

I found my passion for theatre by accident while in middle school. My home room teacher suggested that I join the scenic crew, painting and constructing the set, for our spring musical. I enjoyed this experience, so I continued working on the scenic crew throughout my high school career. During my sophomore year of high school, I stumbled into the world of stage management. My tech director asked me what position I desired for the fall show, and I thought I would give stage management a try. I thoroughly enjoyed the responsibility of running a show, making sure the actors were in place and creating efficient scene changes. When trying to decide my career path, my passion for theatre urged me to discover more about what was entailed to be a successful stage manager.

During the summer before my senior year, I visited five different universities: DePaul, Millikin, University of Wisconsin, Webster and Indiana University. Indiana University provided the best environment for me to get a well-rounded education and specialize in stage management. During my visit to IU, I met with the production manager of the Theatre and Drama Department, David Grindle. He explained that at that time the only option to get a degree in stage management was through the Individualized Major Program (IMP) where students can create their own major if it does not exist. Since there are very few undergraduate degrees in stage management, this option intrigued me.

I took the first stage management course during the fall of my first semester. After taking this course and fulfilling my assistant stage management practicum in the spring, I realized how much that I enjoyed stage management. During the fall of my sophomore year, David and I discussed the possibility of applying for IMP. As a perfectionist and over-achiever, as my friends call me, I decided to pursue a degree in Theatre and Drama with an emphasis in design and a degree with IMP in stage management. This option allowed me to expand my knowledge within the theatre

department with upper level courses in sound design and scenic design and to explore other non-theatre courses that would help with my stage management training. In the spring of 2006, I applied and joined IMP.

Since my Theatre and Drama degree included acting, directing, stagecraft, lighting, costuming, sound and theatre history, my IMP degree focused on stage management and non-theatre courses. The core courses for my degree were Stage Management I, Stage Management II, Production and Events Management and Managing Spectacle, all of which were taught by my mentor and sponsor, David Grindle. I talked with a psychology advisor to decide which upper level courses would most benefit my IMP degree; she suggested the Psychology of Learning and the Psychology of Personality. These two classes taught me about how people learn, how they respond to certain rewards and punishments and how important it is to make people feel safe. The psychology courses helped me to adjust how I interact with people and try to communicate information in different ways. Safety is a huge concern in theatre with injuries during rehearsal and trip hazards backstage, so First Aid and Occupational Health and Safety were added to my list of courses. Since stage managers are often responsible for petty cash, I took an accounting class to learn how to keep record of expenses.

It was during my Stage Management I course that I learned the responsibilities and description of a stage manager. Stage managers help a production run smoothly from rehearsal through performance. Some stage management responsibilities include: taking notes during meetings, creating schedules, communicating with each design department (scenic, lighting, costuming, sound), recording the blocking movement of all actors and calling all of the cues for light/sound/technical areas during the performance. Stage managers juggle multiple tasks at a time while retaining a cool, calm and collected appearance. Stage managers act as a middle man between

the director and the designer. Artistic and creative minds often have their own language to describe certain aspects of the production. It is the stage manager's job to translate designer language to director language and vice versa.

Once a production is in performances, the director turns the responsibility of the show over to the stage manager. Stage managers maintain the integrity of the production by making sure that the actors do not change the show. During the performance, the stage manager has responsibility for the actors, technicians and patrons. If there is potential danger or a problem with the patrons, the stage manager and house manager will work together to help solve the problem. If a problem arises during a performance, the stage manager must make a quick and thoughtful decision to correct the problem. Problems could include a misplaced prop, a sick/injured actor, a missing actor or crew member, a malfunctioning piece of technology, or a disruptive patron.

Unlike other majors that require textbook knowledge, stage management is learned through experience. The Stage Management I course requires the students to be an assistant stage manager (ASM) for one of the eight productions that the Theatre Department produces each year. Since I took this course during my freshmen year, I was provided hands-on experience during my first year of college. After showing potential as an ASM on *The Scarlet Letter*, David offered me the opportunity to ASM another show the following fall and stage manage a show the next spring semester. Assisting on *Arcadia* helped me refine my skills and techniques as an ASM. The first show that I stage managed was *She Stoops to Conquer* in the Ruth N Halls Theater. During the 2006-2007 season, I stage managed *The Woman in Black* at the Brown County Playhouse and *Twelfth Night* in the Ruth N Halls Theater. For IU's 2007-2008 season, I stage managed *Measure for Measure* and am currently the stage manager for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, which opens in April. Stage managing these productions has been the most valuable part of my education at IU.

Each production brings a new challenge to test my abilities, and I eagerly look forward to rising to the occasion.

The most challenging show that I have stage managed was *The Woman in Black* at Brown County Playhouse. The show itself was not challenging; the unreliable factors created challenges. *The Woman in Black* was a two-actor production. It had a trunk that was rigged to close automatically, however the trunk did not work over half the time. There was also a door that closed by itself when a crew member pulled a pulley, which also got stuck many times. The sound system often made sound cues disappear at the top of the show, and then magically reappear by the end of the show. All of the speakers were temperamental and worked when they wanted to. After the opening weekend performances, one of the actors had to have emergency surgery on his appendix. There were no understudies for the show, so I had to rehearse the ASM to perform the role. The ASM ended up performing the role for the rest of the run, and I had to assign a crew member to fill the ASM position. The performance also had fog, which set the fire alarm off on opening night. During each performance, I never knew what would work, what would not work and what would break. *The Woman in Black* kept me on my toes and helped me sharpen my decision making skills.

Every theatre company has its own techniques when producing a show. I wanted to learn how other companies, besides IU, produce theatre, so I interned with a different theatre company every summer, starting after my freshman year. In the summer of 2005, I was a production intern at Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, a small professional theatre company, in my home town of Arlington Heights, IL. As a production intern, my responsibilities included creating contracts, scheduling auditions/callbacks, filing W-9 and other forms, taking notes during production meetings and running auditions/callbacks. Part of the internship included running as a follow spot operator for the show *Forever Plaid*. My experience at Metropolis taught me the technical and management

responsibilities of a production manager; it also taught me that I am more interested in stage management rather than production management.

During the summer of 2006, I took the position of stage management intern at the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, working on *As You Like It* and *My Fair Lady*. Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's production scale is much larger than that of Metropolis because it produces five productions in a span of four months in two separate theaters. Working alongside Equity stage managers and actors for the first time in my life, I proved to be an asset to our stage management team, and demonstrated that I had talent in stage management.

As a final project for IMP, I decided that an internship would be the most beneficial, although I did not know where this internship would take place. During the fall of 2006, I discussed with my mentor where I should apply to intern. I had never been abroad, and I wanted to incorporate that into my final project. Through e-mail correspondence, my mentor and I set up a stage management internship with Opera Australia from June through August (2007). Opera Australia had never had a stage management intern before, so I was their guinea pig. I worked on the Australian Premiere of the opera *A Streetcar Named Desire*, directed by Bruce Beresford, which performed at the Sydney Opera House. My experience in Australia and at the Sydney Opera is hard to describe other than unforgettable.

Currently, I have sent out resumes and cover letters to theatre companies all over the United States, looking for a paying stage management position for the year. This summer I will be working at Summer Opera Theatre as an ASM on *Die Tote Stadt* and as Production Stage Manager for *Carmen* in Washington DC. Opera Australia told me come back whenever I like, which I hope to revisit after I can support myself in the US. I do not have a preference for job location; I am willing to go

where the best experience in stage management is for me. I may eventually attend graduate school, so that I can teach future young stage managers what I have learned from my experiences.