

Biography

Award-winning music director, drummer, and arranger — Chicago, Illinois

Robert Reddrick is a masterful music director, arranger, and drummer, and one of the most respected musical voices in Chicago theater. As **Music Director of the Black Ensemble Theater**, he leads the ensemble that gives the company its unmistakable live sound, drumming and directing through soul revues, biographical musicals, and world premieres alike.

A former student of the Music Department at **Columbia College Chicago**, Robert built his craft the way the best musicians do: in the room, on the bandstand, learning to serve the song. Over the years he has been trusted with musical direction and drumming at **Steppenwolf Theatre, Porchlight Music Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Victory Gardens Theater, the University of Illinois, Free Street Theater**, and beyond.

Before he was anyone's music director, Robert was — and has never stopped being — a **drummer**. He leads from the kit rather than a podium, with the kind of deep, unhurried pocket that lets a singer lean back into a phrase and a horn section snap in around him. A soul groove, a gospel shuffle, a slow blues drag, a funk break, or a full Broadway chart — three decades on Chicago bandstands have given him the vocabulary for all of it. That drumming is the engine under everything else: it is why singers trust him, why his arrangements land, and why an audience feels a show in the chest before they can explain why.

There is a second craft behind the first. At the Black Ensemble Theater, Robert not only leads the music — he **records, edits, mixes, masters, and archives** it, overseeing all of the company's music and audio materials and collaborating with writers, directors, and sound designers. He also composes, transcribes, and programs MIDI. The person setting the tempo is also the person who knows exactly how it will sound in the room and on the recording.

His work has been recognized repeatedly by Chicago's theater community — a **seven-time recipient of the Black Theater Alliance Award** and a **seven-time Jeff Award nominee** for musical direction. He has also been honored among Porchlight Music Theatre's celebrated "Scene Changers."

Away from the theater he keeps the chops sharp with his own band, **The R2Project**, and remains devoted to teaching — sharing his experience with young musicians and students discovering the discipline and joy of playing. He has built a distinguished career in a field where Black musical leadership has long been underrepresented, helping shape full theatrical productions at the highest professional level for decades.



SHORTBIO—FORPROGRAMSANDLISTINGS

Robert Reddrick is an award-winning music director, arranger, and drummer, and the Music Director of Chicago's acclaimed Black Ensemble Theater. A seven-time recipient of the Black Theater Alliance Award and a seven-time Jeff Award nominee, he has spent three decades shaping the sound of Chicago theater.

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