Happiest When in the Theatre:
A Young Actor's Reflections on the Craft

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

For most theatre artists, their goal is to invest some time every day into their craft. For some actors, that may be reviewing old monologues or reading about new breath support techniques. For directors, reading newly reviewed plays may be the best choice for the day. One item, however, that sometimes slips between the woodworks of a working artist can be the idea of reflection. In the theatre there is the universal understanding that a portion of the craft is in the reflection process. As a theatre artist, one must take time during their work to reflect on their growth and their practice. Choosing to ignore this important factor can produce negative effects on the development of an actor. Creating set aside time to reflect on newly acquired skills can be extremely valuable for any theatre artist.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Karen Kessler for her immense guidance that she has given me over the past two years. Words cannot even express the amount of gratitude I have for your mentorship and friendship. Thank you for opening my eyes to my true potential and drive.

I would also like to thank Jennifer Landreth for the immense faith she had in me. I wish I could have expressed this appreciation earlier and more often. Thank you for giving me my first chance again. You are greatly missed.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family. If you had not forced me to audition for the play *The Princess and the Dragon* when I was seven, my undying love for theatre may never have surfaced.
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I. Statement of Creative Project

Acting majors, as well as all other fields within the theatre realm, are called forth to critique their own work and find ways to improve on their craft. Additionally, the ability to grow and flourish in this industry can be very difficult if the artist refuses to find new ideas and continue on a life-long journey of self-discovery. The author felt that creating and writing a blog with reflections that marked the progress she had made throughout her senior year at Ball State would be a monumental task that would benefit her craft. In addition to the author’s benefit, the ability to have these blogs online and available to other Ball State Theatre students would be accommodating as well. Sharing her various experiences with other theatre majors could be a grand way for others to learn and grow through example.
II. Description of Creative Project

The author began to write the blogs in May of 2010 and the blogs continued to be written through April of 2011. The author wrote about a variety of subjects in these blogs throughout the writing process. The author had the pleasure of being an intern at *A Red Orchid Theatre*, a professional theatre company in Chicago, for the summer. There are a number of blogs that describe this particular experience and how the professional realm of theatre is compared to college theatre. Certain items that are discussed are general auditions, headshots, grant writing, and *Chicago Theatre*.

Additionally, the author was involved in five different stage productions throughout the academic school year. The first show discussed within the blogs, *Almost, Maine* by John Cariani, was directed by faculty members Jennifer Landreth and Michael Daehn. The four shows following that were student directed. The author discusses the experiences of working in all five shows and goes into detail the process that those shows took. Furthermore, there are numerous reflections on the rehearsal process that go into detail what the author was learning about and experiencing.

Lastly, the author wrote about the theatre realm as a whole, as well as exploring the field of acting specifically. There are numerous reflective blogs that discuss new items that were being studied by the author, which then related to how those items could help her craft. The importance of concentration, bold
choices, and research are all discussed within these blogs. The author made sure to discuss a realm of acting tips and suggestions that every actor should keep in mind. This blog was meant to be in part, a rough guide for any person who is an actor and who wants continue to mature their craft.

The title of the blog is *Theatre Major 101* and was additionally placed on the Ball State Department of Theatre and Dance Website for student access.

The URL to the blog is: http://theatremajor101.blogspot.com/
III. Author’s Statement

When asked to reflect on one’s growth and learning process, many avenues arise to how one can explore this task. Certain people choose to approach the task without true sincerity and dedication. Others choose to perform this task hurriedly and carelessly. Only the ones who choose to do the work and create truthful and meaningful reflections end up getting a positive benefit from the exercise. In any given field, there is a constant need for growth and recognition for learning. Scientists need to reflect on past research and learn from their mistakes as they take on a new experiment. Culinary students need to continually taste and adjust their cooking while learning new culinary cuisine to grow even more knowledgeable of the food industry. The author of this creative project was willing to do the work and create truthful and meaningful reflections on her work within the theatre.

Reflections and growth are discussed daily within the Ball State Theatre Department. Students are pushed to continue to learn and apply their craft as often as possible. Every actor should be working on their craft in one way or another almost every day. Just as an athlete trains daily, an actor should train daily. Additionally, an actor should always be looking for new techniques to learn and applying this newfound knowledge. The author of these blogs was involved with various experiences throughout the school year and was able to reflect and write down her thoughts about what she was currently learning or being exposed...
to. This was a very positive experience that was only heightened through the ability to go back and re-read past blogs. Having written reminders of past ideas is a fantastic outlet for continued learning, as well as an excellent reminder of past mistakes and triumphs.

The blogs serve as a portal into the mind of the author. Her thoughts on were recorded and given full access to the world. The ability to write about the experiences, be they of highs or lows, was a great outlet to dictate from. If you look at each blog individually, you can tell that each blog holds its own purpose during a specific time of need. The individual need to explore the effect of what had happened during that specific day is present within the writing. There is something to benefit from in each blog, as well as a learning outcome. The author openly notes that if this creative project had not been in effect, there would be quite a few learning experiences that would have been forgotten over time.

The author was attempting to capture as many raw and previously unexposed thoughts as possible in the blogs to create a realm of organized chaos of the mind. There are a lot of themes and ideas that the author could have chosen from when a blog was created, but choosing specific subjects to talk about tended to come from an event that took place that day. The author discovered early on that planning a blog in advance never worked to her advantage. The most successful blogs were ones that were created due to an event or learned encounter. The originality of the idea created a compellingly
written and reflective blog. As stated earlier, there is a positive and definite outcome from this thesis. The main idea of this creative project had events that were occurring six to ten months ago being recorded. Then, when the events that are reflected upon are reviewed over time, the ideas coming from the author’s head seem just as fresh and new as when they were originally written.

The first portion of the blogs was written from May 2010 through July 2010. These blogs specifically discussed the internship that the author was currently working, which was at *A Red Orchid Theatre* in Chicago. Now there is generally a gap between the college realm of theatre and the professional realm of the theatre. Understanding that gap and how to make a clean transition is very important. Once an actor moves from the college realm and into the professional world, it is up to the actor to continue to work on their craft. However, understanding how the professional theatre realm works can be difficult to adjust to. The author wrote numerous blogs about the theatre company and her insight to professional theatre. Being exposed to this kind of information can be extremely helpful to any theatre major that is still in college but well on their way to graduating.

An additional incentive in this creative project was for the author to relay information to people who were interested in learning about an outside experience, or who were looking to learn more about the acting process. The author’s ability to write first-hand experiences about interning at a successful theatre company is an immense learning tool for any student or actor willing to
learn. One example of a blog that is extremely beneficial to any actor that will be entering the professional world would be the one written on June 8, 2010. In this particular blog, the author describes sifting through all of the filing cabinets of headshots and sorting them out at her internship. She was exposed to all kinds of headshots and resumes and caught on very quickly certain do’s and don’ts in the headshot/resume field. Having the blog available, the author was able to write her thoughts down as early as possible, which in turn created even more accurate depictions of what was currently going on in her internship. Any actor who would be interested in getting an inside look into the professional realm would benefit from reading the blogs pertaining to the internship.

Once school was back in session, the blogs turned to rehearsals and other enlightening moments. The author was able to discuss an even wider range of subjects due to the amount of theatre exposure in classes and the rehearsal process. This became the section of time in which a lot of the blogs became extremely free flowing and natural due to the amount of writing inspiration. A lot of the blogs became particularly reflective on the craft of acting and what the author was learning about during the rehearsal process. It was very academically beneficial to put to practice what she had been learning in the classroom and placing it on the Strother Stage in the production of *Almost, Maine*.

Writing about the rehearsal process helped create an intact rehearsal journal. The author could reflect about her journey through the process of discovering her characters, her interactions with other actors, and her personal
growth through the entire experience. There were days where writing it down became a way to wind down and process what had happened during that specific rehearsal. These blogs are a constant reminder of what the author went through in the process of self-discovery.

One blog, written on September 15, 2010, discusses the importance of remembering that the rehearsal process is in fact, a rehearsal process. Actors tend to freak out and hope they are perfect from the very first rehearsal, and this can create an extremely negative outcome in the performance. In this particular blog, the author discusses her re-discovery of the importance of making bold choices during the rehearsal process and not being afraid to try new things every night. This is an example of an experience in which the author was reminded of something she had forgotten about. Writing about this experience and reminding herself of this important idea is a reason why this creative project was so important to produce. Having the ability to openly reflect on this item of importance and sharing the information with anyone who chooses to read it is a great learning experience.

This method of writing blogs was an extensive process, but it turned out to be a very successful one. The success is mainly due to the author taking the time and reflecting on the items that were of importance during this time. Having the outlet and ability to openly reflect on her journey through her senior year was extremely beneficial not only to her, but to anyone who chose to read her blog. The wide range of topics and responses created a very diverse but
universally themed blog about theatre and acting. No two blogs appeared alike, which is a great accomplishment since the author wrote a total of forty-two blogs over the course of this creative project. Having this blog available to other students and actors is another benefit to this creative project since they can learn from the author’s own process and experiences. This creative project was a success in the eyes of the author. Being able to reflect and look back on personal growth can be one of the most beneficially academic achievements because the person can see where they started and how far they have come. This can create an even deeper fire burning in them to continue their journey and continue to reflect.

“Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.”

– Robert Collier
IV. Original Copy of Written Proposal
Written May 7, 2010

For my Honors Thesis, I plan on creating a blog and writing about my experiences in my summer internship and the show I am acting in during the fall. I am going to be interning at a professional theatre (A Red Orchid Theatre) in Chicago, Illinois for the summer. I will be doing various jobs from day to day (from box office to casting to education to workshops to rehearsal, etc.) and will be truly immersed into the professional theatre world. Additionally, I was cast in a fall show (Almost, Maine) for the Ball State Theatre and Dance Mainstage shows. This will be the first time I will experience how the rehearsal process is for equity actors. The reason I will be writing a blog is because I will be experiencing things that underclassman theatre majors will hopefully be experiencing themselves in a year or two. Through my blog, I hope to share my experiences in the internship and the show and help give good advice of what to do and not to do in certain situations. An example could be what monologues are way overdone at auditions and what monologues were very powerful, but unknown. The project outcome will be my complete blog, which is going to be posted on the Theatre Website at Ball State under the student section.

I feel that this project will really help myself analyze my experiences at the internship and the show. Additionally, I will be learning so much from the internship by getting hands-on experience and sharing tips with other theatre students would be a great benefit to them as well. My blog will be a guide to the professional theatre world and I will be sharing what I have been learning while
there and students will be able to use my blog to help them get ready for those same experiences. The blog will help me as a theatre major look back and realize what I have learned about myself through the process and when I graduate I will be that much more confident about working in the professional theatre world. The project will help me reflect on the new experiences I will encounter and I will be able to comment on what I have applied to the internship. My theatre courses here at Ball State will be a tremendous help when I am at the internship and when I am working on the show in the fall. My knowledge with working with children, my backstage knowledge, and my knowledge of theatre history and plays will be a tremendous help when I work at the internship. My acting classes and my acting experience will also be helpful when I am in the rehearsal process for the fall show. Each experience is going to make an impact on my learning and I am so thankful that this project will be immersive learning. Getting the hands-on experience is exactly what I need in order to help increase my knowledge of the theatre and will help me develop my talents in the theatre as well.

My blog is going to be linked on the Ball State Theatre and Dance website under the student section. My audience is mainly for those students who are interested in learning more about the rehearsal process through equity and learn what works and what does not during the process. I want my blog to be a survival-type guide for theatre students who want to pursue acting or work at a professional theatre after they are done with school. I would hope that my
audience would take away good tips and expand their knowledge of what they
know about the rehearsal process and how equity and professional theatre
companies run.
On the following pages are the entire collection of blogs from *Theatre Major 101*, written by Elise Spoerlein.

The total collection of blogs is forty-two, the date ranging from May 22, 2010 to April 12, 2010.

They appear in chronological order.
Saturday, May 22, 2010

Introductions and a Minor Advertisement That is Very Well-Deserved

Hello. I've never written a blog before so it will be a journey for everyone involved. This blog is part of my Senior Thesis at Ball State University and it will be mainly about my journey through my internship at A Red Orchid Theatre (located in Chicago) and my character development/rehearsal process for the show I was cast in for the fall at Ball State University called "Almost, Maine," written by John Cariani. I'm quite excited to be writing about my experiences because I feel so grateful for the upcoming opportunities I have with my internship at A Red Orchid Theatre and the show in the fall. I'm very excited to be delving into the world of a professional theatre company and rehearsing for "Almost, Maine."

Now, before I begin with anything else, I will be doing a slight advertisement for A Red Orchid Theatre. I have been living near Chicago my entire life and I never had the chance to see a show of theirs. I, like most other people, tend to get caught up with the mainstream shows that head towards the Cadillac Theatre, Ford Theatre, Oriental Theatre, etc. Whenever I come home, I plan on seeing shows like "Billy Elliot" and "Wicked." Now, do not get me wrong, the musicals we have come to Chicago are fantastic and I have enjoyed the experience I have had at every one of the shows (most of the time in the tippy-top rows of the balcony, or as I have come to love and call them: The Nosebleed Section). I am a college student, so grabbing those $25 tickets for the top rows is a hell of a lot more appealing than grabbing $100 and up tickets in the orchestra. Sorry for rambling, so I'll quickly get back to my main point. So, I went this past Thursday to see "Abigail's Party" at A Red Orchid Theatre. Now, if you have never been to their theatre, it reminds me a little of Strother Theatre (anyone from Ball State Theatre will understand that), only even more intimate (think of a small blackbox theatre for anyone else who is trying to follow this). Going from a place like the Cadillac Theatre (which is gigantic) to this intimate theatre that seats about 80 people was a huge change. AND I LOVED IT!! It was so nice to be right up with the actors and not have to squint in order to make out the ant people on stage. The atmosphere as you walk into the theatre is lovely because there is a small entrance way that leads to an alley-looking hallway (painted slightly greenish), which then leads to the box office door (which is right next to a staircase), which finally leads to the entrance (past a curtain) to the intimate theatre. I personally love the alleyway. I can't tell you exactly why, but I really enjoy it.

The show itself was fantastic. I am so glad that I got the chance to see it and am so happy that it will be performed again at Theatre on the Lake. If anyone has any time to see it, go see it. And before you ask me or anyone else about the
show, the character Abigail is not in the show. I personally, was dumb enough to ask Kirsten Fitzgerald (who is the main character in the show, as well as the Artistic Director for A Red Orchid Theatre) if she was Abigail...she laughed it off and told me that so many people have asked that question. So I didn't feel as dumb, but I still felt dumb. So anywho, her character is Beverly, who is hosting a party across the street from Abigail's party, and Kirsten has created such an amazing character. I never wanted to keep my eyes off of her. Her facials, her tone(s) of voice, how her repeated line of "That's great" kept me laughing every time she said it, it all was fantastic. She was brilliant. The cast was brilliant. Whether it was Angela's (Miekra Girten, also an ensemble member of A Red Orchid Theatre) quirky awkward facials, Laurence's (Mark Ulrich) falling patience with Beverly, Tony's (Ryan Bollettino) slow descent into drunkenness (and everyone else as well), and Susan's (Natalie West) hilarious repeated line of "Thank you" as she tried to survive in the party environment with the horror of her daughter's party across the street, all of it put together created a wonderful and tragic spin to the play. It was the best two hours of theatre that I've seen (professionally) in a very long time and it was a great breath of fresh air. The entire cast did such a fantastic job of bringing this show to life and creating such hilarious and horrendous moments throughout the entire play (especially the ending). I don't want to get too into the play itself because it is quite hard to explain all that happens because it is a show that you have to see for yourself.

So for all of you people who did not want to read my long paragraphs, here is what you missed:
1. Go see A Red Orchid Theatre Production.
2. If you have already seen A Red Orchid Theatre Production, go see another one.
3. The space inside the theatre is intimate, and I loved that.
4. The cast of "Abigail's Party" was brilliant. If you didn't get a chance to see it and will be in Chicago this summer, go see it during Theatre on the Lake. YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.

Now that I have officially finished that, essentially, what you will be reading through these posts is my quirky and exciting adventures while interning at A Red Orchid Theatre (following that will be the rehearsal process of "Almost, Maine"). I definitely plan on placing other things on this blog, such as random plays that I will be reading over the summer. For example I just finished reading Sam Shepard's "Buried Child." The play is still spinning in my head and I'm trying to figure out what it all meant...but it's Sam Shepard...so I may need to read it once or twice more before I can fully wrap my head around it. If anyone has any comments or feedback about shows I mention, feel free to post back! I would love to talk about any shows that I venture out to read this summer (as well as any suggestions of plays to read). Additionally, I will talk about my overall experiences in Chicago too, which may help people who have never been there
Alright, that's enough for one post. I promise they will not always be this long.
Alright, may the journey begin...

Thursday, May 27, 2010

**Skirt + Strike = Bad Combination**

So, to start this post off, if anyone has ever tried to help strike a set in a skirt like I did the other day at A Red Orchid Theatre, you have come to realize like I have, that it is not a good combination. Ironically, I am not one to wear skirts often. Most people who know me usually see me in a Ball State T-shirt, jeans, and tennis shoes. Lately, since I will be student teaching next spring and the fact that I should start wearing "big people" clothes since I'm turning 22 in August, I have decided to slowly start expanding my wardrobe to other items. Even though the theatre's atmosphere is very casual and relaxed right now at A Red Orchid Theatre, I'm trying to look my best every time I come in. My parents raised me to look professional in professional settings, so I've been trying to wear nicer things to the internship. So yesterday when it was reaching 80 degrees I thought, why not wear a skirt? So I did. And I came into the theatre and sat down at my little computer station and started typing box office information into the computer. Alice, who was a past intern at A Red Orchid Theatre, came in shortly after I sat down and told me that I would be helping strike the set later on that day.

Now, I am completely fine with set work. I am a tech minor, which has to account for something. However, I turn out to not be the best strike helper in the world in a skirt. I did help as much as I could though, don't get me wrong! I did unscrew quite a few screws, I learned where the dumpster is, I helped move parts of the set into a large pile, and I did clean up a lot of the loose screws that were hanging out everywhere on the floor. It was really fun to see the space slowly evolve and see how far back it went once the set was partially taken down. I haven't seen the theatre completely bare, so it was exciting to see the space become slightly bare. This particular strike is different than most other strikes because "Abigail's Party" is going to be performed at Theatre on the Lake (I believe it's in late June...but don't quote me on that). So we had to be more careful with certain set pieces and we were trying to figure out which huge pieces of set and carpet we would move to Theatre on the Lake, and which parts of the set we were ditching at the time. One part of the set that was interesting to me was the wallpaper that they had used for the set. Instead of painting the set, or even putting up wallpaper, it ended up being an elastic fabric that they literally stapled to the wood. From the audience's perspective, I never even
thought that the walls were fabric. It really helped the set flow because the lines looked so clean due to it being fabric and not painted on. I thought that was a very smart and clever thing to do and I felt like sharing :)

Tomorrow, there is a possibility that I may be helping finishing strike. Kirsten suggested that I wear paint clothes. Let's just say, I'm definitely taking her advice.

Sunday, June 6, 2010

Delay Due to Flu Bug...

So I've been back to A Red Orchid Theatre twice since my last post. I received a real nasty flu bug after Memorial Day so I was unable to go to my internship on Wednesday. But I did go last Friday and this past Friday. The first Friday was finishing up with strike. Essentially, we did a nice few hours of "spring cleaning" for the theatre. Every theatre needs it at the end of their season if you have never participated in theatre. At the end of a season, a theatre can look pretty beat up. However, with a few helping hands (or lots of helping hands depending on the size of the space) and you spend a solid few days cleaning everything and putting everything back in its place, it is an amazing accomplishment. The space looks so much nicer, and everything looks neat. We actually plan on cleaning everything up again once "Abigail's Party" is done performing in Theatre on the Lake. That way, everything is 'officially' placed back in its original place.

Then this past Friday, I helped write a grant for the theatre company. A Red Orchid Theatre is trying to start up summer classes for kids and money is always a plus in that kind of situation. They had such a positive outcome with their Youth Ensemble, so they wanted to extend the opportunity to all kids in the Chicagoland area. As a Theatre Education Major, I think it's a terrific thing that A Red Orchid Theatre is starting up classes for kids. So I spent the majority of Friday putting together a grant proposal for the Humana Foundation. In their database, they already have past grants written out, so I pretty much went through a few of them and took parts of past grants written and wrote transitions and such so that it would flow. It's not the most intriguing job in the world, I'm not gonna lie, but it is helping me see how theatre companies survive and how they are able to receive these grants. Also, I'm learning the layout of how grants should be written, what foundations are looking for, and what type of information is needed. Whether I end up teaching at a high school, teaching in college, or are part of a theatre company, this type of information I will need to know and understand. I'm very grateful for the chance to get to understand certain things like writing grants in a professional theatre company setting.
because it just makes me feel so much more confident that I will at least know some very important items that will help me out in the long run.

Monday, June 7, 2010

Dark Theatre and a Familiar Face

Hello, so now that I'm back in the swing of things and feeling much better, life is just grand. I absolutely LOVE interning at A Red Orchid Theatre. I think it's the combination of the people who I am interacting with and being introduced to, the fact that I get to read play after play after play, or the fact that they do shows that I'm extremely interested in. I swear, ever since I took Karen Kessler's Directing One class in which we read THE PILLOWMAN, written by Martin McDonagh, I have really started to enjoy dark theatre. I always thought I was a musical theatre person who enjoyed MARY POPPINS and SOUND OF MUSIC, but after reading and exposing myself to darker plays, I've come to realize that I really love and connect to dark stuff and straight acting is my real passion. No idea why I have this urge and love for dark stuff. Nothing terrible has happened in my life that would make me only feel dark things. I feel like I am a happy person most of the time and try to always have a smile on my face.

It really hit me that I enjoyed playing harsher characters when I helped fellow classmate Natalie Cooper in one of her Directing Two Scenes. We were directing scenes from Chekhov's THE SEAGULL and she needed an actor to play Masha in the scene where she's drunk and has practically lost all hope. Now I'll be honest, I was terrified to play a character drunk because I hat it when people play drunk over-the-top or extremely fake. And I really hadn't been that drunk that many times to really engulf what it is to be that drunk (being an RA for two years will limit that for you...), so I tried to bring out other emotions through her drunkenness. Overall, I think I did pretty well with it. But the thing that was most gratifying was that I enjoyed being that character so much; it was a high for me. Like I said, I don't know why, but I really enjoyed being able to pull out those emotions and really let the character run with them. Honestly, if I could chose between doing a happy little play for the rest of my life or a dark show that would take me to not-so-happy places every night, I would choose the latter. It's all so interesting to me. I've been talking to my mom about it and she actually came up to me one evening and asked if I was depressed or was turning emo (And she was completely serious, she was not joking by any means. I mean, she actually looked concerned). I settled her fears by telling her that I was in fact, not clinically depressed or turning emo, but I was merely interested and fascinated in the character development and the themes that go around such dark theatre. And in the end I find this all so ironic since I was cast in the light-hearted show of Ball State's Theatre and Dance Fall Season, ALMOST,
MAINE, by John Cariani. Don’t get me wrong, I think it’s going to be an amazing opportunity to be a part of the cast and get to know and learn three very distinct characters. And I’m not gonna lie, it’s going to be nice change to go home from rehearsal and not be in a dark place. Now I digress.

Today at the internship, I had the pleasure of seeing the familiar face of Karen Kessler, who is an ensemble member of A Red Orchid Theatre and one of my professors at Ball State. She was coming in to cast part of her show that is in the first slot for the fall season at A Red Orchid Theatre, LOUIS SLOTIN SONATA. The male actor who was supposed to come in and be the reader for the two auditions had an audition himself, so I stepped in and read instead. Two actors came in and read for the part. This was a slight glimpse of what I would be looking at once I start the casting part of my internship, which I am so excited for! I won’t say much about the auditions specifically because at this point I’m pretty sure that’s all confidential due to casting, but it was a great time seeing two great actors pull out two completely different takes on the same character. It just made me so excited for the casting internship and what’s to come with auditions! It also gave me a really bad acting itch and made me miss it a lot. I don’t know, as much as I am terrified to start auditioning for shows in Chicago once I’m done with school, I’m also really looking forward to it. I can’t wait to see what I can do and what will become of me. I usually get really nervous before auditions, but I’m assuming that will soon go away when you are auditioning constantly and you learn to accept the rejections and learn from mistakes. Who knows where this acting path that I’ve chosen will take me, but I’m so ready to see what happens!

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Every Theatre Has One: The Overflowing Filing Cabinet of Headshots

Today as I sifted through all of A Red Orchid Theatre’s filing cabinet of headshots and resumes. Needless to say, it was quite intimidating to see just how many they had and it just kept me in perspective of just how many actors are out there in the world. Like I said, quite intimidating, but it was a good learning experience to see multiple resumes and see which types I liked, and which ones were not quite so aesthetically pleasing. As my casting internship gets underway, I’m sure I will have plenty more examples of do’s and don’ts of resume-headshots. So don’t worry, there will be plenty more to come after this!

Let me begin with the worst type of all (at least for me, and I soon found out Kirsten joined me): When the resume stapled to the back of the headshot is bigger than the headshot; therefore, the resume paper is sticking out awkwardly
and is crinkling and messing up the neatness. I found out Kirsten and I had the same undying hatred towards those types of headshot-resumes and she had said she always wants to throw those out right away without looking at them. I agreed. It just looks so sloppy and it looks like you put no effort towards trying to make your resume-headshot combination look presentable. I know in Kip Shawger's computers class at Ball State, he stressed so much that the headshot should NEVER be smaller than the resume. I would just think if you were a professional actor (or at least in the process of attempting to become one) and were at a school in which you received a degree in acting, how were you not taught the "do's and don'ts of resume-headshots"?? I guess I just see it as common sense.

On a side note, merely paper-clipping your resume to your headshot is not a good idea. A paper clip is NOT a permanent replacement of staples and resumes can easily be lost and separated. Needless to say, I don't think many theatre companies are going to be searching for your resume if it gets lost. Your possible acting career at that company will be terminated due to your own demise the moment you decide to trust a paper clip instead of staples.

Another thing that people did that was unnecessary was they would send in multiple headshots. I'll be honest, Kirsten just picked which one she liked better, and the other was tossed. I'm assuming other theatre companies do the same. Theatre companies do not have the space to keep multiple resumes for every actor that sends one in. So my advice would be: send in one headshot instead of two and save yourself a few bucks (or send that extra headshot to another theatre company).

Personally, there was one thing I really did like about certain headshot-resumes that I came across multiple times. I've heard acting majors worry about which headshot to choose: should I pick the one where I'm smiling, or do I pick the serious one? What I liked about some of them that I came across, is that they would have their serious headshot and then on the resume there would be a small colored picture in the upper hand corner of another headshot of them smiling. This way, a director can see your personality and smile a little more, as well as see the "serious actor headshot" that most people end up using.

So there are a few quick tips about headshot stuff. Once again, if you didn't want to read all that, here's the short version:
1. NEVER have your resume paper bigger than your headshot!! It looks so sloppy and careless...
2. DO NOT trust paper clips. Paper clips are the devil and will abandon your resume sooner or later.
3. Send in ONE HEADSHOT (unless the company asks you otherwise, then ignore this completely). DO NOT send in more than one. More than likely it will get
thrown out. We’re all starving artists; the least you can do is save yourself a few dollars on an extra resume.

4. This last one is personal preference: If you have a serious headshot, possibly place a smiling photo of you on your resume. Top hand corner, small, color. DO NOT have your face across your entire resume and do not make the picture obnoxiously large. Keep it classy.

Like I said earlier, as the casting portion of the internship gets more underway, I’m bound to see more do’s and don’ts to headshots and resumes. So tune in next time for more!

Tuesday, June 29, 2010

Time Flies When You’re Having Fun!

Wow, these past two weeks are a complete blur... I guess time flies when you’re having fun! Most of the things that I have been doing around A Red Orchid Theatre have been searching and writing grants for the company. I’ve also been helping out with a few of the casting items and writing play reading reports, as well as some things with the box office/subscribers. This past week I helped out with moving the set of "Abigail's Party" down to Theatre on the Lake. I plan on writing about what I've been doing in more detail over the next few days. If I wrote down everything now, it would be pretty long. In addition to my internship at A Red Orchid Theatre, I've also been helping out with my town's Ela Community Theatre. The show they are doing this year is "Guys and Dolls." It's been fun working with younger kids and getting them excited about theatre.

I'm so incredibly grateful for this experience I'm having and I keep learning new things every time I go downtown. I've met some amazing people and it's been fun so far, and I cannot wait to see what the next month and a half will bring!

Wednesday, July 7, 2010

And the Plays Keep Rolling In!

So one of the things that I am doing while interning at A Red Orchid Theatre is reading plays that have been sent to the theatre in hopes of being picked up and chosen for a future season. I have really enjoyed reading some of these plays that have come through, especially since the majority of them have not been produced yet. It is a lot of fun to open up a new downloaded script and begin to read a newly written script. Some of them are quite good; others unfortunately, not so much. I do not like being the mean guy and saying a script would not
work at the theatre because I know in the back of my head that a playwright spent a lot of sweat and tears writing the script. But honestly, I do not want to waste Kirsten's time (for those of you who have forgotten, Kirsten's the Artistic Director for AROT) by telling her to read a script mainly because I "don't want to hurt the playwrights feelings." Kirsten gets an insane amount of scripts and I refuse to make her read one that is not right or ready for A Red Orchid Theatre.

It has been fun finding some very well written scripts within the large pile of emails. It has also interesting to read some and think to myself, "Why did this playwright send this type of script to A Red Orchid Theatre?" For those of you who do not know the general workings of AROT's productions, they tend to be very dark and twisted for the most part. And I am not gonna lie, I read a few that are very far from that spectrum and were quite happy. For any playwright who may be reading this, that may be good advice for you when you send out copies of your script to various theatres. Make sure that your script matches their style. If it is no way comparable, why waste your time sending a script? Additionally, try to send a script in email form (it saves trees). I am not a big fan of reading on a screen (and neither is Kirsten), but I have sacrificed my sanity to read the scripts on my computer. I guess I am old-fashioned like that; I like to be able to have something in my hand to read and be able to turn pages. But like I said, save trees and email them if possible.

Now what I do when I read a play is I send Kirsten a Play Reading Report. Now, you may be wondering what that is exactly. Well, what I do is as I am reading the play I begin to take notes on the characters, setting, synopsis, themes, and any types of special considerations and styles a production of the play might need. Once I am done typing all that out, I give my own personal critique on the play. Now this may include what I liked about the play, didn't like, specific things to look out for while reading it, and my own personal opinion on whether or not the play may do well at A Red Orchid Theatre. And lastly, I search to find if the play has a production history and if the playwright has had any other successes with their work.

The task can be time consuming, but I am enjoying this experience so much and it has been great reading so many different types of plays and getting an even greater feel of what would be a possible future asset at A Red Orchid Theatre.
Tuesday, July 13, 2010

**Best Part of My Day = Meeting Michael Shannon and His Adorable Two-Year Old Daughter**

So yesterday I officially met the brilliant actor and one of the founding members of A Red Orchid Theatre, Michael Shannon. He has been in many plays around Chicago and has been in a number of movies. He was nominated for an Oscar for his supporting role in "Revolutionary Road," and his performance was very Oscar-worthy. If you haven't seen the movie, go and rent it right now and especially look out for when Michael is on. You will NOT be disappointed. I remember seeing that movie before I even knew who he was or that he had connections to AROT and thinking that his performance in that role was one of the highlights of the entire movie. I was completely drawn to his character the few times he was on and just loved it. So to go from loving his performance on the screen to actually having him a few feet in front of me was very dream-like to me and placed me in complete shock. When he originally walked into the room I had to do a double take before it sunk in that it was actually him. And can I tell you, he is one of the nicest, quirkiest guys you will ever meet (I'm beginning to think that "nice and quirky" are two personality traits that each ensemble member of AROT has...). He was so relaxed and calm and at ease. I had been looking at headshots and resumes when he had walked in (general auditions are coming up soon for AROT) and so I was seated at one side of the wall and Michael had situated himself with his ADORABLE two-year-old daughter on the other side. While he was talking to Cris (general manager), I had to stop myself from staring at him by looking at resumes every couple of minutes so I would break the stare. And his daughter was so cute!

Like I said, it was a complete honor to even meet him. And one thing I had never known about him until Karen had told me was that he had never had any professional acting training. He just does what he does when he acts, and he's quite good at what he does. I guess that made me feel a little bit more hopeful of my possible future in the acting world. I have been nervous at times because of my lack of collegiate training (especially after looking at the piles of headshots and resumes we have been receiving in response to the AROT general auditions call). But the fact that Michael has been able to perform and accomplish what he has done without technically being "trained" makes me more hopeful and has put a small skip in my step as I look out to my future. I truly think if you have the drive and the passion and the discipline for this particular field, no one should be able to stop yourself but you.
Thursday, August 5, 2010

I Have Found New Respect For People Who Want To Go Into Casting

It's really been a whirlwind of a month. And I have no idea how time flew this quickly (with it probably having to do with the fact that I've been so busy), but I'm loving every minute of this summer while interning at A Red Orchid Theatre. Each day I go in I feel like I learn so much more about theatre and the professional world. It's been an amazing experience and I am so heartbroken that it is all going to be over in a week...It's crazy how fast this internship has gone by. But I cannot even begin to thank everyone who has helped me throughout this internship and for all the knowledge that I now have. I feel like this last week I'm going to be writing every day because I don't want to waste a minute of anything. I am so excited to be going back to Ball State soon, but I'm not at all ready to give up this internship. It's going to be really hard to leave next Friday and know that I will not be getting on the train the following Monday to go back. It's just a very weird feeling because it has become such a part of my life this summer and now I'm leaving it. My hope, however, is that I will be able to see a few of the shows that run this upcoming year at A Red Orchid Theatre. I'm hoping that people may want to join me in the trip up to Chicago this upcoming year and carpooling would be an amazing way to get that accomplished.

Alright, I will now get off of my soapbox and begin to talk about the AMAZING experience of being a casting intern for a few weeks. I'm going to probably have to put this into multiple blogs because there is just so much to say and I'd rather chop it up than literally create a "blog novel." So I think I will begin by saying that being a casting intern has taught me so much (I feel like I'm sounding like a broken record, but it's true). It was a great way for me to get behind the scenes of a professional theatre company's view and really take in everything that directors and theatre companies look for when they begin to have a casting call. One of the great parts of this internship (both in the grant writing and the casting portion) is that I have learned and exposed myself to many new theatre companies that I did not know about prior to this internship. The main theatre companies I really knew about before I started this internship were the Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, and A Red Orchid Theatre. Apart from those few, I really did not know many other theatre companies on a name basis. Karen and Kirsten were able to expand my knowledge on theatre companies and gave me a list of theatres to be looking out for when I was looking at resumes. Here are some of the theatre companies they listed for me: The Gift Theatre, The Hypocrites, Steep Theatre, Straw Dog Theatre, Lifeline Theatre, Signal Theatre, Collaboraction, Rivendell Theatre, House Theatre, Timeline Theatre, Silk Road Theatre, Court Theatre, Theatre 7, and The Chicago
Dramatists. It was so great to have a broader perspective on the prominent theatre companies around Chicago and it was great finding out more information on some of the theatres.

And I'm not gonna lie, it was very intimidating when I started looking through headshots and resumes. It was hard to get out of my own thought process and get into the "casting director thought process" and really look for the people who we needed to see and set the others to the side. Karen had given me some tips on what to look for and helped me out through a lot of the headshots the first day. After that, I was pretty much on my own when it came to figuring out who to put in the "yes pile" and who to place in the "maybe pile." Of course, Karen and Kirsten looked through everything after I had placed them into the separate piles in case there were a few that they wanted to place in the opposing pile. Coming into this part of the internship, I was not expecting to get as much freedom as I ended up having. And it was a great feeling to be able to look at things for myself and learn and grow from that. As the weeks went on, I could tell that I was really improving on what to look for and the sorting process went quicker as the days progressed (I swear, that first day alone I literally spent the entire day looking at the resumes trying to figure out who fit where). It was great to sit down and look at each resume and also realize what parts of their headshot/resume were aesthetically pleasing to me and which ones weren't. It was great to look at them from a casting director's eyes because some items that seemed cute and practical, really ended up being a hassle and impractical. I'll probably save those specifics for another day...

Before I leave this blog alone, I would like to do a quick shout-out to A RED ORCHID THEATRE since they have recently been awarded "BEST THEATRE COMPANY" in CHICAGO MAGAZINE!!!!!! So congratulations to everyone at Red Orchid because the title is very much deserved!!!!

Wednesday, September 8, 2010

As One Door Closes, Another Opens...

So, my apologies for not doing this for quite a while...the craziness of moving back to the fun town of Muncie, Indiana, getting used to the new apartment, and classes beginning has kept me busy. But I promise that I will attempt to write as much as possible with the new experiences that are beginning with rehearsals for "Almost, Maine." There has also been much going on within the first few rehearsals, including a directorial change. Jen Landreth will no longer be with us through this process due to issues that I personally feel I do not have the right to discuss. However, my thoughts and prayers are with her and I hope she will come back to us soon. Mike Daehn will now be directing the show and we had
our first rehearsal with him last night. We have still not fully blocked the show, so we went through everything that we had blocked so far so that Mike would get a feel for what Jen had worked on with us for the few days she was here. We all know we have a lot to work through over the next month (we open exactly one month from yesterday...), but I'm sure the entire cast is going to kick into full gear and work rigorously over the next few weeks. I know I will be working on the show and script and character analysis and such whenever I find myself with free time. I really want to put everything I have into this show and really embrace these characters. I am excited, terrified, anxious, happy, etc. for the coming weeks with rehearsals. I know there will be high points, low points, and a bunch of points in between, but I feel I am ready for this task at hand.

And on a side note, I miss A Red Orchid Theatre terribly. And great news, they received 7 Jeff Nominations!!! (for those of you who don't know what that is, Karen described it as the Chicago version of the Oscars...) So congrats to everyone for that AMAZING accomplishment!!!

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

The First Stumble Through is Upon Us

So this entire past week has been very productive! Mike has been re-blocking certain parts of the show and everyone has gotten a grip on the changes and the new feel to rehearsals. My biggest problem that I'm facing right now is just completely letting go of what's going on in my head technically and just do it. I am extremely hard on myself and am my own most-feared critic. My goal for tonight's rehearsal is to quite thinking of what I didn't like about my choices, and instead just fully live in the moment. I think I'm so afraid of displeasing Mike or not giving him what he wants that I'm not taking full advantage of the rehearsal process. I'm trying to be perfect, and I can't think in that term because I think it will never make the situation better.

Beth Turcotte, one of our Ball State Theatre and Dance faculty members, talked during Karen's Directing One class (I'm the T.A.) and it really made me think about the rehearsal process. She was discussing the relationship between directors and actors and she said something that really stuck with me when she talked about the rehearsal process. I have known this information, but for someone to say it aloud for me to remind myself of it really helped. She said that we are learning in the rehearsal process and we are in an educational environment. Make bold choices. Try new things. Do not hold yourself back. The rehearsal process is when you experiment with everything. She said you should not be perfect in the rehearsal process. If you were that good, you wouldn't be here, you'd be in Chicago or New York working. This reminder couldn't have
come at a better time for me. I need to let go of my fears and just live in the world. I am so ready to explore my three characters even further tonight.

Monday, September 20, 2010

Knee-to-Knee

On Friday, Mike had two of my scenes do a knee-to-knee, which I had never done before. Pretty much what it is you have the actors sit right across from each other and go through the entire scene. This helps the process of figuring out some moments and beats that may need to be a little clearer or to figure out beats that may not be working out. It was a great help to the scenes and we were able to figure out a beat or two that was not showing clearly before. We were switching around a few things we had discussed earlier and doing a knee-to-knee was a great way in order for me to focus on my beats instead of doing the blocking as well. I wish we had done something like this at the beginning of the process because I think it would have helped me discover a lot of things about the scene sooner. However, discovering throughout the process is what makes the rehearsal process fun. I love having that rush of realizing "oh, that's what that means!" or "that's what he's trying to get me to do!" I may just be a nerd, but I love finding new moments. I'm trying very hard to not set things in stone that I have chosen, unless Mike wants a moment to be kept a certain way. I just do not want to give up too easily and keep a moment the way it is and never decide to figure out a different way to approach it.

This rehearsal process has really helped me with my process of character development. I love when Mike poses a question that I haven't thought about because it puts a completely new spin what certain things I have looked at for a while. Having an outside point of view on my character has helped me with discovering new traits and objectives. This experience has been an eye-opener and a great way for me to discover more about myself as an actor and has made me grow so much. I love learning more and more about myself every day.

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Changes and Discoveries

Now that we are moving towards running the show, we have begun to run each act every other night. We have officially run the first and second act twice apiece in the last two nights. The rehearsal process is slowly shifting because Mike isn't stopping the scenes as much for moment to moment, and instead we are running through everything and he is giving notes in between the two runs we
had each night. He has stopped us at certain spots if moments just aren't working or if something technical is not working. In addition, we are all continuing to find new moments and new discoveries as we go, as well as changing certain moments that are not working as much as they used to. It is crazy to think that by this time next week we will be performing the entire show for Crew View. Crew View is when the students that will be crewing the show will be able to watch the show once the full way through before they begin to crew the show and will unfortunately not be able to watch the show during the run because they will be crewing the show, obviously. With that coming up, costume fittings, and talk of lighting choices, the reality of the show going up in about three weeks is becoming more and more real...It honestly feels like yesterday I was cast. I'm honestly starting to get a little sad that this experience is slowly making its way to the finish line. This has been such an incredible experience so far and I feel so blessed to have had the chance to be a part of it.

This experience, as well as the numerous experiences from last year through acting in various class scenes, capstones (directing student's shows), and now a Ball State Theatre and Dance Production, has really helped me make the slow transition of bringing myself into the acting realm of theatre again. And I'm loving every minute of it. I feel like I'm home when I'm in a rehearsal. It feels right to me. I would love to teach students as well, don't get me wrong, but I get this extreme sensation when I'm working on a character. And I'm not ready to give that up just yet. I feel like I have a lot of fight and yearn for learning left, and I hope this will continue with me once I get out into the real world.

Monday, November 1, 2010

Aftermath

So the reason I haven't written in a month is because I wanted to have the entire experience go through without me talking about it moment to moment. I would much rather discuss it afterwards and reflect instead, especially since that is the main reason why I am even doing this as my Honors Thesis. I want to be able to look back and discuss how some things worked while others did not. This entire experience with "Almost, Maine" had been a roller coaster (but a good one, overall). I am still trying to get everything settled in my head in order to discuss it clearly so I'm probably going to write about a lot of stuff in individual blogs. Additionally, this is a huge help for any students who are interested in the rehearsal process and what went on during rehearsals and how I developed my characters specifically. I would really like to discuss a lot about the show and how I was able to work within the space and with other actors. This was really my first college experience working with college acting majors and a professor as a director. So there was a lot of things that were new to me with the process.
and I feel like I tried to understand as much as I could in terms of understanding the rehearsal process and character development. I really had a fantastic experience when it comes to learning about myself as an actor. I think that was honestly the most beneficial thing that came out of this experience.

Sunday, November 21, 2010

Concentration

For the remainder of the semester, I thought it would be beneficial to just discuss certain elements within the acting/theatre world that are of importance. Since I began this blog, I feel like I have learned an overwhelming amount of things, as well as nice reminders of other items I had already learned. I thought concentration would be a good topic to discuss first. I am currently in the rehearsal process for a Capstone (for those of you who don't know what that is, it's a directing student's senior project; they have to direct their own show basically) and the play is "Silence." Now, there are a few scenes throughout the entire show in which there are extreme amounts of humor. I am a person who tends to laugh at situations, so it has become a mission of mine to stop laughing during certain scenes. I have to really concentrate on the scene and attempt to not see the humor of what is going on since my character does not see the humor in it.

I have come to discover over my last three years in college that concentration is one of the key elements in acting. If you are not focused on what you are doing, you will indeed flounder. Earlier in my years, I tended to wander off sometimes and think of other things I need to get done during the day. However, I have definitely left those bad habits at the door and have begun to encompass my characters I am playing fully. Some people need more than a moment before a scene begins to get into character. I didn't have that much time to focus and get into character during "Almost, Maine" because I was usually changing and getting my hair re-done in between the scenes. However, since I had more time during the rehearsal process to begin to get into character, once the performances began, I was able to tap into each character easier since I had worked on it a lot during the rehearsal process.

Monday, November 22, 2010

Aspirants

In high school, I always had the problem of exhaling a lot during a monologue. I have rid that habit since coming to Ball State and as I'm working with high
school students at a local Muncie high school, I can begin to hear the students exhaling loudly during monologues. While I was in acting class with Mike my freshman year, he talked about how we needed to stop exhaling too much to make it dramatic or lifelike, because it does not help in either sense. It ends up becoming a bad habit and it does not make it dramatic by any means if you exhale after EVERY SENTENCE. Yes, once in a while there should be a beat with an exhale if needed. However, to do it very often defeats the very purpose of it. I made a mental note of it and changed it for myself. I am hoping to end this habit with the high school students I am working with. I want to break this habit. Heavy breathing does nothing. Just a friendly reminder of bad habits that have been broken.

Monday, November 29, 2010

Inner Monologues

I've been working with the high school students with the concept of inner monologues for a day or two. I ended up stealing an exercise that I did in Mike's Acting Two class. We were given a place/location as to where we were and we had to think of an inner monologue while we were doing a scene. For example, I had the students do a scene on the beach. It made the students have to think on their feet during the beginning because they were trying to think of random things to think about. However, that wasn't doing them any good in learning the lesson so I told them they would just have to let themselves think random thoughts until I pointed at them to share their own thoughts. That way it was what they were truly thinking about and not what they were thinking about while waiting for me to call on them. I wanted them to incorporate this into their character work for their monologues because we all have an inner monologue going as we go about our lives and I them to mirror this and do that with their characters as well.

Thursday, January 27, 2011

New Beginnings

So, I'm continuing this blog through the end of the semester for my honors thesis. What I think I am going to start doing is trying to write daily blogs about things that have been going on in my life (in terms of theatre) and talk about them and my reflections and learning experiences and such. Just all that fun reflective stuff you do in theatre anyway; I'll just have the benefit of having it all down in a blog versus paper. I'm sure I will have plenty to write about since I
have a very busy last semester. I'm currently student teaching theatre, I am involved in three productions throughout this semester, and I will be getting prepared to graduate and go out into the real world and begin my journey as an artist in Chicago. So I am sure I will have plenty of things to get off my chest. I want to make this blog not so formal, but just as a way for me to spill what has been happening with me and hopefully in this, people can also get good advice and such out of it as well. So essentially, everyone wins in the end! So get ready to go on this wild ride with me and I hope you enjoy the blog :)

Friday, January 28, 2011

Trying New Things

Tonight at rehearsal, I decided to let loose a little and just go by pure instinct when it came to action on stage. The show I am currently working on is Sam Shepard's "Suicide in B flat." And if anyone knows of this show, they will know that it is very out there and Shepard doesn't give you much in terms of where the world is. So I've been working on my own understanding of the world and what the rules of this world are and this has really helped me a lot in terms of figuring out character motivation and objectives. So I decided that from now on I'm going to be going from pure instinct instead of trying to stay in my own head and think logically. From now on I'm sticking in my character's head and if she wants to move around, she'll move around. If she wants to deliver lines a certain way, I'm not going to question it. I mean, that's what the rehearsal period is all about. This is the time to discover and really shape your character. I think sometimes people are too timid to go out on limbs and really try to explore your character. People are so stuck on being "perfect" that their work ends up being sub-par because they never try to do things in rehearsals.

If I can give any advice to people in the rehearsal process, I'd tell them to explore their characters fully in each rehearsal. Try something different every night. No two rehearsals should look exactly alike. See what works. Change what doesn't work. Continue to make bold choices. Even if one choice doesn't work, you will probably learn something about your character from that choice that may help you in the next rehearsal. Don't be afraid to look silly. For example, I decided tonight in rehearsal that I heard Nile's jazz music from the ground. So naturally, I placed my right ear on the ground to hear it. The best part was, the other actors followed by doing the same thing, which made a very interesting stage picture of all of us with our ears on the floor listening to silence. It was a bold choice that I made, and it ended up working out. By having this particular bold choice work, I now know a little more about my character than I did before that.
So explore in rehearsals. Make bold choices. Listen to your inner character. Let the actions follow through.

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Monday, January 31, 2011

Actor's Journal

One thing that I believe every actor (or artist for that matter) should have is some kind of journal that they are able to take with them everywhere. For example, Hobby Lobby has some small leather books (probably fake leather seeing as they are about $3) that can easily fit into a bag or purse and is easily transportable. As artists, we are always observing the world around us (or at least we should be doing this) and having a journal in which to write any observations down is key. I plan on having many journals by the end of my life filled with things from workshop notes to character notes to people watching to quotes to notes from a theatre book...you understand what I am getting at. The list can go on and on and the possibilities are endless. And the best part is, you can find almost everything you have discovered and written down all in this journal. You no longer have to take paper napkins or scrap pieces of paper and attempt to round them up at the end of the day. Everything will be in this journal. Now this is not some kind of universal idea I've created and I'm trying not to act like I have. I am merely reminding you artists that it is so important to have a place for you to write down things about your art and your work. I have lost many notes in the past that I wish I could find again, but alas they are lost forever. Now, with my journal I can have everything I need to write down and remember in there (and obviously replace it once it is full).

And these do not need to be expensive at all (our nickname after all is "starving artist"). Like I said earlier, mine is from Hobby Lobby and it was $3. But it has a hard cover and also has an elastic band to keep it shut.

Use this to your advantage. Write down what you see, hear, learn, and do. You should never try to waste a day not learning about your art.

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Thursday, February 3, 2011

Inspirational Quotes

I am a sucker for quotes and I love finding quotes that encourage me to continue on this path that I've decided to follow despite all the odds. I tried to ignore my complete and utter love for acting for almost three years in college until I decided enough was enough. I am still finishing out my degree in Theatre
Education, but acting is what my true passion is and I am so happy that I am no longer lying to myself. I've personally had some great support about my decision (including my parents finally understanding that this is what I want to do with my life), and I've also had people not as enthusiastic. To those people, I feel sorry that they feel that way. Personally, I would never discourage anyone to pursue what they loved. I'm also the type of person who takes things like that very personally, so quotes help me realize that I can do what I want to do, despite what anyone tells me otherwise. I thought it would be great to write down a bunch of quotes that have helped me through rough times and keeps reminding me that this is what I truly want to do with the rest of my life.

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Don't waste your life in doubts and fears: spend yourself on the work before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for the hours or ages that will follow." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

"We are still masters of our fate. We are still captains of our souls." - Winston Churchill

"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will." - Vince Lombardi

"There is only one success-to be able to spend your life in your own way." - Christopher Marley

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out." - Robert Collier

"First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do." - Epictetus

"Every artist was at first an amateur." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." - Mark Twain

"Whether you think you can or think you can't-you are right." - Henry Ford
Friday, February 4, 2011

You Can Never Read Too Many Plays

One thing that I am going to try to incorporate for myself throughout the rest of the semester is to read as many plays as I can get my hands on before I graduate. I know once I graduate I will not get the access to the type of plays that we have currently in our theatre library. After graduation I will have to pay to get most of these plays (and expand my own play collection I've already begun since college) and with a waitress's salary while living in Chicago it may be something I can do every once in a while. At least, not nearly as much as I would like to I guess is what I'm getting at.

Additionally, I'm trying to find as much a variety of monologues that I could possibly use for auditions while reading these plays. Personally, I'm specifically looking for female characters somewhere in their late teens to mid-twenties at the moment when I am searching for plays to read over the next few months. My ideal goal would be to read a play a day, but while student teaching all day and rehearsing for shows at night, it might be a stretch so I think I'm going to try an every two day thing instead.

I think it is so important to continue to expand your knowledge of plays outside the realm of your theatre classes. We read most of the classic iconic plays that all theatre majors should understand by the time they graduate. I believe you should constantly be opening yourself up to new material as often as possible. I think it would be such a waste if I did not use the opportunity in front of me in the theatre library. I think this is something everyone who is an artist can benefit from. My father always taught me that I should be a life-long learner and never feel like you know too much information. I'm definitely taking his advice to heart when I say I'm going to expand my knowledge of shows as much as possible before I graduate. I also hope along the way that I will be able to find a few really good monologues as well to use as well as a bonus benefit for doing this.

Take the advice. You can never read too many plays.

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Saturday, February 5, 2011

See What's Happening in the Real World

One thing that I am trying to improve on, and something I think is very important for any theatre major to do, is to constantly update themselves with what is going on the theatre world outside of the college atmosphere. Most students get so caught up with what's happening in the theatre department at
their school that they never venture out and discover what is being done outside of their college. We all will be heading out into the real world soon enough, so why are we not seeing what the real world is doing?

Now, everyone always says "I never have time." And I know that is a big, fat lie. Everyone can find at least five minutes in their day and look what's happening in New York, Chicago, L.A., etc. We all are guilty of spending too much time at one point or another on facebook or watching mindless television. Instead of doing that for the 80th day in a row, take twenty minutes and surf the web and see what shows are being done, what theatre companies are doing, what is going on in the theatre community...There is an endless amount of information out on the internet to find this information. Even on facebook there is a way to find out new things going on in the theatre world by being a fan of a theatre company. Currently I'm a fan of A Red Orchid Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and Broadway in Chicago. And it never fails that at least one post will be on my newsfeed by any of those three facebook links. And the best thing about that, is that generally I can then branch out from that link and find new items as well after I explore that link.

So you should have no problem finding five minutes a day to just expand your own knowledge on what is going on in the professional world. After all, this is what you want to do with the rest of your life. This should not be seen as a chore, but as another way to grow daily in a small way.

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

Continue to Find New Discoveries

Honestly, one of things that used to get the best of me was the fact that I would pick a specific choice in a moment and then never attempt to change it. I think one of the biggest things that actors should do is to never set into a routine for their scene, monologue, or show. You should be attempting to find some other discoveries every day and continue to react as if they are new discoveries. I think that's how so many people get into a rut with their character. They never play around in the rehearsal process and even when the performances come around they never decide to vary their decisions.

Now, I'm not saying completely change every moment (because your scene partners may not be too happy about the vast changes). But to respond to something differently because you felt a change, that's great! Never try to force a moment to happen again. If it was meant to happen, it will present itself again. Continue to play around. Never settle. It is the rehearsal process for a reason, so don't be afraid to try new things!!
Sunday, February 13, 2011

I Am Happiest When in the Theatre

I've been called crazy a few times over the past year from various people who hear about my schedule in terms of theatre. This weekend it got me thinking how much I have done over this past year. I sat myself down and thought about how much I've done in terms of theatre projects (acting-wise) over the past year since I officially decided to stop kidding myself and actually go after what I truly was in love with, which was acting. I am one of those people who once they figure out what they want to do, they go after it and take every opportunity that presents itself.

Since deciding this, I've been in 9 scenes/Ten-Minute One Acts that have been directed by students in directing classes. These scenes vary from Chekhov's "The Seagull," to Labute's "Reason's to be Pretty," to Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure." This was fun to think about because all of the scenes have come from all over the realm of theatre and have placed me in numerous situations that I had never found myself in before. For example, playing all three women in "The Seagull" within one class period (including playing a woman who was intoxicated onstage for the first time). Another example, performing a scene from a Shakespeare play for the first time in my life. Both of those situations taught me something about myself as an actor and helped me expand my horizons.

I've now been in 4 Capstones (For anyone who doesn't know what a Capstone is, it's a directing major's last project before graduation. They direct a production they have chosen all by themselves.) And this varies from playing numerous women in a production in Lowe's "String of Pearls," to a lord at the turn of the century who finds out her true sex on her wedding night in Buffini's "Silence," to a free-jazz crazed (literally) woman in Sam Shepard's "Suicide in B Flat." These roles have also made me grow tremendously. Because of "Silence," the personal bubble that I might have had on stage at certain points is gone (which is fantastic). "Suicide in B Flat" has let me explore the inner depths of a script and has given me more free-range in a character than ever before. I believe every experience gives you a new outlook on something that you might have never known if you hadn't given it the chance.

And lastly, I've been very gracious to have been cast in the Strother Theatre Production of Cariani's "Almost, Maine" and a Cave Show of Steen's "Avenue A" at Ball State as part of their 2010-2011 season. "Almost, Maine" gave me my first stage kiss (and numerous ones at that). And it also gave me the ability to do a little comedy instead of the more dramatic plays that I had been doing prior.
Learning some of the comedic timing and the ability to not let the laughter of the audience break you was a fantastic experience. I cannot wait to begin rehearsals for "Avenue A" after this weekend (which is when "Suicide in B Flat" opens). I know I will have to learn a New Jersey accent for my role, which will once again be another first and I am up for the challenge.

I also had the amazing opportunity to work at A Red Orchid Theatre in Chicago over this past summer as an intern. It gave me an up-close look at how a real Chicago theatre runs and I got to experience so much there (including setting up a three-day audition for A Red Orchid Theatre that I was able to sit in on as well).

So over this past year, if you were counting, I’ve been involved roughly 15 theatre projects since I decided this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I know it sounds extremely corny, but acting just seems right. It seems like this is what I was made to do. I have yet to find anything that gives me the same thrill as being on the stage. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life. It’s why I’ve been “crazy” enough to participate in 15 theatre projects over this past year (and I still might be involved in two additional ones by the time I graduate in May).

I decided that it was too late to dwell on the past and have the "what if's" stuck in my head and be angry I couldn’t have just accepted it sooner. Instead, what I’ve done is taken every opportunity that has been given to me and I have used each one as a new learning experience. This is my new life motto: I am happiest when in the theatre.

Tuesday, March 1, 2011

Inside the Actor’s Studio for Dinner, Please

I have a crazy-busy schedule this semester since I am not only student teaching, but I am also acting in three different productions throughout the semester. One production just ended about a week ago, and I have now been in rehearsals for my next show for about a week now. On any given weeknight, I have (at most) three hours in between getting home from teaching and rehearsals. I stay after school at least twice a week to help out students with their speech meet materials, so on occasion (like today) I don’t get home until around 5:30pm which means I have roughly a little over an hour before I head to rehearsal. I have numerous amounts of schoolwork and lessons plans that I attempt to work on during that time, as well as character work and memorization. It’s not the best situation at the moment, I won’t lie. I would love nothing better than to spend all of my time on acting and getting ready to go out into the real world.
Unfortunately, I do not have that kind of "free time" at the moment. However, I have found a very nice way to incorporate some kind of acting downtime during my day.

I had never seen "Inside the Actor's Studio" until I came across it on Bravo about a week ago. I absolutely loved it and was hooked because it was such an interesting experience listening to other actors and hear them talking about how they act. It was encouraging to hear that I use some of the same acting techniques that have been so successful to them, as well as learning new tactics that I had never thought of before. So I went onto YouTube after the show was over to see what kind of episodes I could find on "Inside the Actor's Studio." And thankfully, the episodes are abundant. So since I do not have the time to just sit down and watch an full episode every day (even though I would love that), I have one place in my day that I would always have open: Dinner.

Before, I would mindlessly flip channels as I ate dinner and would watch some kind of stupid reality TV. show to relax my brain for a few minutes. However, I have now switched my routine to watching "Inside the Actor's Studio" episodes (or portions of them). It has been such a great experience thus far. I look forward to eating dinner every day because I know I will listen to great actors talk about acting. I have created almost a mini-acting lesson for dinner every single day and it is such an uplifting twenty minutes of my day because it reminds me daily why I want to do this for the rest of my life. It also does give me time to relax, but also learn something at the same time.

Gone are the days of watching a random cooking show or a reality show on MTV. I have now filled that time with something meaningful to me, my life, and my future.

Thursday, March 3, 2011

Research

One thing that a lot of my directors haven't really pressed thus far would be researching before we go into rehearsal. It has been asked, but in terms of discussing what we have looked over, we have never really done that. My latest director for the show that I am currently in had us watch three movies: "Shawshank Redemption," "Requiem for a Dream," and "The Outsiders." He also had us read another play called "The Orphans" in order for us to wrap our heads more around the lifestyles and time periods we are living in for the show. It has been nice for a director to give us the ability to watch certain films and read plays in relation to the show. I feel like I can wrap my head around the world all the better already.
I have always tried to do some kind of research when I begin a role, but I think that it is something that everyone should remember to do whenever they start another show. It's been nice to be reminded how important it truly is when beginning a new project.

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**Monday, March 7, 2011**

**Inspired.**

So I just finished watching one of my favorite movies, "Benny and Joon." I always feel that after I watch a movie that I particularly enjoy more than the rest, it almost inspires me a little more with my decision to go into acting. After watching a performance by Johnny Depp, it always inspires me to aim for the stars. I have become obsessed with watching movies, but paying a lot more attention to a specific actor and how they act than watching the movie themselves. I really don't think most people understand how hard it is to act (in terms of creating a defined character and having something to be doing at every moment of the scene and create and invent action outside of the script. I find myself watching people who are not talking at a specific time than watching the person on stage or screen that is talking. I like to watch how people react and what they do when they are not the center of attention at the moment. It fascinates me to see what they have decided to do during their moments of silence and what they have done character-wise to fill those moments. I believe Johnny Depp is one of the most talented actors that I've seen create fantastic moments in moments of silence in the script.

I have stopped watching a lot of pointless movies that are just for pure entertainment and box office bucks. Instead, I've become more attached to the movies that draw me into the characters and their own journeys. Once again, every time I see a good movie and good acting, it just inspires me to make the goal to achieve that type of acting and technique one day. Yes, I am setting my standards extraordinarily high, but I've always had the type of personality that makes myself take on more than I believe I can handle (like student teaching and involving myself in three productions). I'd rather create a goal for myself that I may not reach or achieve as quickly as I may have wanted to than to aim for something that I know I could achieve. This way, even if I don't make my goal, I've most likely gotten farther ahead than if I had set a goal I could have achieved.

There are certain actors whose performances almost always inspire me. Some of those include, but are not limited to: Meryl Streep, Dustin Hoffman, Johnny
Depp, Kate Winslet, and Michael Shannon. The work done by these actors inspire me to continue my journey in hopes of achieving their ability of the craft.

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

Your Own Personal Monologue Book

So, one of my friends had told me a few years ago that they had kept a monologue book. Essentially, what they would do was if they found a monologue in a play that they enjoyed and thought they might use one day, they copied the page and placed it in this book that they called their "Monologue Book." Now once I began to get serious about acting again, I decided to begin my own book of monologues. What I bought for my "book" was a regular journal with a fake leather cover. It is a perfect size for me to carry around in a purse and the copied pages of scripts fit perfectly into it. What I've done over the past few months is whenever I come across a monologue that I particularly like, I will copy the monologue and glue it onto a page in this book of mine. Above or below the monologue, I then write in the title of the show it is from and the playwright so I can remember and always refer back to. It's been an incredibly beneficial investment to me and I am very thankful that I started one.

Not all of the monologues are ones that I would easily be able to do right now at this age. Some of the monologues are done by women in their early thirties. I would not be able to go out to Chicago auditions with a piece like that. Instead, I've kept it in the book for when I age a few years and am able to come across as a thirty year old. Lately, I've been trying to find monologues that fit within my age range so I can get a dramatic and comedic set of monologues for Chicago auditions. I believe I have officially found the set that I will use for Chicago auditions once I graduate and move. Both of the monologues are of girls in their late teens, which I believe will be a good age range for me to at least market myself in.

One thing I noticed at A Red Orchid Theatre General Auditions was that some women were trying to push their age too far and it ended up being a train wreck for them. I understand that I will look on the younger side when I graduate and start auditioning up against actors who are 27. So why would I put myself in that unnecessarily difficult position and find a monologue of a 27 year old. Instead, I have made it easier for myself and I have chosen two monologues that vary in tempo, topic, and character traits. I'm really excited to begin to memorize them and work on them over these last few months of school. Hopefully by the time I graduate they will be in good enough shape for auditions in Chicago.
Thursday, March 10, 2011

Memorizing

Oh, the joys of memorization...and the lovely process that goes with it. I'm currently memorizing my lines for the show that I am in currently, called "Avenue A." We have only had six rehearsals I believe, and this entire week we have had off due to Ball State's spring break. I am still here in wonderful Muncie due to student teaching, so I have had my evenings free for the first (and last) time all semester. I've spent some time with the script when I am not writing lesson plans or attempting to relax.

Personally, I have found it more difficult to memorize before I get into rehearsals. I know this will change because some directors in the real world would like to have actors off book by the first blocking rehearsal (which I completely understand). Once I am off book on a show, I feel so much more free and able to develop my character. I love being off book; It's the process of getting there that can become extremely frustrating. Right now I have the majority of the script memorized. However, I have quite a few lines that I have in my head that I know, but the cue lines that I need for those lines haven't really sunk in yet. I'm hoping that this upcoming week of rehearsals will get my mind set in stone in terms of lines. The best way I know how to learn lines is when I just continually go over sections repeatedly until I have it and then move on. It's almost like a stepping stone process. I add a layer, go back and repeat everything I've learned, then add another layer, and then go back all the way to the beginning again. It may seem like a tedious process but it seems to work for me. The only problem with this method is that Act I tends to be strong in terms of memorization and Act II may be lacking a little more due to the fact that I went over the second act less than the first.

One thing I did over the summer to get ready for "Almost, Maine" was I recorded my scene and placed it on my iPod and I was able to play it whenever I went anywhere. Hearing the lines over and over again eventually got stuck in my head. Another way I helped myself was writing flashcards. Not only were the flashcards helpful, but also writing them down in the process of creating them helped instill some of the dialogue. There are so many different ways that people chose to memorize. I'm still completely open to finding new ways and tricks to memorizing because I feel like I could always use the help. One good thing that has come out of me doing so many directing scenes and full length productions is that I truly believe my ability to memorize has improved. I feel like it took me longer to memorize lines last spring than it does this spring. I'm hoping that keeps up with me and I can continue to improve.

Well, back to memorizing!
Sunday, March 13, 2011

Sleep

So with everything that's been going on in my life in terms of teaching during the day and acting at night, sleep has not really been a priority to me at all. I've tried to live this semester by the saying, "I'll sleep when I'm dead." Now, I believe this quote has great power to it, and I fully understand the meaning and intent toward it. However, when you are receiving about 5 hours of sleep a night and only have very small spurts of time that are not scheduled for you, you start to go slightly insane. And not in a bad way, but you begin to miss sleep. You begin to look forward to hitting that pillow at night just a little more than you probably should.

So this blog does not have as much to do with theatre as it does to do with staying healthy and human. I have come to realize through this semester thus far that sleep is a very powerful thing that should not be taken for granted. The quote I've been attempting to live by will be something that I will choose to live by, but not literally. I look forward to sleep for more than 6 hours for more than three days in a row.

I think no matter what you choose to do with your life, make sure that you get enough sleep with it. I have gotten frustrated lately because I have to choose sleep over reading a theatre book or play. It makes me mad that I have to succumb to sleep instead of working on my craft. However, I know that this crazy schedule will end soon enough and I will have all the time in the world as I desperately look for acting work in a matter of weeks after I graduate.

So even though I miss the sleep, I would much rather be in a position of getting a lack of sleep due to work than having all the time in the world and no work. I'd probably go crazy. Scratch that, I would go crazy.

Monday, March 14, 2011

Money

I wish money did not exist. Or had such a huge weight on the world. Or my life. There are so many things I would like to do once I graduate. Like move to Chicago. See a ton of theatre. Participate in many workshops. Dedicate my life to the arts.
But alas, money gets in the way. I will be graduating from college and will have little to no money to my name (Mainly due to the fact that I am spending well over $55 on gas a week in order to get to teaching and back daily. And that little thing we call college debt.) The fear of not having a job (for paying the rent/bills) after I graduate scares me. Right now I am beginning to worry about job availabilities in terms of serving in restaurants. I want to make a ton of money so I am able to take the opportunities given to me in Chicago Theatre. However, I feel like it will not be possible until I get a job and begin receiving this thing we call money that rules us all.

I am trying to keep a level head on the situation. For example, I am lucky to live so close to Chicago as is. Additionally, I know that I will be working hard on my craft (as well as my serving job, whenever I receive one) every day and make sure that I never lack in practice. I love the saying, "Dancers practice daily. Musicians practice daily. Singers practice daily. Actors go to bars and complain about not having work." I think that is a huge statement that can become a reality if I am not careful enough. I want to make sure I practice daily and rehearse my monologues (or read a new play or read up on techniques).

The money issue is a big letdown currently, but I refuse to make it a problem that will hover over me forever. I just felt like venting a little bit about my loathing for money (or my lack thereof).

Tuesday, March 15, 2011

Spend Yourself on the Work Before You

So for the past few days stress has filled my life, not gonna lie. I think it's the combination of graduating in less than two months, attempting to find a sub­leaser for my apartment, rehearsals, my future, sickness, money...the list goes on. I've attempted to look on the bright side of life during stressful times like this. I tend to look to quotes to help me pull on through. I had a really nice one that I had in my room that has helped me calm down today:

"Don't waste your life in doubts and fears: spend yourself on the work before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for the hours or ages that will follow." ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Instead of sulking in complete stressfulness, work on moving forward and what you need to be accomplished. I am terrified as much as I am excited about moving back to Chicago and beginning this acting career. However, just stressing about that does not help me at all. Instead, I should continue what I have been doing all along and work on my craft every day. Do something to help myself:
Read a play, read a technique book on physical acting or vocal variety, work on lines, work on dialects, work on monologues, etc. The list can go on and on.

Being able to step back and allow the stress to fall off your back can be tough at times, but I am determined to make sure that it does not take over my life. That's why I really enjoy that quote by Emerson. If I prepare for the duties that I have in front of me currently, they are only going to be benefit my life in the future as well.

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Inspiration From Another Actor

I love reading about other actors' experiences and how they view acting. One of my friends had posted a great interview of an actor on Facebook, and I wanted to share it on my blog. I think what this actor said is fantastic. So I thought instead of writing another post about being inspired, I thought I'd share another actor's inspiration (Matthew Gray Gubler):

"My best advice to actors is if you love acting, do it every chance you get," Gubler says. "Success does not mean success. All that matters is whether or not you're doing your best to entertain. The way this business works is all about luck and timing. I get really sad when people say, 'I'm no good. I haven't been cast in a pilot.' It doesn't mean you're not good; it just means someone hasn't seen you yet. It doesn't mean that in real life you're not the greatest actor. It's unfortunate, but I think if you can find happiness in just purely enjoying the craft and doing what you love, you'll forever be happy."

He also advises actors to self-generate projects rather than waiting to be cast in someone else's project. "[I]t can drive actors crazy," he says. "I refuse to let that be an issue to me. I try to self-generate as much stuff as I can. All I am interested in is if I can bring people some entertainment, some happiness. I don't care if it's one person. I don't care if it's just my dad or 14 million people every Wednesday night at 9. As long as I'm getting to make somebody smile or be moved, I couldn't be happier. If I weren't on this show, I'd probably be doing mime work on Santa Monica Boulevard or something. I try not to stop. I don't want to ever stop."
**Wednesday, March 23, 2011**

**Carpe Diem**

One of my friends asked on facebook what they felt (in two words or less) was the best/practical/most important thing they learned in college and this got me thinking. Once the answers from people started rolling in, it got even more interesting and more thought provoking as the answers continued to flow. Now that I will be graduating from college in a little more than 40 days, reflection is becoming a huge thing in my life. I honestly have no idea where the time went. There are things that I would definitely wish I could change. However, even when I think of that, I wonder if I would honestly be where I am today in terms of what I want to do after I graduate. I don't necessarily think everything happens for a reason, but I believe you can learn from everything that happens to you. I started out this college journey believing that it was teaching theatre that I wanted to do. Now as I begin to slowly end my college experience, I find myself exactly where I hadn't originally planned to be, but had always had the inner desire to be. And that is, pursuing acting.

This is why I decided to personally write on my friend's question the answer of, "Carpe Diem." This has been one of my top quotes from back in high school. It was a quote that we had roaming around the choir and drama department. I won't go into detail as to how it came to be since it is a long story, but just know that it has a deep relevance and meaning behind it. Carpe Diem = Seize the Day. I honestly think as a high school senior going into college, I was too afraid to pursue what I really wanted to do (which was perform) because I was so afraid to fail. People all around me did not have the most encouraging words of wisdom when I had told them that was what I had wanted to do. I think one of the biggest reasons as to why I strayed away for so long was that I didn't want to confront those people later in life and have them see me fail at it. This is one thing that I have learned in college: Failure is part of life and the journey. I will not be perfect. I may never be perfect. I will fall on my butt. A lot. And that is perfectly normal. I should be seizing this gift of life and running with it. I refuse to grow old and look back and be angry at myself for not pursuing what I want to pursue.

Carpe Diem are the two words I would describe as the best and most important thing I have learned in college. Even though I am still scared to the bone at times, I know where I am going is going to be an epic journey. I refuse to spend another day sulking in doubt. I use that energy now to get better at my craft instead of use it for worry. I will continue to seize each day and never take anything for granted. I felt like I had lost a part of me when I decided to not pursue acting at the beginning of my college career; I refuse to make that same mistake again as I enter in the next phase of my life.
Thursday, March 24, 2011

Go to the Theatre

One thing that I really regret not doing as much while I was still in high school was taking advantage of living less than an hour away from Chicago. I did not see my first professional show until my junior year in high school. Since then, whenever I have been able to go to shows when home from school I have tried to take advantage of seeing shows. I believe that is one of the things that I am most excited about in terms of taking full advantage of seeing shows when I graduate and move back home. I think any actor, director, etc., needs to see shows constantly. Seeing what others do and what you can learn from their productions is such a great tool. I am getting so excited just thinking about all of the shows that I will be seeing once I get home.

I also just discovered this lovely website called digitaltheatre.com. This is a website designed to buy professional shows that have been professionally taped. So for those who do not have access to professional shows as easy as I do, this would be a great way to see productions. YouTube.com is always there for you to use as well if you are able to find productions on them.

So long story short, go to the theatre. See shows. Enjoy the art. Learn from the art. Never stop.

Tuesday, March 29, 2011

New York Dialect

So for the show that I am currently rehearsing (Avenue A) three of the four characters need a New York Dialect. A student was kind enough to come in tonight as a dialect coach and give us some pointers on the accent so we do not feel as lost in the accent. Her pointers that she gave us are extremely helpful in this dialect and so I thought I would share them on this blog in case someone in the future may need an extra hand on grasping the New York dialect. There are 11 rules that she laid out for us:

1. Drop "r" at the end of words (Almost create an "-uh" sound. Also, end your sentence on a higher tone, not lower.).

2. Drop "h" in words.
3. Keep the tip of your tongue on the top of your top teeth (**THIS ONE HAS HELPED ME ADAPT THE MOST THUS FAR)**

4. "T" becomes a loose "d".

5. "Th" because a solid "t".

6. The sound "oo" is elongated (And lean heavily on it).

7. "T" and "d" at end of words are dropped.

8. Connect the words by pushing them together.

9. For words like talk, walk, almost, and long, your mouth should create a very tight circle.

10. Hard --> hah' You --> yous

11. "R" is always dropped.

I know these rules have helped me grasp this dialect even stronger than I had before. I hope that these rules may help you in your journey towards mastering a New York dialect. I know that I will be sitting next to my script for the next few days (during free time) and working on the dialect in every sentence that I say in the show. I want to make sure that I have as close to a perfect New York accent as I possibly can for the show. I want to be concentrating on staying in the moment and being present when we perform this show. I do not want to be worried about an accent and making sure it sticks. I want to feel confident enough that I can work the dialect cleanly into my character and use the dialect to my advantage during the show.

Monday, April 4, 2011

**Until You Walk in My Shoes...**

No matter how many times I hear from people sarcastic comments about my new ambitions and rekindled love for acting, I just keep telling myself to remain positive. I hate when people feel the need to belittle others just in order to keep their own moral about themselves up. I never understood the need or want to point out to someone that what they are truly passionate about or something they are interested in is never going to be successful, especially if you are not a major in it. I honestly feel sorry for people who feel the need to expose their negative opinions on others. I personally feel that I have gotten my share of
negative comments on my new path towards acting. Some people feel the need to give me a constant reminder that I am not in fact an acting major. Do they honestly think I forget? I feel like I can't go a few days without being reminded that I am not in my "proper place." I have slowly, but surely, gotten over being upset by that. I think the thing that frustrates me the most is that people tend to judge without even understanding the struggle that I had to go through in order to get to where I am today. I think this is one thing that people think of so little when they rush to judge.

People don't know what I went through in high school. People don't know that my own drama teacher told me I would fail and that I should do something else, despite all of the passion and vigor I had when I was a junior in high school for acting. People don't know that he told me this after I saved his ass by learning the role of Belle and going on stage and performing it in less than 12 hours time. People don't know that he told me I would fail while my mother and I sat across from him in a meeting that was originally supposed to map out possible acting colleges for me. People don't know that I originally took theatre education as a major because of my drama teacher, and not because he was an inspiration. Instead, I went into theatre education so students would never have to go through what I had to go through with that man.

For two full years, I tried to push down and forget the passion that I had for acting. For two years, I tried to forget that that is what I truly wanted to do. For two years, I had hoped that eventually the urge to get back on stage would go away. Well, I can tell you honestly that it did not. All it did was build up in me more and more until I was finally able to expose it again. And, with some kind words from Karen Kessler, I finally told myself to stop lying to myself. That this is what I wanted to do with my life. To stop pursuing something that my parents wanted me to do. To stop pursuing something that was originally built on anger, not passion. But before I go any further though, I would like to state that I do, in fact, absolutely love teaching. These past few months of student teaching have been wonderful and I know that I will want to teach someday. However, at age 22, I want to be doing something for myself and be selfish for once. I want to go out and pursue what I have been wanting to do.

So for everyone who believes that someone cannot pursue something they did not major in, I apologize for every person who chose a career at age 18 and then decided to change it. I apologize for every person who buried their true calling due to negative and hurtful people, and then decided to say "fuck them" and actually pursue what they had wanted to. I am sure that if you were in my shoes, you would want positive reinforcement from the people surrounding you and not sarcastic comments about where they believe you "truly belong."
Thursday, April 7, 2011

Theatre Books

One of the things that I always strive to do is continue to work on my personal "theatre library." For the past four years I have been adding books to my collection. I think that having plays, theatre history, acting techniques, etc., is a great thing to have as an artist. I enjoy going back and re-reading past plays that I have read and brushing up on old acting books from freshman year. One of the things that I always do is highlight. I am a highlighting fiend when it comes down to it. I think it is extremely important to keep up your artistic reading as well as actually physically doing the work. For me, it is a mental thing. I enjoy reading, and having a collection of theatre materials makes my life a whole lot better. My parents look at me weird whenever I ask for my birthday or Christmas for certain plays or books on theatre.

Additionally, I always look for new things to read (not in terms of theatre as well). I feel like for the past four years of college, I haven't had that much time to read literature and novels (at least, for my own enjoyment and not for class). I want to create a book list of novels that I have yet to read (or ones that I read in high school that I did not appreciate as much as I probably should have). I think that now that we are in an age that technology is king, a lot of people choose not to read. But I think that it is so important for both your mind and your work to read.

Now that I am nearing graduation, I am beginning to think of things to do in my spare time (since I am a workaholic and I'm sure I am going to be stir-crazy by week two post-graduation) and reading is on the top of my list. I cannot wait to sit and read on my family's porch over the summer with my little dog in my lap. It brings a smile to my face just thinking about it.

Friday, April 8, 2011

Missing the Stage

I feel like I am already beginning to feel the weight of graduation on my shoulders. Now mind you, I am extremely excited to graduate. I am very excited for the real world and to see where this new path is going to take me. However, I am terrified of the thought of not being in a production for a while. Now, as I have already written in other posts, some people have called me crazy due to my extremely hectic schedule. I believe that I definitely have the personality of a workaholic. I tend to work myself to the bone and I rarely say no to an offer to act in something (whether that be for a scene in a directing class or a full length
production). I feel that every opportunity is a blessing and that I can learn and take away something from every production I work on.

I have realized that my senior year has been jam-packed with productions. I began in late August with "Almost, Maine" rehearsals. Those ran through the middle of October. I had about a week to two weeks break before I began rehearsals for "Silence." "Silence" ran through the second week of December (and I was also involved in two directing two ten-minute one acts). Once we came back from winter break (mid January), I began rehearsals for "Suicide in B Flat." That went till late February and I began rehearsals for "Avenue A" the Monday following the last show of "Suicide in B Flat" on Saturday. I will be finishing up "Avenue A" on Sunday, and then I will be spending my last three weeks on "Dr. Horrible's Sing-a-long Blog" till the week before I graduate. So essentially, I will have been involved with five full-length productions within an eight-month period. And I think the weirdest part out of all of it, is that I still feel like I could have done more (and wanted to do more).

I am so terrified that by week two of my post-graduation that I will be so stir-crazy back at my house up in the Chicago area. I absolutely love the stage. I love the rehearsal process. I love delving into new characters and finding new ways to push myself even farther and find characters that I have yet to experience. One of the professors that saw the show tonight had told me how he has enjoyed seeing me perform over this past year and was pleasantly surprised by the range of characters he had seen me play (Going from Glory in "Almost, Maine" to Laureen in "Suicide..." to Rosa in "Avenue A" are definitely characters that do not step in the same direction). This was one of the nicest compliments he could have given me and I was very grateful for this comment from him. I am so glad that he commented on the versatility of characters that I had played and it was nice that I am actually pulling it off.

I think that is one thing that I really admire about Amy Adams currently. She is starting to look for roles that may not be suited for her according to some people. She went from "Enchanted" to "Doubt" to "The Fighter." All three of those characters are so different, yet she pulled all three of them off wonderfully (and surprised a lot of people on the way). This is one thing that I hope to hold on to, and that agents and casting directors do see in me (and on my resume). My resume probably looks a little odd with the range of shows that I have been a part of this past year, but I hope that this will work to my advantage when I begin to send out resumes and headshots to Chicago theatre companies.

But anywho, back to my main point in this particular blog, which is my fear of missing the stage. Honestly, if I could go from job to job and never have a break I would take that in an instant. Actors who take months off from shows I honestly don't understand. This may be because I am just getting back into the
swing of things and I am still on an "acting high." However, I hope that this feeling never goes away. I look forward to the next rehearsal once a rehearsal ends. I look forward to the next project the moment the latest one ends. I just hope that I can get my foot in the door soon enough, or at least to the point where I could be doing staged readings, or table readings for new plays or for theatre companies who need scripts to be read. I will do anything to act once I am out of school.

I really feel like it is what I need to be doing with my life. I have never been so sure of something like this before and I am so confident in my choice for acting that it honestly still scares me at times. And I am not scared of the acting, but I am scared of the uncertainty of when I will be able to do it again once I graduate.

I really think that if it comes down to it, I will be performing monologues and one-woman shows to my dog in order to keep my sanity.

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Sunday, April 10, 2011

Treat Every Moment As If It Were Your Last

I learned today once again that you should never take anything for granted. We were originally supposed to have our final show of "Avenue A" this afternoon, but due to circumstances beyond our control the show was unfortunately cancelled. It just goes to show that you should treat every moment of a show as if it was your last. I had finished out our double run yesterday in high hopes of going through Rosa's journey one last time. I won't be able to anymore, and I wish I had relished in that performance on Saturday night a little more than I had. But I guess that is the circle of life that is the theatre. You give your heart, body, and soul; you give your sweat and blood; and once that final moment on stage happens, everything is once again placed to the wayside. Productions finish up and people move on.

I know that I will have to get used to this process, but I think the fact that I was never able to say goodbye to the character of Rosa is slightly bothersome. My comparison feeling is: My parents buy a puppy, I get attached to puppy, while I'm at school one day parents decided to get rid of puppy, I come home from school and puppy is gone; I never got to say goodbye to the puppy.

Moral of the story: Treat every performance with the same passion that you would as if it were the last time you would be performing it. That way, you know that you have completely put your heart and soul into the character and completed their journey to its entirety.
Tuesday, April 12, 2011

You Know You’re a Theatre Major When...

You know you’re a theatre major when on your day off from rehearsal, you go to the theatre to see a show.

You know you’re a theatre major when you hear a phrase and automatically in your head complete the phrase to a musical theatre song.

You know you’re a theatre major when the time comes for you to graduate with a B.A. Degree, you are scrounging around for a serving or bartender job.

You know you’re a theatre major when you tend to wear acting blacks more than regular clothing.

You know you’re a theatre major when you are reading more plays than any other type of literature.

You know you’re a theatre major when you constantly people watch.

You know you’re a theatre major when you no longer care that people are staring at you in utter confusion while you mumble a monologue to yourself while walking down a crowded street or subway car.

You know you’re a theatre major when you are ecstatic for the Tony Awards and the person next to you has no idea what you are talking about.

You know you’re a theatre major when Sutton Foster is considered a household name.

You know you’re a theatre major when you begin to watch movies for the acting and style versus "pure entertainment."

You know you’re a theatre major when you practice your accents when you talk to complete strangers at work.

You know you’re a theatre major when you spell "theatre," not "theater."

You know you’re a theatre major when you eat, sleep, breathe, and can only think of the theatre.