

Traci Ledford

*Department Chair & Assistant
Professor of Theatre Arts, School of
Fine Arts*



Center For Excellence in
Christian Scholarship

Traci Ledford, Department Chair and Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts, was born in Dallas and raised in Garland, Texas, where she was first introduced to theatre in Kindergarten. She turned down the role of the Mama Bear in *The Three Little Bears* so she could dance with a boy in another segment of the program. By third grade, however, she was working with classmates and neighborhood children to present homespun productions both at school and at home. That summer, her mother encouraged her to audition for *Little Women* at the local community theatre where Ledford was cast in the role of Beth. Ledford has studied theatre ever since; her pursuit led her to explore acting, directing, voice-overs, designing, and playwriting. After graduating from South Garland High School, Ledford attended Baylor University where she earned her BFA in Directing and Design, graduating summa cum laude. She took an education and outreach internship with the Dallas Theater Center following graduation, and eventually found her way to public school where she taught all levels (K-12) of theatre arts for nine years in both Texas and North Carolina. Ledford then returned to Baylor to obtain her MFA in Directing before coming to ETBU.



As a director, Ledford has helmed over forty productions; among them are *Our Town*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Twelfth Night*, *Black Comedy*, *The Voice of the Prairie*, *Moon Over the Brewery*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Tartuffe*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Into the Woods*, *The Dazzle*, and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Ledford served as assistant director last year for Horton Foote's *The Traveling Lady* at Addison's Water Tower Theatre. Ledford also continues to perform as an actress; her roles have included such classics as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Mariane in *Tartuffe*, Andromache in *The Trojan Women*, and the Mother in Federico García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*. Last spring, Ledford appeared as Rosannah in a student-directed production of *Brilliant Traces* at ETBU.

What brought you to ETBU?

Nate Records, who held the position prior to me, called me to ask if I would be interested in the job opening since he was moving to Germany. He was a third-year graduate student at Baylor when I was in my first year of graduate school. I was brought over for the interview, and was immediately impressed with Dr. Tom Webster, Dean of the School of Fine Arts, and the student body. It didn't hurt that Dr. Dub Oliver was making the same transition from Baylor to ETBU at the same time; in fact, he interviewed me on the Baylor campus while he was still working there, and participated in my graduation, giving me a huge hug after I received my diploma.

What makes a student successful in your class?

Integrity is the trait I most desire to see in my students because the characteristic itself holds so much responsibility; integrity demands honesty, proactive communication, dedication, respect, and a sense of professionalism. True theatre students must also be ambitious without being arrogant. Theatre is a brutal discipline where you must constantly start over and prove your abilities with each new assignment, duty, or role; successful students see these time-demanding responsibilities as valuable opportunities that will prepare them for the real world. Believing excellence is in the details, students of theatre must pay attention to subtext, nuance, literary devices, historical research, given circumstances, geometry, visual and aural artistry, vocal expression and inflection, spatial relationships, texture, semiotics, design, chemistry (in the personal sense), and physical action. Essentially, we must study and apply material from other subjects because our artwork demands a broad knowledge of many disciplines in order to fully develop (and defend) production styles, design work, and character choices. Finally, theatre students must persevere; they must endure long hours, physically demanding work assignments, and constant critical feedback while maintaining a positive outlook for both their academic and artistic futures. Theatre majors and minors are as much motivators and encouragers as they are carpenters, painters, electricians, costumers, managers, designers, actors, and directors. I must admit that I am proud to work alongside a great many students who motivate me to give my best daily.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned from your ETBU colleagues?

I am blessed with a rich network of support across many curriculums. It is unbelievably encouraging to have faculty and staff inquire after our productions, lend props and furniture, attend productions and ask after our welfare; it is a blessing to hear their sincere appreciation of our physical labor and academic scholarship. Their affirmation of what we do has enabled me to feel a part of a broader community where hard work and collaboration are highly valued; but, perhaps more than that, I know that ETBU is a place where caring people continually and sincerely invest in the human spirit.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned from your ETBU students?

I have always maintained that, as a teacher, you learn infinitely more from your students than they ever learn from you. I have been blessed to teach and mentor loving hearts and large souls. I continue to learn the value of commitment, compassion, fairness, patience, humility, perseverance, the importance of Christian character, and the benefits of encouragement from the example they set for me with their hard work and dedication.

Academic Credentials:

BFA Directing and Design – Baylor University, *summa cum laude*

Secondary Teacher Certification – Texas A & M Commerce

MFA Directing – Baylor University

Areas of Expertise:

Directing

Acting

Theatre Education in the Public School

Professional Memberships:

Texas Educational Theatre Association

UIL One Act Play Adjudicator

Publications:

“The Influence of Epic Theatre on the Work of Robert Lepage.” *Texas Theatre Journal*. January 2008.

Presentations:

“iGrad.” Co-Writer and Presenter. Baylor University Graduate School Student Orientation and Graduate Program Directors Meeting. Waco, TX. August and November of 2008.

“Women of Action: An Examination of Arthur Giron’s Characterization of Women in *The Coffee Trees*.” Resonance Ensemble - Theatre Row. New York, NY. October 2007.

“The Influence of Epic Theatre on the Work of Robert Lepage.” Texas Educational Theatre Association. Houston, TX. January 2007.