

SARAH ATENHAN

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I am an artist-scholar and arts administrator with over 20 years of experience in creative production, pedagogy, and community engagement. As the Founder and Artistic Director of Satellite Dance, I focus on aerial dance as a means to study the relationships between embodiment, disability, and collective joy. My work emphasizes accessibility, body autonomy, and Universal Learning principles in my teaching. I have expertise in choreography, education, grant writing, leadership, and project management. I aim to advance my research on the cultural syncretism of aerial arts, dance, and disability justice within Culture and Performance studies.

EDUCATION

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

B.S. in Psychology | 2008

Extensive coursework with the Department of Dance (major-level: Ballet, Modern, Improvisation)

Select Continuing Education & Professional Development

- The Expressive Aerialist, Paper Doll Militia, 2025.
 - Choreographers Institute, L.A. Contemporary Dance Company, 2025.
 - Periscope Artist Entrepreneur, Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville, 2024.
 - Qualified Rigger Level One, American Crane & Safety, 2023.
 - 200-hr Yoga Teacher Training, the Kaivalya Method®, 2021.
 - Aerial Fitness and Yoga Instructor Training, AIR® Aerial Fitness, 2016-2017.
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ARTISTIC & SCHOLARLY WORK

Satellite Dance, 501(c)(3) | Nashville, TN

Founder, Artistic & Executive Director | July 2017–Present

Founded nonprofit arts organization and leads all operational and creative aspects including strategy, communications, finances, and production across three divisions: Performance, Education, and Community Engagement. Designed organizational structure and processes to reflect core tenets: Aerial. Dance. Adaptable. Shared. With Care.

- Executes integrative aerial pedagogy framework emphasizing accessibility, body autonomy, and Universal Learning methodology; designed 30-hour teacher training curriculum synthesizing aerial fitness, yoga, and dance disciplines for diverse populations including hypermobile and chronically ill practitioners.
- Designs and leads curriculum for five education programs. Develops tailored pedagogical approaches through collaborative partnerships with external organizations, employing responsive teaching methodologies that adapt to learner needs and partner-specific learning objectives.
- Writes, secures, and manages grants from multiple funding organizations with 100% award rate, totaling over \$30k. Navigates diverse grantor-specific reporting systems and requirements, tracking deliverables and outcomes to ensure compliance and maintain strong funder relationships.
- Manages \$20k annual operating budget with 10% year-over-year growth, maintaining intentionally small organizational structure prioritizing sustainability and quality over expansion in high-risk arts sector.
- Produced and directed 27 projects to date across print, live events, and film. Successfully navigates aerial safety protocols, diverse performing populations, and sustained community engagement.

Note: text in [blue](#) indicates an active link to project samples.

GRANTS, AWARDS, & RECOGNITION

- *Dark Side of the Moon* for Satellite Dance, Metro Arts Nashville, Project Support Grant, 2026.
 - Aerial Dance Workshops for Satellite Dance, Tennessee Arts Commission, Project Support Grant, 2026.
 - Professional Development Award, LACDC Choreographers Institute, Center for Cultural Innovation, 2025.
 - Selected Community Arts Leader for Professional Development, Metro Arts Nashville, 2025.
 - *Syncretism: a study integrating aerial and dance* for Satellite Dance, Metro Arts Nashville, Operating & Project Grant, 2025.
 - *Storyscapes* for Satellite Dance, Tennessee Arts Commission, Project Support Grant, 2024.
 - Finalist & Presenter, Periscope Pitch, Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville, 2024.
 - *Carina Nebula* for Satellite Dance, Tennessee Arts Commission, Project Support Grant, 2022.
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SELECT PUBLICATIONS & CREATIVE PROJECTS

- *Syncretism: a study integrating aerial and dance*, Satellite Dance, 2025.
 - *Storyscapes Pt. I & II*, Satellite Dance & Hermitage Public Library, 2024.
 - *By Nature, a dream ballet*, Satellite Dance, 2020.
 - Atenhan, Sarah. “Rest is in order,” *Lazyaerialist.com*, 2025.
 - Atenhan, Sarah. “My body is built on a swamp,” *Lazyaerialist.com*, 2025.
 - Atenhan, Sarah. *Aerial Sling Teacher Training Level One*, Satellite Dance, 2023.
 - Atenhan, Sarah, and Michelle Reid. *The Fabric of Space and Time*, Satellite Dance & Blurb, 2021.
 - Atenhan, Sarah. *Aerial Fitness Level One*, So Fly Studio, 2017.
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ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Aerial & Dance Educator | Various

2009–Present

- 15+ years instructing students of all skill levels for ages three through adult in several environments including private studios and public schools.
- Formats: Aerial Sling (Dance, Yoga, Fitness), Vinyasa Yoga, Jazz, Ballet, Contemporary, Modern, Hip Hop, Improvisation & Composition, Strength & Mobility.
- Universal Learning methodology at core of practice; participants start on equitable footing, develop agency, and advance skill sets safely and effectively as a community.

August Jackson | Hybrid

Communications Producer | 2014–2019, 2022–2023

- Designed and analyzed survey reports for Fortune 500 companies, processing qualitative and quantitative feedback from audiences of up to 5,000 participants to inform strategic planning and communications.
- Partnered with account director to implement operational systems for new Communications department, including data management, reporting templates, and workflow development. Scaled program from a single franchise for Fortune 500 organization to multiple franchises; systems in use as of 2023.
- Produced high-impact deliverables including videos, podcasts, print campaigns, and digital content across live and virtual platforms, tailoring content to diverse audience engagement goals.
- Managed project budgets from \$50K to \$1.3M while maintaining detailed production schedules across multiple overlapping projects.

- Transformed resource department by systematizing processes, implementing scalable talent management infrastructure, and establishing communication protocols. Created an operational framework that enabled department growth and improved cross-functional collaboration.
- Analyzed employee capacity and project demands using data management systems to optimize staffing recommendations across creative and strategy teams. Tracked utilization metrics to inform executive hiring decisions.
- Redesigned and managed freelance talent database of 50+ independent contractors, transforming existing system into structured resource organized by skill and performance ranking. Created standardized profiles to enable efficient talent matching and data-driven hiring decisions.
- Partnered with the design team to create a weekly departmental newsletter featuring personnel updates, protocol documentation, and industry trends research and analysis.

RESEARCH INTERESTS AND SKILLS

Theoretical Areas

- Cultural Syncretism
- Post-modern Aerial Dance
- Disability Studies & Chronic Illness
- Embodiment & Somatic Practices
- Trauma-Informed Pedagogy
- Choreography & Performance Theory
- Community Arts Research

Research & Professional Skills

- Grant Writing & Administration
- Qualitative & Quantitative Analysis
- Curriculum Design & Execution
- Project & Production Management
- Workflow Systems & Archival Practice
- Rigging & Safety Protocols
- Community Partnerships & Engagement

AFFILIATIONS

- American Youth Circus Organization & American Circus Educators
- Born to Fly Aerial Curriculum