

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

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

Academic Degrees:

M.F.A. 2002 University of Alabama, Montgomery, AL, Acting
B.F.A 1994 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, Theatre Performance

Professional Record:

2021 - present Associate Professor of Theatre and Drama (Acting and Stage Combat), with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, University of Michigan
2018 - 2021 Associate Professor of Theatre and Drama (Acting and Stage Combat), School of Music, Theatre & Dance, University of Michigan
2016 - 2018 Associate Professor of Acting and Movement, with tenure, Department of Theatre, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
2012 - 2017 Graduate Acting Program Director, Department of Theatre, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
2011 & 2018 Guest Lecturer, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, University of Michigan
2010 - 2016 Assistant Professor of Acting and Movement, Department of Theatre, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
2007 - 2010 Visiting Assistant Professor of Acting and Voice, Department of Theatre, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
2010 Guest Lecturer, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, MI
2005 Guest Lecturer, Alabama Shakespeare Festival/University of Alabama, Montgomery, AL
2004 - 2005 Guest Lecturer, University of California – Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA
2003 Guest Lecturer, University of San Diego, San Diego, CA

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Traister is a dedicated and effective teacher and has taught a broad array of courses across the discipline of applied theatre. She came to the School of Music, Theatre & Dance (SMTD) as an experienced and accomplished teacher with a track record of bringing contemporary professional standards to her classroom training to help launch the next generation of actors. Her pedagogy serves as a bridge between the academy and the commercial theatre, and her interpersonal skills and sensitivity to individual needs have established her as one of the most sought-after teachers in the Department of Theatre and Drama (T&D).

Professor Traister regularly receives positive teaching evaluations for all of her courses, and narrative responses often cite her preparedness, professional knowledge and commitment to student success. Professor Traister's former students have gone on to internships and employment at professional theatre companies (Cleveland Play House, Tipping Point Theatre, most recently),

been accepted to prestigious graduate programs (Yale School of Drama, Case Western University, University of Southern California), and secured positions in academe (University of Illinois, North Carolina State), and the profession (BBC Productions).

Professor Traister has undertaken significant professional development in order to further her skills in the area of intimacy direction and has become an important national voice in this emerging field, which like stage combat focuses on the illusion of highly emotional and charged stage action in ways that are both physically and emotionally safe for those involved. She also has engaged with professional development to improve her knowledge of voice and speech training, bringing this knowledge to her work with her courses and productions.

Professional Activities: Professor Traister is a multi-faceted artist, active in acting, stage combat and voice work. Her influence on the art and craft of fight choreography, through her teaching and leadership role, is her most important professional contribution. She has been a prominent member of the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD) over the past 30 years. She was the first female-identifying president of SAFD, and is only the second female in history to be awarded the rank of SAFD fight master, the highest rank possible within the society.

Professor Traister's record of achievement as a pedagogue in the field is extraordinary. She has sustained a national presence as a master teacher, and in addition to the activities mentioned above, has taught for five summers at the National Stage Combat Workshop, and in training programs at the North Carolina School of the Arts, and Louisiana Technical University. Finally, Professor Traister created a regional workshop, The Fredricksen Stage Combat Intensive, to expand access to core weapons training in the region. The title of the workshop honors the former chair of the SMTD Department of Theatre and Drama and SAFD's co-founder, Erik Fredricksen.

In addition to her work in fight choreography, Professor Traister is a prolific voice actor, and has narrated nearly 300 internationally released audiobooks, ranging from 6-20 audiobook engagements per year. She has also done extensive work as a choreographer, contributing to four or more shows annually. Professor Traister brings more than three decades of professional acting and directing credits to her work, and her creative activity shows a continued trajectory of increasing national and international prominence.

Service: Professor Traister has an outstanding record of service. Within the Department of Theatre and Drama, she has served as the head of performance for the past three years, and has been a member of four search committees in two years, chairing one. She has established herself as a willing and thoughtful contributor to SMTD faculty governance and has served on the SMTD Dean's Task Force on Sexual Misconduct, the Faculty and Staff Allies Network, the EXCEL Entrepreneurship Funding Committee, and the Global Engagement Committee. At the university level, she has served as a UM university provided advisor (UPA) for Title IX Sexual Misconduct Investigations for the Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Flint campuses, a member of the faculty senate, and spring commencement faculty marshal at Michigan Stadium. Within the broader profession, she has been similarly active, including her previously mentioned leadership roles in SAFD, as well as roles as an adjudicator for skills proficiency in combat, for monologue competitions and duet acting, for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: “The professor has narrated a huge number of audio books...she’s clearly meeting a meaningful industry standard, or she wouldn’t be hired so often. One only need listen to two audio books of different genres to learn that there’s a huge range of skills and aesthetics at work in the medium...The professor’s statements reveal an ambitious and committed actor with many stage credits at reputable professional companies, and a teacher who has taught many kinds of courses. It’s also clear from the written record that she is committed to service in a variety of volunteer roles at your institution.”

Reviewer B: “Professor Traister’s stage combat work, both as a fight director and choreographer, have unquestionably had a significant impact on the field. Her status as the two-term president of the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD), and the first female identifying person to hold that office, is an impressive indication of that fact. This is also a testament to the quality of Professor Traister’s work as a flight director/choreographer, as advancement in that field is contingent upon a detailed and extensive process of evaluation and certification. Professor Traister’s acting credits are respectable, particularly with theatres like Alabama Shakespeare Festival, as are her professional voice coaching credits, but it is her work with stage combat that truly make Professor Traister outstanding in the field when compared to her peers.”

Reviewer C: “Of all her work, it is Ms. Traister’s creation of the Shakespeare Tour and The Fredricksen Intensive that I will continue to identify as outstanding contributions. These contributions each reflect deep care for education, learning, and community. Both serve as exceptional examples of a commitment to the future, respect for the past, and the creation of pathways to the future of our art and craft...Ms. Traister is an established and respected member within the Society of American Fight Directors and amongst the international stage combat/stunt community. She is a well-established academician, respected actor, director, intimacy director, master teacher, fight director and fight master.”

Reviewer D: “You have a wonderful candidate.”

Reviewer E: “Ms. Traister is working at an exceptionally high level in the world of stage and screen combat...The massive quantity of creative activity, teaching and service present in her dossier speaks volumes as to the devotion and discipline that Ms. Traister brings to bear, no matter what organization or institution she finds herself serving. I certainly believe this to be the level of work commensurate with a full professor anywhere in the country.”

Reviewer F: “In my career I’ve had the good fortune to have worked at all levels in the arts and with a vast array of practitioners, including actors and directors considered to be leaders of both stage and screen...Her standing among her fellow teachers is as a ‘first amongst equals’ as they recognise in her a leader who has put herself at the forefront of this art by her dedication, enthusiasm and diligence...I consider Ms. Traister to be an innovative practitioner who is constantly seeking to refine and improve her work; in doing so she has become a highly respected artist and one that has given much back to the community. She is extremely generous both of her time and of herself, and this selflessness is a rarity of which I would urge you to take full advantage.”

Review G: “One needs to be mindful and respect the fact as a woman in the stage combat field, which is male dominant, she has pushed the envelope and forced her counterparts to reconsider how they approach and execute their craft. It should also be noted, her highest achievement as a teacher is serving as an adjudicator for students who are testing to be certified as an actor/combatant through the SAFD. Only Fight Masters are allowed to adjudicate these tests which take place at professional theatres, colleges and private training institutes all over the country.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Traister is one of the world’s foremost authorities on stage combat, and a highly respected performing artist and teacher. She has an exceptional record of leadership and service to SMTD and her profession. With the strong support of the school’s Executive Committee, I am pleased to recommend Christina Traister for promotion to the rank of 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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