



“My background in community theater started when I was very young.

I worked in the technical and production side of theater for a long time until I moved into the role of managing the Charlotte Symphony. I stayed in that role for 22 years before I decided I wanted to try something new and came to Florence in July of 2017 to accept the Director position at the Performing Arts Center.

I had seen photographs of the facility prior to coming here, but I was floored when I walked in for the first time.

Architecturally, it’s amazing.

The exterior has Winnsboro granite from the Winnsboro, South Carolina quarry and the lobby has this marble with such an interesting backstory that I have never seen anywhere else.

Then the theater itself has a totally different feeling from the lobby which I really like. The mainstage has a lot of modern takes on theater design that are paired with these very industrial-looking walls.

I am incredibly impressed with the fact that the city of Florence has something like this. And we make sure to think of the community when we consider which artists and performers we bring here. You have to look at what people seem to want, but I also feel the obligation to try to have some acts that stretch the community’s bandwidth a little bit.

You also want to serve all the communities in the region because there is a lot of diversity in the people who live in the Pee Dee. I don’t want to lock in on one set of people, I want to make sure we provide a variety of offerings.

There’s a lot of things we can still do as well. We have a school program that we’ve been working with where we’re bringing in students from the surrounding communities to see 55-minute plays that professional companies come in and do.

It’s really rewarding to see their eyes light up when they see this place and I think it’s important to build the audience for the future.

I’ve been doing this job for so long and it’s hard, it’s a lot of hours, a lot of weekends.

But I love seeing happy people leave the theater once they’ve seen something that they really enjoyed.”

- Bud Simmons, Director of the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center