

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
School of Music, Theatre & Dance

Ashley E. Lucas, associate professor of theatre and drama, with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, associate professor in the Residential College, without tenure, associate professor of English language and literature, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and associate professor of art and design, without tenure, Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design, is recommended for promotion to professor of theatre and drama, with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, professor in the Residential College, without tenure, professor of English language and literature, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and professor of art and design, without tenure, Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D. 2006 University of California, San Diego (UCSD), Ethnic Studies and Drama and Theatre  
M.A. 2003 University of California, San Diego (UCSD), Ethnic Studies  
B.A. 2001 Yale University, English and Theatre Studies

Professional Record:

2013 – present Associate Professor of Theatre and Drama, Associate Professor in the Residential College, Associate Professor of Art and Design, and Associate Professor of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan  
2013 – 2019 Director of the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) at the University of Michigan  
2008 – 2012 Assistant Professor of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC)  
2006 – 2008 Carolina Post-doctoral Fellow for Faculty Diversity at UNC  
2005 – 2006 Associate-In Professor, Research Assistant, and Doctoral Student at UCSD  
2001 – 2005 Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant, and Doctoral Student at UCSD

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Lucas is a high-impact, transformative instructor who challenges students to expand their understandings of the potential for art as a catalyst for social change through a pedagogy that fuses analysis and creation. Her students do not just study theatre as a social catalyst but they turn documentary research into original plays and then return these works to the community through performance. A recent example is the play *Dear University of Michigan* (2018) created by one of her classes to amplify the voices of undocumented students on campus. Professor Lucas has regularly taught a set of courses including Documentary Theatre, Latina/o Theatre for Social Change, and Theatre & Incarceration. She also developed a MOOC on decarceration. Professor Lucas has been a member of five dissertation committees as a faculty member at Michigan in the departments of American Culture, Education, English, and Romance Languages. Her student evaluations are uniformly excellent, although the response rate is low.

Professor Lucas' courses are typically time-intensive and often require off-campus travel to work in prisons, youth facilities, public housing, or other community venues. She, for example, regularly takes a course to Brazil each summer for a three-week intensive. Her pedagogy thus commits ambitiously to an extraordinary depth of learning and community experience. Among Professor Lucas' most pioneering courses is the Atonement Project, developed while at Michigan. This interdisciplinary project was created with PCAP alumnus Shaka Senghor to examine the intersection of the arts and

restorative justice. Maybe the most summative evidence of her educational impact is that student participation in PCAP doubled under her leadership.

Her dossier offers ample evidence of her instructional philosophy in action. She aims “to provide an environment in which my students can thrive and unleash their intellectual curiosity and their creative energy,...to know that their thoughts and actions matter, that none of us are as powerless as we feel, and that they are capable of making the world different and better.”

Professional Activities: At the University of Michigan, Professor Lucas has achieved an impressive and international record of scholarly and creative achievement through publication, performance, and frequent speaking engagements. Her research culminated in the 2020 publication of the book Prison Theatre and the Global Crisis of Incarceration (London: Methuen Drama, Critical Companions Series, 281 pp.). The text is already being translated into Portuguese for publication in 2021. The book includes four chapters by Professor Lucas that explore a range of methodological approaches including memoir, documentary interviews, thick description, and performance analysis. The book also includes four chapters written by others and edited by Professor Lucas.

Professor Lucas also published her play Doin’ Time: Through the Visiting Glass in 2016 with Routledge Press, helping to propel its use in the undergraduate and graduate classroom. It has subsequently appeared in both Portuguese and Spanish translation. She performed the work ten times during her appointment as associate professor in both the United States and Brazil. Professor Lucas’ other publications include two peer-reviewed articles and two co-authored peer-reviewed articles, four additional book chapters (two co-authored in Portuguese), interviews in books and journals, two book reviews, blog posts for Razor Wire Women (a site for arts, activism and incarcerated women), along with a host of conferences and conference presentations in the United States and international sites including those in Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, and Uruguay. Professor Lucas also serves as a consultant to prison systems and prison art projects in the United States and Brazil.

Professor Lucas has been extraordinarily successful at securing funding, both internal and from external sources such as the Ford Foundation, to propel her research. She is a founding member of the Carceral State Project Documenting Criminalization and Confinement through a humanities-based archive that received a U-M grant of \$500K and foundation support of \$580K. She receives frequent travel grants to support her research in Brazil and was awarded two MCubed grants as well as a Humanities Institute fellowship.

Service: Professor Lucas was recruited to SMTD and U-M in part to serve as the director of the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP), broadly recognized as the largest prison arts program in the world. Professor Lucas’ task was a challenging one—taking over from the project’s founders to develop new collaborations and intellectual directions that could propel the program forward. Her dossier documents particular success in this arena, mainly due to her extraordinary investments in relationship building. She has worked to bridge across our campus, engaging three schools (LSA, SMTD, Stamps) as well as the Residential College, but has also extended the project’s reach through the State of Michigan’s prison system and a host of community and campus organizations. These relationships have produced dividends not only for PCAP, but for her research and teaching as well. In just one example, SMTD’s involvement in the PCAP program has grown and deepened under her leadership, including faculty collaborations with Theatre, Composition, Choral Studies, and Opera. She developed community partnerships including PCAP Wolverine Pathways, the Federal Correctional Institute/Milan, The Linkage Project, and the PCAP Concert Series.

Professor Lucas has taken part in departmental service duties at a level expected of faculty with joint appointments to multiple schools, departments, and programs and provided service to SMTD search committees, guest residency committees, and the faculty advisory committee of the Center for World Performance Studies. In LSA, she has served on Promotion and Tenure and LEO review committees, the Residential College Executive Committee, and committees in Latin America and Caribbean Studies. She has also done service work for the Center for Global and Intercultural Studies and ADVANCE.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: “Lucas’ teaching philosophy is exemplary—she clearly cares about how her students learn and how they fare, both in her classes and also in the greater society during and after their time in university. Students of Lucas will graduate with a great grounding both in performance aesthetics, publicly-engaged ethnographic performance techniques, and a sense of social history and civic responsibility...Lucas clearly is a talented, consistent, hard-working, sincere and committed colleague. She is also a world-class, internationally respected writer and performer.”

Reviewer B: “Dr. Lucas’s [sic] work on incarceration has grown more pertinent and as her CV shows, she is an international leader around this topic as it pertains to the arts. I remember well the profound impact of this early iteration and it has been a pleasure to see her rise to the top of our field of theater and performance studies. Dr. Lucas’s visionary work with the Prison Creative Arts Project exemplifies the ability of art, activism and academics to speak to major issues of human rights.”

Reviewer C: “Dr. Lucas is an impressive, prolific international researcher and writer...Lucas is clearly knowledgeable about her subject matter, cares about her students, and helps students see how what they are learning will transcend their time at the university.”

Reviewer D: “I am convinced that her scholarship genuinely makes an innovative contribution that will re-define her chosen field of study. Dr. Lucas is highly productive and prolific. The sharp focus of her work ensures that her scholarship has been much noticed and widely admired...She is already highly regarded by her peers and her scholarship provides a reference point for anyone working in the same field.”

Reviewer E: “I find the scope of Dr. Lucas’ interdisciplinary collaboration both on and off campus to be very impressive, and consider the level of community engagement locally, nationally, and internationally to be exemplary...I would be hard pressed to think of someone whose output in terms of scholarship, invited guest lectures, presentations, and performances, as well as the crucial facilitation of prison-based programs, is as extensive as that of Dr. Lucas’.”

Reviewer F: “The work that Lucas has pioneered at the University of Michigan is world leading and its influence is felt and recognized locally, nationally and internationally; in university classrooms, in prisons, in the public spaces she curates, in the research she publishes, the digital documentation she creates...The impact of Lucas’s [sic]work is both immediate and enduring.”

Reviewer G: “Dr. Lucas provides us through her teaching, service, and research a way of connecting us, of illustrating how when one person is diminished, we are all diminished. I can’t think of a more important approach to higher education.”

Reviewer H: “It is difficult to imagine a better ambassador for the work of the university than she... The University of Michigan is truly fortunate to have a researcher of Dr. Lucas’ caliber and commitment on its faculty, and I’m not surprised she’s been regularly awarded U-M and Mellon Faculty Fellowships...Both the quantity but especially the quality of her research...and public engagement are exemplary.”

Reviewer I: “Her scholarship is impressive both for its originality and for its hemispheric scope. I can think of very few scholars who have dedicated themselves to the topic of theatre with incarcerated individuals as thoroughly as Dr. Ashley Lucas. It is my opinion that Dr. Lucas is the best of the lot.”

Summary of Recommendation:

In summary, Professor Lucas is a scholar, teacher, and activist of international significance and influence who has expanded our curriculum in ways that have anticipated and propelled shifts in the field to a more socially engaged pedagogy. She has done the type of difficult, personally challenging, pioneering, and trail blazing work that combines research and creative activity as both service to the community and as a mirror to highlight distortions in the treatment of the dispossessed and powerless. Her work is broad and diffuse in its range of influence while being focused and powerful in its impact on individuals, our students, and the field. Given her range of responsibilities, her work is prolific and impressive in amount and significance. It is with the support of the SMTD’s Executive Committee, the RC’s tenured faculty, LSA’s Executive Committee, and the Stamps School of Art and Design Executive Committee that we recommend and support Ashley E. Lucas for promotion to professor of theatre and drama, with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, professor in the Residential College, without tenure, professor of English language and literature, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and professor of art and design, without tenure, Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design.



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David Gier, Dean  
Paul Boylan Collegiate Professor of Music  
School of Music, Theatre & Dance



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Gunalan Nadarajan, Dean  
Penny W. Stamps, School of Art & Design



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Anne Curzan, Dean  
Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of  
English Language and Literature, Linguistics,  
and Education  
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts