

Timothy A. McDonald

Bio

Tim McDonald is going to make the world a better place through musical theatre.

A respected playwright and leader in education, Tim started iTheatrics to help communities create more ways for students to experience the transformative power of the arts. In less than two years, the company has already designed innovative products and educational experiences for a distinguished list of clients including the Jim Henson Company, leading theatrical licensor Music Theatre International (MTI), Disney Theatricals and MacMillan/McGraw-Hill publishing.

In 1997 Tim was recruited by MTI CEO Freddie Gershon to create and develop the first educational division in a major musical theatre licensing firm. For ten years Tim supervised, wrote or developed every show – over 30 titles – in MTI’s educational division. He worked side-by-side with theatrical greats (including Cameron Mackintosh, Stephen Sondheim, Arthur Laurents, Stephen Flaherty, Lynn Ahrens, Stephen Schwartz and Sheldon Harnick) to create age-appropriate versions of classic musicals such as *Les Misérables*, *Annie*, Meredith Willson’s *The Music Man* and *Into the Woods* for students to perform, along with corresponding educational materials. While at MTI, Tim also teamed with Disney Theatricals to adapt eight beloved Disney animation titles – including *Aladdin*, *The Jungle Book*, *Cinderella* and *Mulan* – for the stage, virtually creating the “direct to licensing” musical theatre market.

These productions have since set the standard for educational licensing in the industry. By the time Tim left to form iTheatrics (with Freddie’s blessing), the company was celebrating that over two million students had been part of a MTI Education production.

Tim further solidified his reputation as a playwright through his work on the musical *Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka*, co-writing the book with Leslie Bricusse and adapting the score from the film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* by Leslie and Anthony Newley. The premiere production set attendance records at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and went on a three-year national tour, which included a special command performance for the President and First Lady at the White House. Tim was invited back to the Kennedy Center to direct *The Phantom Tollbooth* in the fall of 2007; the production enjoyed rave reviews and sold-out shows.

Tim is continuing to define the educational theater market by creating new musicals for children. He wrote the books for *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley* (currently on tour across the U.S.), the new show *Frankly Ben*, and *The Ant and the Elephant* (also currently on tour across the U.S.). Tim is also developing a stage version of the classic *James and the Giant Peach*, which will

be performed with the prestigious Pilobolus Dance Company as well as *Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas*.

Sustaining the youth theater movement also requires recognizing students and teachers for their efforts. Tim and his team continue to create exciting experiences that celebrate kids on-stage and backstage. He helms a bi-annual national junior theater festival in Atlanta that draws together thousands of teachers and students from all over the country. iTheatrics' New York City–based Junior Theater Academy offers serious students a taste of the joys and demands of the professional performing arts world.

Tim saw an opportunity to raise the bar of theater presented to young audiences at performing arts centers across the country and, in partnership with Stephen Gabriel at IntraMusic Theatricals, directed and developed four new touring shows: *Broadway Junior on Tour*, *Disney's Discover Theater*, *Frankly Ben*, *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley* and *The Ant and The Elephant*.

Guided by the principle that education has very little to do with age, Tim continues to be a fierce advocate for educators. From his early days at MTI he has worked to design materials and create professional development seminars that give any teacher anywhere the tools necessary to put on a show in their community. He has been invited to give presentations for leading organizations including the Music Educators National Conference, the National Alliance of Elementary School Principals, the National PTA and the National Alliance of Music Theater. [In a time when the teacher wellness is becoming more and more of a concern to our school communities, each iTheatrics product or experience for educators is designed to engage and revive teacher's creative spirit.](#)

Tim wrote his first of many musicals when he was growing up in Northern California. These early productions usually starred his sister and the neighborhood kids and featured a score of whatever pop music was available in sheet music form. (One might call them the original jukebox musicals, but this was long before the term was coined.) Many bedsheets were sacrificed for curtains, many curtains became costumes, and a good time was generally had by all.

Tim earned his BA and Masters in music from Chico State University. After college, Tim and many of those very same neighborhood kids formed their own light opera company, the Chico City Light Opera (CCLO). They learned their craft the old-fashioned way: by presenting show after show with Tim serving as producer, sometimes director, sometimes performer, and often selling tickets, fixing toilets and taking out the trash when necessary. In his six-year tenure as the group's executive director, Tim directed 100 musicals. He also served as a freelance director and won multiple Annie Awards and West Coast Drama Desk nominations for his San Francisco Bay Area musical productions, including *Hair*, Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, *Into the Woods* and the West Coast premiere

of Stephen Sondheim's *Passion*.

For more information check out TimothyAMcDonald.com or iTheatrics.com.