 10-minute set. I love how it informs and empowers them as actors.

## ***I balance my work and creative life by...***

embracing the chaos! I have twin teenagers, live on two coasts, teach at a Research 1 institute, and continue to direct professionally all over the country. I love what I do, which helps! My superpower is managing time well. And I love how projects and life feed each other. I turn the cacophony into my own personal symphony for life. **sx**

As a director, choreographer, and performer in the Broadway/Off-Broadway community for over 30 years, **MINDY COOPER's** passion for new works has always steered her career. Broadway: *Chicago* (original revival cast); *Titanic* (original cast); *Dracula, The Musical* (choreographer); *Wrong Mountain* (choreographer); *Beauty and the Beast*; *Song & Dance*; and *Tenderloin*. Off-Broadway directing and choreographing: *50 Shades! The Musical Parody*, *The Eternal Space*, *Mars/Venus Live*, *Soul Doctor*, *Five Course Love*, *Hoi Polloi* (world premiere of a lost Noël Coward work), *Being Seen* (FringeNYC), *Deployed* (NYMF), and multiple *Broadway by the Years* (Town Hall). Readings and commissions: *My Friend Hafiz*, *Still Will Be Heard* (Peak Performances), *Mothers* (NNPN), *Mojave*, *Social Life: The Musical*, *Hysterical* (GFTF), *American Monkey*. Mindy's regional work has won several BATCC awards, including Best Director and Best Choreographer. She is Co-Founder/Director of Ground and Field Theatre Festival ([groundandfield.com](http://groundandfield.com)), a national new works festival at UC Davis, where she is a professor.