

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO



Director's Notes

Happy Halloween!

This third issue of *The Director's Cut* Lines up perfectly with the official end of our first quarter. Time is flying by so quickly. And with so many days off in November, it'll be Thanksgiving Break before we know it!

This month has been a busy one in the studio. Not only did we experience our Teacher Swap series with Mrs. Barnes in the Dance Academy, but we also tackled auditions for this year's MTAS Musical, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. It's going to be an exciting show season as we head back to the Golden Age of Broadway with this title.

Speaking of the Golden Age, in the classroom, students have been busy exploring a wide array of repertoire. MT Fundamental students just kicked off their Golden Age unit while the MT Workshop group is diving into Disney. Meanwhile, our Advanced Workshop class is deep in their interpretations of Rodgers & Hammerstein as our Pre-Professional seniors are putting together a production number from *Will Rogers Follies*. We've been keeping quite busy.

In this issue, we also highlight the opportunities MTAS brings with its focus on college, careers, and professional pursuits. You'll meet our Career Experience Specialist and get some "scoop" on what our students thought of our latest invited guest artist as well as the two major events that kicked-off October: Teacher Swaps and Artspllosion.

With Gratitude,

Erich DiCenzo

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO

BACK TO THE FUTURE MTAS!

Last issue highlighted three "All Star Alum" who visited the studio to pay it forward. They shared stories about their college journeys, offered helpful audition advice, and answered questions about the business. This month, it was once again a privilege to welcome back a very special MTAS Alum!



Musical Theatre Fundamentals Students Rock Out To "It's Only a Matter of Time" with Steven Eckloff

Steven Eckloff, class of 2021, is a graduate of Boston Conservatory, where he earned a BFA in Musical Theatre with a Dance emphasis. Currently, Steven is on the North American equity tour of Broadway's *Back to the Future*. He serves as one of the company's swings, covering nine different ensemble tracks. Steven is also a cover for Marty McFly...a role he's already gotten the chance to play three times.

While on his week vacation from touring, Steven spent two days with us in the studio, meeting with all four MTAS courses. Students first learned original Broadway choreography from the show before participating in a Q&A. See what some of them had to say below.



Musical Theatre Workshop Students are All Smiles After Their Masterclass

"Steven's energy was incredibly infectious, and he made dancing so early in the morning enjoyable. I think what makes him such a successful person in the industry is his ability to naturally connect with everyone in the room. He has a sociability to him that isn't intimidating at all, but very inviting."

Nate Smith; Pre-Professional Musical Theatre [Fairfax HS]

"I thought Steven was super nice. He felt like the right mix of professional, but also chatty. I gleaned a lot in the Q&A about tour life and the different disciplines of theatre in a conservatory setting."

Casey Abbott; Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop [Madison HS]

"Steven was considerate of everyone's capabilities and was so welcoming and made everyone feel included. When he held the Q&A – because he is closer to our age – it felt relatable."

Aanika Bhatnagar; Musical Theatre Workshop [Oakton HS]

College Connections



BRIAN KREMER
Elon University



KIESHA LALAMA
Point Park University



MICHAEL CAMPAYNO
Point Park University

When someone asks: “What makes the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio at Fairfax Academy special?” The best answer to give also happens to be a concise one. “Opportunity.” As you have experienced this year, MTAS students are regularly exposed to industry professionals and get to work side-by-side with guest artists ranging from Broadway actors to regional and international Casting Directors. But perhaps equally as advantageous as those unique experiences is when students can directly communicate with Artistic Chairs/Recruiters at some of the nation’s top performing arts programs. This was recently the reality for the twenty-five seniors who make-up our Pre-Professional Musical Theatre course.

On Tuesday, October 7, students had the opportunity to virtually meet with Brian Kremer, who serves as both an Associate Professor and the Coordinator of Musical Theatre programming at Elon University. He was gracious as students asked him questions covering everything from study abroad opportunities to helpful audition advice. Then, on Wednesday, October 22, students met virtually with quite an impressive team: Michael Campayno, Point Park Conservatory’s Director of Musical Theatre; and Kiesha Lalama, who – aside from serving as the interim Dean of the School of Theatre, Film and Animation at Point Park University – also serves as the Executive Producer at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. Together, Kiesha and Michael shared with students the exciting news of a brand new 3-year accelerated BFA program. The degree – which piqued student’s interest – is titled *Performance and Creative Industries for the Uniquely Curious and Multi-Talented Artist* and includes a collaboration with Point Park’s Schools of Business, Education, and Communications.

Opportunity. It’s what the MTAS Academy is all about. In zoom conferences that each lasted over an hour, students left more knowledgeable and a whole lot more inspired about what their futures may have in store for them!

ARTSPLOSIVE OPPORTUNITIES!

“The Teacher Swap Day was super fun, and I really enjoyed working with Mrs. Barnes. She was so sweet and nurturing. I felt incredibly welcomed and comfortable. It was a calming environment, but with a motivating energy.”

Julia VanValkenburg; Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop [Fairfax HS]

“I thought Artspllosion offered a great experience in allowing us to collaborate with students in different content areas of our Academy. It was cool to learn about what they do in their classes and work together to simulate a project that combines all our talents.”

Angela Gray; Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop [Hayfield SS]

INTRODUCING OUR: Career Experience Specialist



Ms. Amy Hard has a background in language studies, theatre, and dance, and arrived at the Academy after 24 years teaching and directing at Robinson SS. A proud George Mason University Theatre alum, she’s enjoyed working and growing with the incredible regional artists and institutions here in the DMV.

She’s had the honor of choreographing, dancing, acting, and directing for various high schools, the Kennedy Center, Studio Theatre, Arena Stage, NBA & NFL Cheer/Dance teams, and others.

Globally, she was proud to be on the first Theatre Global Classroom project with a school in China, and guest directed at the American College of Sofia, Bulgaria.

Best fun fact according to her two daughters? She paid the bills as a professional clown.

A LOOK AHEAD

Monday, November 3rd

Student Holiday
School Planning

Wednesday, November 4th

Student Holiday
Teacher Workday

Tuesday, November 11th

NO SCHOOL
Veterans Day

Wednesday, November 26th -

Friday, November 28th

Thanksgiving Break