

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO



Director's Notes

Happy Thanksgiving!

In the last issue I said, "It'll be Thanksgiving Break before we know it!" and now here we are. Before anything, I want to wish you and your families a happy, restful, and delicious break. When we return, we'll have three, full five-day weeks before an extended Winter Break. With my upcoming return, the initiation of the rehearsal process, and our next MTAS showcase, it's sure to be a jam-packed couple of weeks. As always, I encourage students to stay on top of schoolwork and remain mindful of any due dates and/or upcoming assignments and responsibilities.

Given my extended time away, this fourth issue of *The Director's Cut* will highlight a lot of student voice. In my absence, it was important to me that our MTAS students were not simply given busy work with a long-term substitute but rather be provided with unique educational experiences with industry professionals. After all, that is what the Academy is all about...opportunity! This issue showcases those individuals as well as the insights and experiences our students walked away with. Of course, I have also taken the opportunity to share my own takeaways from what was a truly special experience at London Towne Elementary.

As we look ahead to next month, we'll not only have our second series of Signature Workshops in class on December 8th & 9th, but also our Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop's Showcase on Thursday, December 18th. Save the date now for a great show!

With Gratitude,

Erich DiCenzo

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSICAL THEATRE
& ACTORS STUDIO

From Big Lions to Lil' Lions

I would be remiss if I didn't begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to our entire MTAS Family for your understanding and support both before and during my time at London Towne Elementary. Without a community made up of mature, engaged, and passionate students who are supported by equally engaged and dedicated parents, this opportunity would not have been nearly as seamless as it was. Thank you!

I must be honest, two things concerned me before starting my tenure at London Towne. Firstly, having spent most of my career working with teenagers, I wasn't sure I would be any good at it. And secondly, I wasn't sure if I would even like it. But over the last month one thing has proved to be true: whether it be with the Fairfax Lions or the London Towne Lil' Lions, I feel the same: I love my job!



Mr. D w/ Principal Shele Banford & AP Lucy Zamora

There was never a day when LTES wasn't roaring with excitement. Whether it was our Friday "Dance Party's in the Pod", our Pep-Rally to welcome in Quarter 2 [made even more exciting by a visit from GMU's Men's Basketball team], or the annual Thanksgiving Luncheon, every day was an adventure. It didn't take long before I realized how special "The Towne" is, or how lucky they are to be led by an incredible team.

I wish I could say what an average day was like, but the truth is every day looked different from the one before. Some days it seemed like the walkie-talkie never stopped going off. In those instances, I was mostly conferencing with students over a behavioral concern brought up in the classroom. Other days – the slower ones – I'd be able to get into classrooms to observe teachers and students in their elements. These were my favorite days! I quickly learned that an elementary school building is filled with a TON of optimism...young, bright minds with big dreams and a slew of creative, magic-making teachers by their side.

If you don't know, LTES is an immersion school, where students get half of their instruction taught in english, and the other half in spanish. One of the standout moments of my time at "The Towne" was observing a class taught fully in spanish. The teacher was amazing...a wizard. I am leaving my tenure with so many new experiences, relationships, and knowledge that I am so eager to bring back to my own classroom and practices!



LTES Admin Team with the GMU Men's Basketball Team

The Leading Ladies



Anna Maria Ferrari



Valerie Karasek

While our students have had the opportunity to meet a whole lot of inspiring guest artists over the past month, it became very clear that there were two frontrunners.

Two women, each of whom have very different stories and experiences. One, a retired Langley HS Theatre Arts teacher; the other, a recent graduate and alum of MTAS. Both, working actresses with relevant and meaningful experiences. There is no doubt that our students gleaned a ton of insight from these two "Leading Ladies!"

"A big key takeaway for me was that a theme throughout each class was to make strong character choices in your performance. In the class with Anna Maria Ferrari, we learned a dance combination to a song from Shrek, which has a ton of bold and unique characters. The class really helped me step outside of the box and become a storybook character, instead of dancing as myself. In the acting class with Valerie Karasek, she also used character choices as a theme. We read A/B open scenes, which made it hard to develop a character since the lines were quite vague. It was fun to explore character motives and use my creativity to create a character and perform the scene, with an intention to act unapologetically. Though all the guest artists inspired me, Anna Maria and Valerie were the most impactful because they helped me use my creativity and have fun and be confident with a character.

Angela Gray; Musical Theatre Workshop [Hayfield SS]

"Valerie Karasek was such an upbeat spirit in the classroom and fostered an environment in the studio that made my classmates and I eager to experiment with new text and push ourselves creatively. She gave us freedom to make big choices, develop specific circumstances, and absorb scenes through the lens of a director. I loved her passion for theatre, and I hope I get the chance to work with her again in the future!"

Allie Blanchet; Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop [Madison HS]

"I felt the most inspired while working on open scenes with Val Karasek because I loved seeing all the choices my classmates made, especially when they were able to create scenes before lines even began. I also learned about adding character into dance and making big choices in improv with Anna Maria Ferrari. I miss class with Mr. D, but I've learned a lot from all the amazing guest artists that have come in!"

Reagan Geissler; Musical Theatre Workshop [Madison HS]

"Although we have been missing Mr. D in the Workshop class, we have been making the most of our time with the terrific guest artists. I have enjoyed the opportunity to learn from all of them in different ways. In particular, I was inspired by Anna Maria Ferrari because her confidence and enthusiasm were infectious. As she taught us the dance from Shrek and shared experiences from performing at the Olney, I was struck by the passion and sense of fun that she exuded. Her joy for the field pushed me to want to continue to grow and learn. I also really enjoyed our class with Valerie Karasek, where we performed several scenes. I loved the opportunity to be creative as we utilized props and developed our own circumstances for the scene work. Ms. Karasek provided excellent tips on making bold choices in our work."

Ainsley Zael; Musical Theatre Workshop [Lake Braddock SS]

INTRODUCING

Evie Korovesis



As our production of *How to Succeed* ramps up, I'd like to introduce you to our Asst. Director/Choreographer. Ms. Korovesis currently serves as the Theatre Director at Thoreau Middle School in Vienna, Virginia, where she has taught for the last five years. Prior to this, she was a music teacher at Columbia Elementary. Evie brings with her a wide range of abilities to support a successful production.

"I am thrilled and honored to be working with the Academy students yet again in this year's production of How to Succeed. Mine and Mr. D's collaboration started when we did Hairspray together; him as director, and me as a Corney Collins Kid. As Assistant Choreographer, we quickly realized our brains worked the same way and we loved putting them together to create something so fun! While I have been a music/theatre teacher in FCPS for fourteen years, there is something so special about working with Academy students. I have loved getting to know students from around the county these past few years and the amazing talents that they have shared. We started this week with music rehearsals and already the joy in the studio is bright and contagious! Have a wonderful and well rested Thanksgiving Break and I look forward to seeing you all at the show!"

Evie Korovesis

A LOOK AHEAD

**Monday, December 8th -
Tuesday, December 9th**

Signature Workshops In-Class

Thursday, December 18th

Adv. MT Workshop Showcase
7:00pm FHS Auditorium

**Saturday, December 20th -
Sunday, January 4th**

Winter Break!