

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

José Casas, assistant professor of theatre and drama, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of theatre and drama, with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

Academic Degrees:

M.F.A.	2003	Arizona State University, Creative Writing (Playwriting)
M.A.	1997	California State University, Los Angeles, Theatre Arts
B.A.	1992	University of California, Santa Barbara, Dramatic Arts

Professional Record:

2016 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre and Drama, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, University of Michigan
2015 – 2016	Graduate Assistant, Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Texas at Austin
2014	Lecturer, Department of Theatre, University of Redlands, Redlands, CA 2011 – 2014 Lecturer, Department of Chicano Studies, California State University, Los Angeles
2009 – 2010	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC
2007 – 2009	Lecturer, Department of Chicano Studies, California State University, Los Angeles
2003	Graduate Assistant, Department of Theatre Arts, Arizona State University
1996 – 1997	Graduate Assistant, Department of Theatre Arts, California State University, Los Angeles

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Casas is a dedicated and innovative teacher who has made significant contributions to not only his students' growth but also to the curricular offerings in the Department of Theatre and Drama. He created the Playwriting minor, and has taught a variety of courses at UM, including Introduction to Playwriting, Intermediate Playwriting, Advanced Playwriting, Hip-Hop Theatre, Documentary Theatre, Writing for Solo Performance, and Playwriting Toward Production. Professor Casas' students have been recognized as winners of the prestigious Hopwood Award, and received national recognition at the annual Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Students consistently comment on Professor Casas' passion for the course material, constructive and thoughtful feedback (described by one student as "concise, yet compassionate..."), and ability to foster individuality and agency.

Professional Activities: Professor Casas' primary area of creative activity is in the field of applied theater. As a playwright, he uses ethnographic and documentary techniques to tell stories that are both timeless and timely, "created to empower people, not merely to entertain them." His work is strongly imbued with social activism, and explores issues of identity, diversity, inclusion,

representation and equity. The impact of a playwright today is measured chiefly in commissions, performances, and awards. One of the leading voices and advocates for Latino Theatre and Theatre for Young Audiences in the United States, Professor Casas has been commissioned by the Kennedy Center, The La Jolla Playhouse, Florida Studio Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, Peppercorn Theatre Company, Childsplay Theatre Company/Phoenix Symphony, and the University of Virginia. His recent work *Mariposa/Butterfly* (co-authored) was selected for performance on New York University's New Plays for Young Audiences series. Since joining the faculty at Michigan, his works have been performed around the country 20 times on university and independent stages.

Professor Casas' play *Flint* (2019) exemplifies the political and social work that his creative and scholarly contributions are meant to accomplish. An ethnographic/documentary exploration of the Flint water crisis, the work is built (verbatim) from over 80 interviews Professor Casas conducted with Flint residents, and the public record. The work was performed as part of the SMTD mainstage season at Arthur Miller Theatre, at the Flint Community Center, and by the department of theatre at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in conjunction with the University of Michigan's Prison Creative Arts Program (PCAP) program. Professor Casas' monograph Palabras del Cielo: An Exploration of Latina/o Theatre for Young Audiences in 2018. Palabras del Cielo is notable as one of the first collections of U.S. Latino plays and received the 2019 Distinguished Book Award from the American Alliance for Theatre and Education in Washington, D.C. He has given invited conference presentations on a range of topics, including Latina/o theatre for young audiences, theatre and technology and new media, and theatrical adaptation, and been an invited guest artist in residence at universities across the country.

Service: Professor Casas has been generous in his service to the department, school, and the University of Michigan. Within SMTD, he has served on three faculty search committees, the Merit Review Committee (that resulted in a substantive revision to the School's merit pay program), the Department of Theatre and Drama Advisory Committee, and ad-hoc committees that provided guidance on SMTD's involvement with the Arts Initiative, among others. He has also contributed vast amounts of "invisible service" as an informal mentor to SMTD's BIPOC students. He is active in service to the profession, as well, and is an active contributor to the ongoing discussion about race and equity in theatre practice. He has been the Multicultural and Diversity Director for the American Alliance of Theatre and Education, and was one of the original supporters of the "We See You, White America Theatre" movement. He is currently a trustee for the Children's Theatre Foundation of America.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "Professor Casas has worked as a writer/creator in significant venues. His reviews show him to be an artist of great dexterity and a collaborative nature. Professor Casas's [sic] service and publications are well above the line and nicely balance his research and teaching. (At our institution, his work would put him above the line in every category.)"

Reviewer B: "The sheer number of productions of Mr. Casas's [sic] plays at high profile theatres throughout the U.S. speaks to audiences' eagerness for his work. At the same time, his ongoing relationships with theatres (e.g. First Stage and Stage Works) as well as with Dramatic Publishing indicate that he has garnered the respect of his collaborators – both theatrical producers and editors.

Likewise, the fact that multiple theatre companies and educational institutions have commissioned plays by Mr. Casas and that he was the second most produced TYA playwright, nation-wide, in the 2019-2020 season attests to the high impact he is having on young audiences and TYA theatre artists.”

Reviewer C: “I was generally impressed by his body of work. Reading the plays available through the packet, I found them fresh, vibrant, sophisticated...One of the strongest aspects of Mr. Casas’ work is that he has a clear vision and focus on what he wants his plays to accomplish. His commitment to explore ethnic diversity in all of its ramifications gives a fire and passion to his work”

Reviewer D: “I now also count José Casas among the most important teachers of playwriting – ‘one to watch’ if you will – in higher education today. I am particularly impressed by the breadth of offerings within this new program, each of which draws upon and extends Professor Casas’s [sic] known professional strengths.”

Reviewer E: “It is clear to me that Casas has been and continues to be a powerful force for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field; that he has devoted his considerable artistic, organizational, and pedagogical talents to projects that pry open the American theater, pushing it to welcome and serve BIPOC youth and BIPOC artists and audiences more broadly...Casas’s [sic] achievements and ongoing projects are exactly the kind that my field is most hungry for, and the kind that I would expect my colleagues in both the academy and the professional theater world most deeply to admire.”

Reviewer F: “Professor Casas’s [sic] playwriting focuses on a range of issues pertaining to Latinx identity and culture, environmental social justice, musical styles, and diversity. His plays embrace Spanish-English bilingualism and are specifically designed for children, youth, and/or adults. He demonstrates fluency in engaging diverse audiences of age, cultural identity, and arts literacy. His record also indicates collaborative and devised works...”

Reviewer G: “Professor Casas seems to have developed new courses and areas of interdisciplinary teaching at the University of Michigan...Casas seems to have taken the department in new directions that reflect our own American moment and that engage his individual interests and strengths, not to mention identity. This, along with his active level of university service, add to his value as a professor.”

Reviewer H: “Professor Casas writes some of the most outstanding plays for young audiences in the United States. Casas captures the nuance and complexity of latino/a/x youth identity in his works...all pieces crafted with vanguard dramaturgies often reserved for pieces intended for adult audiences. Many of these works function as exemplars of craft for the [junior] playwrights who study in our MFA program.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Casas is a powerful playwright with an incisive talent as both a writer and teacher. His creativity amplifies the voices around him to engage issues of broad social impact and he models what it means to be an engaged creative artist, teacher, and citizen of the university, the

community, and his profession. With the unanimous support of the school's Executive Committee, I strongly recommend José Casas for promotion to the rank of associate professor of theatre and drama, with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.



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

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