

# SAMI H. ISMAT

737 Ridge Ave, Evanston, IL 60202  
(224) 432 - 4544 | [sami.h.ismat@gmail.com](mailto:sami.h.ismat@gmail.com) | [www.samiismat.com](http://www.samiismat.com) | [Linkedin](#)

## EDUCATION

### **Master of Fine Arts in Studio: Performance Art**

**School of the Art Institute of Chicago**, Chicago, IL

*Institute of International Education Fund (IIE) Scholarship for Syrian Students.*

*Graduate Admissions Incentive Scholarship.*

### **Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Directing with Merit, East 15 Acting School**

**University of Essex**, United Kingdom

*Said Foundation Scholarship*

### **Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication (concentration on film & theatre)**

**American University of Sharjah**, United Arab Emirates

*H.H. Sheikh Sultan III bin Mubammad Al-Qasimi - Cultural Office Scholarship.*

*Dean's Honorary List 2012, 2013*

*Chancellor's Honor Student Year 2012/13*

## SELECTED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

- Sojourn Summer Institute (online), Goodman Theatre, Chicago, IL, 2021
- Directors Lab Chicago, Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago, IL, 2018
- Sojourn Summer Institute, Goodman Theatre, Chicago, IL, 2018
- Rude Mechs devised theatre workshop, The Neofuturists, Chicago, IL, 2018
- Intensive Residency for Directing at Russian Academy of Dramatic Arts (GITIS), Moscow, Russia, 2015

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Reserve Team Head Coach**, [Edgewater Castle Football Club](#) – Chicago, IL Dec. 2020 – Present

**Senate Member**, Graduate Student Senate (School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2019-2020)

## PUBLISHED WRITINGS

Ismat, Sami, “Deconstructing Myths via Performance Strategies: Experiences of a Contemporary Practitioner.” [Deconstructing the Myths of Islamic Art, London](#): Routledge, March 21, 2022

## EXHIBITIONS/PERFORMANCES/PROJECTS

2021 *Lemon & Oil*, film, *Pivot Arts Festival*, Pivot Arts

2020 *Transfixed*, Online video, *Peacebook Online*, Collaboration and *Is It a Good Time?*, Mana Contemporary  
*Veni, Vedi, Vici*, Immersive Performance, The Future of Our Plans SAIC Graduate Exhibition

2019 *The Syrian Refugee Art Studio*, Performance & Exhibition, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

*Every Time I Step Towards Freedom*, Painting and Performance, Dfbrl8r Art Gallery - Zhou B Arts Center  
*Road to Asylum*, Installation, Open Studios 2019 School of The Art Institute of Chicago  
*Pyrophones*, Group Performance with Ensemble of Abandoned Practices, School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
*Sitting in Our Lap & Plucking Our Beards*, Street Performance & Protest, State St.-Chicago Loop  
*New Normal*, Performance in collaboration with Jonas Becker, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago  
*Atlas Unlimited: Entr'acte*, Lecture Performance in Collaboration with Karthik Pandian & Andros Zins-Browne, Graham Foundation  
*Atlas Unlimited*, Performance & Exhibition, Karthik Pandian & Andros Zins-Browne, Logan Center for Arts

2018 *By a Shore Rests a Body*, Performance and Sculpture made in collaboration with Armin Hayerpatian & Divyamann Sahoo, New Blood Festival/Links Hall

### **THEATRE DIRECTING EXPERIENCE**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Playwright/Deviser</b>	<b>Producer/Venue</b>
<i>Sabra: Art to be Interpreted</i>	Sami Ismat & Martin Zebari	Columbia College Chicago/Zoom
<i>Picnic Summit</i>	Sami Ismat	Collaboration
<i>Human Trash</i>	Sami Ismat	Rough House Theatre/Links Hall
<i>Real News</i>	Sami Ismat	HOMESSET Series
<i>Frivolous Dabke</i>	Sami Ismat	Collaboration/Art Institute of Chicago
<i>Ghosts of Freedom</i> (Workshop production)	Sami Ismat	Trellis Residency/Greenhouse Theatre Center
<i>Finding a Loving Motherland</i>	Sami Ismat	Collaboration
<i>Mibbaj</i>	Riad Ismat	Stratford East, London
<i>Hypocrisy of Bureaucracy</i>	Sami Ismat	East 15 Acting School
<i>Top Girls</i>	Caryl Churchill	East 15 Acting School
<i>Nature is Beauty</i>	Sami Ismat & Ensemble	East 15 Acting School
<i>Crossing the Border</i>	Sami Ismat	East 15 Acting School
<i>The Pillowman</i>	Martin McDonagh	East 15 Acting School
<i>Jerusalem</i>	Jez Butterworth	East 15 Acting School
<i>The Seagull</i>	Anton Chekhov	Russian Academy of Arts (GITIS)
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	William Shakespeare	East 15 Acting School

### **ASSISTING DIRECING EXPERIENCE**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Producer/Venue</b>
<i>Lady In Denmark</i>	Chay Yew	Goodman Theatre
<i>They</i>	Beata Pilch	Trap Door Theatre
<i>Henry IV Part 1</i>	Shiru Wang	East 15 Acting School
<i>Welcome to Thebes</i>	Rikki Henry	Corbett Theatre
<i>Our Country's Good</i>	Sarah Ullman	East 15 Acting School
<i>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</i>	Tim Sandifer	Corbett Theatre
<i>Fear &amp; Misery of the Third Reich</i>	Stephen Unwin	Tristan Bates Theatre
<i>A Mid Summer Night's Dream</i>	Vong Pak	East 15 Acting School

*The Tempest*

Sean O'Brien

East 15 Acting School

### **DIRECTED STAGED READINGS**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Playwright/Deviser</b>	<b>Producer/Venue</b>
<i>Uzbek</i>	Talgat Batalov & Yekaterina Bondarenko	Silk Road Rising
<i>No More Tears to Shed the Future is Gone</i>	Sami Ismat	MPAACT/Greenhouse Theatre Center
<i>Her Grave of Flowers</i>	Sami Ismat	Muslim Writers Collective/ The Frontier – Jackalope
<i>Pureland</i>	Mehdi Moradpour	Silk Road Rising/Goethe- Institute Chicago

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

*\*denotes online or hybrid course*

<b>Lead Teaching Artist (Community Actors Program)   Arts + Public Life at UChicago Arts</b>	October 2021
<b>Adjunct Faculty in Theatre Studies   DePaul University</b> Courses Taught: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Dramatic Theory</i></li></ul>	January 2022
<b>Adjunct Faculty in Theatre   Columbia College Chicago</b> Courses Taught: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Topics in Performance &amp; Representation: Conflict in Performance</i></li><li>• <i>Directing I*</i></li><li>• <i>Traditions of World Theatre*</i></li><li>• <i>Global Drama*</i></li></ul>	Fall 2020 – Present
<b>Graduate Teaching Assistant   The School of The Art Institute of Chicago</b>	2018-2020
<b>Performance Department</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Re.Abandoned Practices - Summer Performance Institute*</i> – Matthew Goulish, Lin Hixson &amp; Mark Jeffery</li><li>• <i>Becoming Imperceptible*</i> – Lin Hixson</li><li>• <i>Intro to Performance</i> – Roberto Sifuentes</li></ul>	Summer 2020 Spring 2020 Fall 2018
<b>Visual &amp; Critical Studies Department</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Undergraduate Thesis II*</i> – Karen Morris</li></ul>	Spring 2020
<b>Undergraduate Academic Spine Department</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>(Re) Defining Success as an Artist*</i> - Anna Ogier-Bloomer</li></ul>	Spring 2020
<b>Photography Department</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Lighting Fundamentals*</i> - Nathan Miller</li><li>• <i>Documentary Practices</i> – Jonas Becker</li></ul>	Fall 2020 Fall 2019

## **Contemporary Practices Department**

- *Hybrid Core Practices\**– David Lozano & Mikey Peterson Fall 2020
- *Core Practices* – Kyle Johanson Fall 2018

## **Teaching Artist - Northlight Theatre Skokie, IL**

Spring 2018

### **Description:**

Taught through limited 8-weeks residencies at various Chicago Public Schools. I was assigned to teach 6th & 7th grade students the subjects of storytelling, writing and performing in black and brown community schools on the Northwest and the South Side of Chicago weekly. The program commenced with a performance in the school auditoriums that was focused on social justice issues that the students identified.

## **LECTURES & WORKSHOPS**

### ***Defining Yourself in Chicago Arts***

Victory Gardens Theatre Chicago, IL

Dec. 2019

Supported by New Neighbor Arts Entrepreneurship Project, designed and facilitated a workshop at for refugee and immigrant artists in Chicago working in a variety of performative fields (music, dance, theatre, new media). The workshop aimed to aid self-discovery and guide artists in establishing a career in the arts in Chicago.

### ***New Neighbor Arts Entrepreneurship Project***

U.S. Department of State

Aug. 2019

Through Exchange Alumni grant, designed a curriculum and co-facilitated a two-day workshop for working immigrant and refugee artists in Chicago. The workshop was designed to train them how to be enablers/facilitators to newly arrived immigrants and refugees who want to work in the performative art fields.

### ***Atlas Unlimited Project Workshop***

Logan Center for the Arts/UChicago Arts

Mar. 2019

Gave a touring guide and a performance workshop for high school students visiting the Atlas Unlimited exhibit with a Q&A afterwards.

### ***Performing, Devising, Improve & Acting Workshop***

Arts+Public Life, University of Chicago

June 2018

Worked with middle school and high school students from the community with the support of the program instructor on scenes from *Leave Me Alone*. The day included a variety of methods to approach a written scene, perform a devised scene, improvising a prompt and physical acting/performing technique.

### ***Devising with Images, Objects and Text***

East 15 - University of Essex

Nov. 2015

Led and guided a workshop about using found images, objects and text to collaboratively devise a piece of theatre.

### ***Breaking Down Chekov & The Seagull***

Russian Academy for Theatre Arts – GITIS

Feb. 2015

Led a workshop session that uses Chekov's texts to act contemporary situations and reverse analyzing the results to Chekov's plays, particularly *The Seagull*.

### ***Creating Images for the Acting Body***

New York University Abu Dhabi

Spring 2013

Co-taught a workshop about breaking down Shakespeare's text into simple real-life sites and images to generate physical movements and recite the text with them.

## **VISTING ARTIST LECTURES & PRESENTATIONS**

**Panelist - *Fall Departmental Critique for Performance Graduates***, MFA Studio Program, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Fall 2019

**Panelist - *Spring Interdisciplinary Critique***, MFA Studio Program, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Spring 2019

**Participant - *Roundtable Discussion with Visiting Artist Cassils***, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, , Fall 2018

**Lecturer - *Performance Department Graduate Artist Lecture, Q&A and Panel***, Neiman Center at School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL, Nov. 2019

Gave an artist lecture leading with on philosophy and influences into the process and the works of art. The lecture was followed by a Q&A with me, and then a panel discussion with other performance graduates moderated by Robin Deacon.

**Speaker - *Body & Society in Relation to Trauma***, Dfbrl8r Art Gallery, Sep. 2019

A panel discussion on the body as an archive for trauma and performance as a record and account of traumatic historical events that impact society and generations. The discussion was moderated by Prof. Nora Taylor.

**Director - *Directing the Artist***, Harvard University, Nov. 2018

A social experiment in directing an artist talk during a set-up fictional talk and discussing the dynamics of authority and creativity within this.

**Workshop Instructor - *Fictional Directing Processes***, Harvard University, Nov. 2018

Workshopped the play I wrote *Leave Me Alone* in the build up to the Atlas Unlimited exhibition with students, using character discovery exercises, meditative techniques and devising scenarios to stage some of the scenes from the play.

**Presenter - *The Problematic Nature of Arab Theatre in the Contemporary World***, Directors Lab Chicago, Aug. 2018

A talk followed by the discussion on the state of theatre in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt in relation to social justice issues and censorship. The discussion also included cultural differences and issues that would be highly problematic in an American theatre culture.

**Guest Lecturer - *Research Based Devised Political Theatre***, Columbia College Chicago, Spring 2018

A talk about my process and values in creating devised theatre based on political events & histories

**Instructor - *Collaborative Storytelling***, Stevenson High School Odyssey Program, Fall 2017

Facilitated a collaboration to create a story about a subject using only furniture and analyzing it as a big group while to understand the importance of mise-en-scene in expression.

**Guest Lecturer - *Arab Theatre & the Arab Spring***, Columbia College Chicago, Fall 2017

Gave a lecture about the foundations of Arab theatre and its connection to the nature of the protests of the Arab Spring and the influences on contemporary Arab culture.

## **SELECTED PERFORMANCE WRITINGS**

### *Single Stroke Caesar*

Written to become a book for special collection. Single Stroke Caesar is an investigation of the unfolding events of the Syrian whistleblower, codenamed Caesar, told through the imaginary perspective of Caesar. This writing is inspired by the single stroke battle scene format used often in Japanese film and animation. The format was chosen for its duality

and adapted from a battle of sword wielding warriors to a battle between two perspectives going on in Caesar's head that are imagined by the author.

*Leave Me Alone*

A play about two artists of color who get invited to do a big project for the Marrakech Biennial in Morocco. As they decide on a project involving real refugees enacting incidents from the Egyptian revolution in 2011 a real revolution amongst the refugees happen in opposition to the Biennial with the two artists stuck in the middle. The play's commission and original idea was conceived by Karthik Pandian and Andros Zins-Browne.

*Ghosts of Freedom*

A collection of fictionalized theatrical scenes based on documentary material on the war atrocities suffered by women in war in Syria.

*Postcard Picture*

A short film about the empathy found between refugees from different backgrounds after one of them tries to mug the other.

**ACTING EXPERIENCE**

***Theatre***

<b>Project</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Company/(Director)</b>
<i>Kiss</i>	Interpreter	Haven Theatre Chicago (Monty Cole)
<i>Mibbaj*</i>	Jassem	Guild Literary Complex (Riad Ismat)
<i>Mibbaj*</i>	Adnan	International Voices Project (Riad Ismat)
<i>Obstacle Course*</i>	Mohammed	Chicago Theological Seminary (dir. Michael Menendian)
<i>The Locketeer**</i>	Ensemble	Trap Door Theatre (dir. Catherine Sullivan)
<i>The Victims*</i>	Bassam/Masoud	Silk Road Rising (dir. Malek Najjar)
<i>The Admission*</i>	Azmi	Silk Road Rising (dir. Malek Najjar)
<i>Bengal Tiger</i>	Iraqi Citizen	Corbett Theatre (dir. Tim Sandifer)
<i>At the Baghdad Zoo</i>	Trinculo	NYU in Abu Dhabi (dir. Tomi Tsunoda)
<i>The Tempest*</i>		
<i>MacBeth Arabia**</i>	Duncan/MacDuff	NYU in Abu Dhabi (dir. Tony Tassa)
<i>R.U.R**</i>	Radius	American University of Sharjah (dir. Tony Tassa)
<i>Our Town</i>	Howie/Joe	American University of Sharjah (dir. Tony Tassa)
<i>Cheesecake for Roaches</i>	Larry	American University of Sharjah (dir. Tony Tassa)
<i>A Mid Summer Night's</i>	Indian Boy	Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts

<i>Dream**</i>		Syria (dir. Riad Ismat)
<i>Jerusalem Bells Damascus</i>	Muhammed Al Durrah	ENANA Dance theatre (dir. Jihad Mofleh)
<i>A Winter's Tale**</i>	Mamillius	National Theatre Syria (dir. Riad Ismat)
<i>The Visions of Simone Machard**</i>	Child of War	National Theatre Syria (dir. Riad Ismat)
*Denotes Reading		
**Denotes Adaptation/ Translation		
<b>Film/Television:</b>		
<i>Animus</i>	Human Blob	School of the Art Institute Chicago
<i>Obstacle Course</i>	Mohammed Ghazali	Silk Road Rising – Chicago
<i>Demo.crio</i>	Nezar	Commercial - Soapbox Productions UK (Jamien Middleton)
<i>Good Morning</i>	Husband	East 15 Acting School (Brittany Johnson)
<i>Forsa Thania</i> (10 episodes)	Ghodai	Drama Series - MBC 4 Productions Dubai (various directors)
<i>The Print</i>	Special Forces Unit	El-Meriyati (John Balthazar)
<i>Taif</i>	Ghost	American University of Sharjah (Areeb Al Shathri)
<i>A Strange Place</i>	Ahmad	American University of Sharjah (Meera Al Midfa)
<i>Jerusalem Bells Damascus</i>	Muhammed Al Durrah	Syrian National TV

## **FILM PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>
<i>The Reunion</i>	Short film by Jeremy Chen	Producer/Assistant Director
<i>Huda's Hope</i>	Documentary on Syrian refugee family in Chicago	Producer/Translator
<i>Pleasant Sleep</i>	Short film by Riad Ismat	Director/Producer/Editor
<i>Nocturnes</i>	Short film by Matthew Tillet	Director of Photography
<i>Drama School</i>	7-episode web series written by Jamie Criss	Second Assistant Director
<i>HELP</i>	Short contemporary drama film by Actors Center London	First Camera Assistant

	by Sue Dunderdale	
<i>Postcard Picture</i>	Short film by Sami Ismat	Director/Writer/Editor
<i>Cover</i>	Short film by Mitchell Glass	Director of Photography
<i>Shanked</i>	Short film by Sean O'Brien	Director of Photography
<i>Life</i>	Experimental silent film by Sami Ismat	Director/Writer
<i>Lilian</i>	Documentary on a Nigerian Celebrity stylist	Director of Photography
<i>Individual vs Society</i>	Experimental silent film by Sami Ismat	Director/Producer/Writer/ Editor

## **TECHNICAL & ADMINISTRATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE**

### **Links Hall – Chicago, IL**

2018 – Present

#### *Lighting Designer & Production Stage Manager - Part-time*

- Design and program lights for festivals and performances.
- Operating sound, lights and projections for festivals and performances.
- Trouble shooting electricity, production equipment and production files (sound, video).
- Communicating with artists on production design, show requirements and safety measures.
- Assisting artists in installing their sets and equipment for productions.

### **Steppenwolf Theatre Company – Chicago, IL**

2017 – 2018

#### *Audience Experience - Part-time*

- Responsible for managing lobby, ushers, and coordinating with box office, stage management and theatre bars.
- Aiding customers in access and disability needs.
- Communicating with face-to-face with audiences.
- Occasionally managing the gift & book shop, including handling stock, storage and transactions.

### **East 15 Acting School – London, UK**

2014 – 2016

#### *Documentation Technician - Part-time*

- Documenting audio and video of any performances, plays, shows and music events.
- Editing and transferring materials to archive and to the artists.
- Burning materials on DVDs upon request.

### **Akin Gump Strauss, Hauer & Feld LLP – Chicago, IL**

2017-2018

#### *Freelance Translator for the Pro Bono department – Case based hire*

- Over the phone live translation & interpretation between legal clients from (Iraq, Syria, Jordan) & the pro bono attorneys.
- Provided translations of IDs, licenses, university certificates, official letters and documents that belonged to the clients that were necessary for their case.
- In-person interpretation for intake interviews of the refugees, immigrants & their families.
- Proof reading affidavit written by the pro bono attorneys for accuracy of information.

### **Huda's Hope (documentary film) - Evanston, IL (March 2017-May 2017)**

#### *Field Producer, Interpreter & Lead Subtitle Writer – Project based hire*

- Live field interpretation & translation between interviewer and refugees with cultural sensitivity on their traumatic journeys.
- Subtitling the film's Arabic dialogue into English with a small team.



- Organizing shooting locations & interview times between production team and the refugee families.

**Race ME Events - Dubai, UAE**

Feb 2014 – Aug 2014

*Marketing & Communications Executive* - Full-time

- Copywriting all social media, printed media, and digital media in Arabic & English.
- Copyediting & proofreading paperwork for sponsorship deals & partnerships with other organizations in Arabic & English.
- Verbal & written communicating with clients & partners in Arabic & English.

**TROPFEST Arabia Film Fest - Abu Dhabi, UAE**

Jun 2013 – Feb 2014

*Communications & Logistics Executive* - Full-time

- Remote verbal & written communicating with applicants, participants and selection committee.
- Copyediting & proofreading all social media and printed marketing produced by the advertising agency for the festival in Egypt.
- Interpreting film submissions & proofreading subtitles for accuracy & cultural sensitivity.

**British Council – Doha, Qatar**

March 2009 – August 2009

*Test Center Supervisor* - Part-time

- Running the written & oral placement test hall for English language classes.
- Grading the placement tests for incoming English learning students.
- Coordinating the registration of the students with the registration department & the language teachers.

**Other Relevant Experience:**

- Translated Copyediting in English a Syrian theatre play called 'Mihbaj' Written by my Late Father Riad Hussain Ismat.
- Translated several short-film scripts from Arabic to English.
- Worked three months as an intern for AVIAREPS Marketing & PR agency specializing in tourism agency for the Dubai office.