

Illinois Theatre Association

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ITA ANNOUNCEMENTS

The ITA is accepting nominations for Board of Director candidates for the 2015-2017 term. Click here for details.

The ITA is accepting nominations for its 2015 Awards of Honor and Excellence. Click here for details.

ITA EVENTS

March 7, 2015

THEATRE: A Role for Everyone, a Catalyst for Change

eFOLLOWSPOT February, 2015

Why Join the ITA Board?

By Faye Ryan, ITA First Vice-President



The ITA Nominating Committee met recently to discuss their plan to have a recommended slate of ITA Board members for the 2015-2017 term, including President-Elect, First Vice-President, Treasurer, and a member of each of the Division Representative teams - Community Theatre, Creative Drama, Professional Theatre, Secondary School Theatre,

Theatre for Young Audiences, and University/College Theatre. During the planning, a discussion ensued about why one would want to apply for and serve on the ITA Board and the discussion was as diverse as its members.

So why might you want to consider serving on the ITA Board? First and foremost, board service is an excellent way to have a substantial and ongoing impact in your theatre community. As a member of a dedicated team of engaged theatre practitioners, you can identify long-term goals, seek out diverse opportunities for collaboration, and brainstorm, as well as implement, innovative strategies for lasting impact.

Serving on the board allows you to experience, first-hand, the operations of an organization at a high-level. Whether or not you strive to be a leader of a nonprofit organization, learning about and making decisions on governance, financial/accounting, ethics and legal issues is not something that most of us have the responsibility of doing, or opportunity to do, at our regular jobs. It's an experience that will truly develop your leadership skills and provide you with exposure that you might not otherwise gain.

At the same time, serving on the board can be an invaluable way to meet others in the theatre community outside of your normal circle. You will have the opportunity to meet new people (both the members of the board and their network as you interact with them at events). By expanding your network in this way, you'll discover that you have access to mentors and professional opportunities you otherwise wouldn't.

Current Board Members were asked to share some of the benefits, both personally and professionally, that they have gained through board service. Here are just a few of the responses:

Cynthia Bringer, TYA Representative:

I've enjoyed working on the mini-conferences hosted by our combined divisions of CD and TYA. Professionally,

[Click Here for Details](#)

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

March 7, 2015

Chicago Spotlight, Inc.
Theatrical Skills Workshop:
[Safe Rigging - Heads Up!](#)
New Lenox

April 18, 2015

Chicago Spotlight, Inc.
Theatrical Skills Workshop:
[Theatrical Make-Up - Who Do You Want to Be?](#)
Oak Park

[Submit an Event!](#)

JOB POSTINGS

Cutting Hall Performing Arts Center is looking for a part-time theatre technician to work supporting events in its theatres.

[Click here to visit the ITA's Job Board for details.](#)

FEATURED PERFORMANCES

Want your performance to be featured here?
Be sure to list your performance on the [ITA Performance Calendar!](#)

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being a board member helps me with my school's evaluation process (Danielson's domain four). The connections I made meeting fellow ITA members has helped me both professionally and personally.

Karen Hall, Five Year Secondary School Representative:

I am honored to serve on this board because I believe in its mission. I enjoy the chance to collaborate with my colleagues and have a support network to reach out to, especially within the Secondary Division.

Judy Kingner, 9 Year Board Member as Secondary Rep and 2nd Vice President:

Professionally, I get to connect with other professionals in the theatre world, which allows me to learn about opportunities outside of the secondary division. Personally, I have made many friends through my work on the ITA Board, and I get to be a part of an organization that makes a difference in the lives of so many.

Amelia Kmiec, Secretary:

Theatre was my lens for learning growing up. It's important for me, both as a teacher and human being, to figure out a way to give that opportunity to future generations in as many ways as I can, both in and outside of a classroom. Also, the opportunity to commune with a bunch of people who have different skill sets than mine is fascinating because I am constantly learning so much new information about a subject I thought I already knew a lot about. It's humbling and keeps the hamster on the wheel in my brain active.

Emily Leonard, Creative Drama Rep:

Personally I am building connections with performing arts specialist in a variety of fields. Professionally I am gaining a better understanding of the workings of the various divisions within the ITA and more broadly throughout the state.

Ioana Lidgas, Creative Drama Rep:

Being on the board has been an excellent experience for me. In short, I have gained insight on many different aspects of theatre in our fair city of Chicago and surrounding areas. I have a new network of professionals (primarily drama teachers) that I share lesson ideas with, props and set items with, and an overall "support system" that I wouldn't have without being on the Board of Directors. I have some new, close friends who have surfaced as well. I have had the experience of planning 2 conferences and giving back to our theatre community by providing quality workshops and experiences.

Marty Lynch, Univeristy/College Rep:

Serving on the board has been a pleasure because it gives me the chance to help raise awareness of the incredible number of talented individuals in Illinois. ITA has the ability to bring together artists and unlock opportunities that could never present themselves without our network. If ITA does one thing, it illuminates new pathways.

Jonathan Meier, Secondary Representative:

The ITA has been an important organization in my development as a theatre educator. I have been involved in volunteer organizations in the past, and I know how

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College/University Group Discussion

Community Theatre Group Discussion

Creative Drama Group Discussion

Professional Theatre Group Discussion

Secondary School Theatre Group Discussion

Theatre for Young Audiences Group Discussion

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Illinois Theatre Association

IHSTF



The ITA is a network of dedicated theatre artists and educators advocating quality theatre throughout Illinois. Please join us!

123 Mill Pond Dr.
Glendale Heights, IL 60139
312-265-5922 (office)
312-265-6101 (fax)
www.illinoistheatre.org

Please Visit ITA's

important it is for members to serve in order for the organization to thrive. Serving on the Board of the ITA is my way of saying thank you to a great organization. I have made some great friendships, but more importantly, I have developed a network of theatre educators and professionals who make me a more effective teacher.

Serving as an ITA Board member is one of the most challenging and rewarding of volunteer assignments. While election to the board is an honor, board members have important legal and fiduciary responsibilities that require a commitment of time, skill, and resources. If this sounds like something you would like to explore further, take a look at the [Board of Directors link on the ITA website](#). There you'll find more complete job descriptions and responsibilities as well as an application should feel that now is the time for you to get more involved with and make a commitment to your theatre organization.

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SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, September 19, 2015

**Illinois Theatre Association's
2015 Annual Convention**

Featuring:
Annual Awards of Excellence Ceremony
ITA's Annual Meeting
A Dynamic Keynote Speaker,
Workshops for ALL Theatre Divisions,
Networking,
and More!

Illinois Central College and Holiday Inn and Suites
East Peoria, IL

Tune in to the April *e-Followspot* for more details

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Educators on the Move: Margaret Boersma Leads Workshop on the importance of Movement in the Classroom

By Amelia Kmiec, ITA Secretary

"It's innate. We knock it out of our students and it is part of who we are."

While there seems to be a great deal of skills that are deemed no longer useful to today's test-crazy educational culture, Margaret Boersma addresses, in the quote above, what she believes to be an asset in the classroom: movement. "The body does not lie," she recently told a group of educators, quoting Helen Ridlington White. Ms. Boersma, an educator from Canada, recently taught a workshop called Movement: The Magic of Storytelling for interested members and non-members of the Illinois Theater



Amelia Kmiec with Margaret Boersma

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The Illinois Theatre Association is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Association on Sunday, February 22nd. Traditionally, Boersma works with non-theater teachers who want to incorporate movement into their lessons. "Some of my best students have been the ones lining up outside the principal's office," she says with a smile. Using core subjects such as Science, Social Studies and Language Arts, Ms. Boersma integrates body movement in order to get students to take better control of their own desire to learn. "Students are more engaged when they own their own understanding of the material," Boersma stated.

Ms. Boersma began the session by asking participants to describe what they do professionally, what their passion is and their understanding of process drama. Many expressed their desire to bring lessons alive for students, as well as a need to address social justice in an educational setting. "I have really loved watching how my 8th graders have woken up to the experience of learning process drama," Dinah Barthelmess, ITA President told attendees of the workshop. Ms. Barthelmess, in collaboration with her school and P.T.O., brought Ms. Boersma to her school in order to engage her students in a three week exploration of the theme "Us and Them," which addresses differences in terms of the context of two schools: a red school and a blue school. "I met Margaret in a workshop through AATE," Ms. Barthelmess stated. "It is just clear to me that she has so much to give."

A graduate of the Nova Scotia Teachers College and a veteran teacher for 30+ years, Ms. Boersma has worked with students in a variety of age groups, from pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade. "Canada had a mandatory K-8 Dance/Drama curriculum," Boersma said. "I had a cart, and I would often run from one end of the building to another, working with groups of students one to three times per week. It was a great workout".

Ms. Boersma's stamina, whether influenced by her years marathoning behind a cart or not, was truly evident as she guided teachers through a sample of different exercises they could use to help students physicalize their own learning. Beginning with a "walkabout," where students warmed up using the entire space, Boersma also used many familiar theater exercises to scaffold to the main theme of the session: bullying. Using the book One by Kathryn Otoshi, students learned about "Blue," a lone wanderer, content in his existence on the periphery, and "Red," a loathesome, tyrannical bully who, without outside intervention, teases Blue relentlessly. Students came up with verbs and adjectives that described both Blue and Red, which also, as Boersma pointed out, acted as a vocabulary lesson. Students individually choreographed their own dances to the adjective/verb combina



Afterwards, Boersma gathered students in a neutral circle to discuss how they felt while performing the dances. Many shared how the dances triggered old memories, while others addressed how the intense involvement individually had deep commitment in terms of emotionality. tions, and then performed both Red and Blue dances side by side to accompanying music.

To close, Boersma taught the method of "flocking," in which students became both characters Red and Blue in groups and

took turns leading movement that embodied the emotions of each of these characters. All members of one group would look upstage while the other group members looked downstage and would follow the movement prescribed by the person at the head of each group. After some time, Boersma would tell groups to switch focus to the next closest member, and then their movement would be followed to guide the group.

"We truly had a different perspective of this performance," Boersma said, including Executive Director Aimee-Lynn Newlan, who was also watching from the audience. "Thank you for your work today - you have inspired me," she said, clapping her hands.

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3rd Annual Illinois High School 10-Minute Play Festival at Eureka College

By Marty Lynch, ITA College/University Theatre Division Representative

Scripts are now being accepted for the [Illinois High School 10-Minute Play Festival](#) to be presented November 20-21 by [Eureka College](#) and the [Peoria Live Theatre League](#). All Illinois High School students are eligible to enter. All scripts must be new, unproduced works. Six scripts will be selected as winners and produced by Eureka College



Dates:

Submission deadline: Must be e-mailed or postmarked by July 1, 2015

Evaluation period: Now through July 4, 2015

Authors notified: July 5, 2015

Selections announced: By September 15, 2015

Performance dates: November 20-21 (2 evenings)

Notification of scripts received will be made by July 5, 2015. Notification of script chosen will be made by September 15, 2015.

The six selected plays will be staged in November 2015 at Pritchard Theatre in Eureka College.

There is no fee to enter this competition.

Prizes:

Eureka College will produce six scripts written by Illinois High School students. The six plays will be selected from all entries in the following categories:

Class of 2015: 1 script
 Class of 2016: 1 script
 Class of 2017: 1 script
 Class of 2018: 1 script
 At-Large: 2 scripts

In the event that no scripts from a class are submitted, another at-large script will be chosen. All student scripts are eligible for

selection in the student's class rank and the At-Large openings.

We are dedicated to producing original works, and if we have the resources to produce more than six plays, we will select more than two At-Large scripts.

Submission Guidelines:

- You must be a high school student in Illinois.
- Electronic submissions will be allowed.
- Submissions must be original, unpublished, 10-minute plays.
- Plays should be written in proper script format.
- There is no limit to the number of plays that an individual may submit.
- Production requirements should be feasible. Since the winning plays will be produced, no play considered technically un-producible will be considered.
- Recommended maximum number of characters per play is four.
- Running time is to be 10 minutes or less, which may mean 6-10 pages depending upon the density of dialogue. Authors are responsible for submitting work that is within the 10 minute running time limit. Cuts will be requested of the playwright for any selected play which runs over the limit regardless of the number of pages in the script.
- Mailed scripts must be typed/word-processed, numbered, and stapled.
- Scripts cannot be returned. Eureka College and the Peoria Live Theatre League assume no responsibility for lost or damaged scripts.
- We are unable at this time to provide feedback to playwrights regarding their work.

Submission Process:

Snail Mail - Mail 2 copies of each script along with the two types of cover pages to:

Illinois High School 10-Minute Play Festival
c/o Marty Lynch
Eureka College
300 E College Avenue
Eureka, IL 61530

E-mail - Send a digital copy of the script and two types of cover pages (see above) to: martyl@eureka.edu

In the subject line, please write "Illinois High School 10-Minute Play Festival."

The selection of directors, actors and designers for the selected plays is at the sole discretion of Eureka College. An author may participate in the process if participation is requested by the producing companies or the director selected for the project. Entry of a script into this festival grants to Eureka College the right to produce the entered play only for this specific event in November 2015, and authors retain all rights to their work for future production or publication. Authors, if their play is selected for production, grant to Eureka College and the Peoria Live Theatre League the right to use their name, biographical information and photo for purposes of

publicity and marketing during the period Aug 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

Questions can be directed to martyl@eureka.edu

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RE-ACT

By Cynthia Bringer, ITA Theatre for Young Audiences Division Representative

Those of us in theatre education know the importance of process over product, that the learning process is more important than the end product. One of the ways to get there is the idea of REACTING. When a student submits a piece of writing for an assignment, most likely the teacher will take him through at least one re-write. Why not do the same for an acting piece?

My little sixth graders were so nervous to do their presentations this past week, that their presentations weren't their best. Previously I worked with them one on one. They also worked with one other group and got feedback from them, but presenting in front of the whole class turned into a different story. They spoke ten miles a minute; they forgot their blocking; they forgot their lines; anything that could go wrong, did. Then the magic happened. I allowed them a chance to go out and rework yet again things the class shared with them.



The audience members are to watch and then raise their hands and wait to be called on by the actors. "I have an opinion, would you like to hear it?" I was amazed that the six graders were able to define every aspect of what needed to be worked on that I had taken in my notes. Getting the opportunity to go out to practice one more time helped. The

actors then came back, more relaxed, and for the most part, did a better job the next time.

Reacting is a great idea for process drama! So the next time your class is doing a performance piece: REACT!!!

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Where Should the "Actor" be Placed?

By Stacy Deemar, ITA Member

Despite the arctic temperatures across the country, the winter season is an exciting time of year when we come together as a community of artists to recognize the great talents among us. We take the time to view the beautiful artistry and craftsmanship of film and television from the previous year.

Regardless of whether you are a member of the actors, directors or writing guilds, many theatre educators are passionate about why one piece of art is superior to another. And during the awards season that includes SAG Awards, Golden Globes, Critics' Choice Movie Awards, and Academy Awards, we share our opinions and debate one another even after a nominee is awarded.

One of the greatest accomplishments as an artist is when we are recognized for our outstanding talents. When the accolades are issued from within the industry, like the Screen Actors Guild Award, this validation has significant economic and professional benefits. Careers can be launched and the award becomes a permanent fixture in resumes, biographies and obituaries.



The prestigious SAG Award is a privilege to win since its inauguration twenty-one years ago. And just being nominated for the award is worthy of honorable mention. Only thirteen awards for acting are given amongst the 165,000 members which makes winning one even more impressive.

The Screen Actors Guild Award is a magnificent nude male figure standing on top of a pedestal holding the mask of comedy slightly elevated in his left hand and the mask of tragedy in his right hand. The solid bronze statue weighs over twelve pounds and is called "The Actor."

There are numerous anecdotes about where SAG Award winners keep their "Actors." Some popular places include the study, library, living room, a shelf, hidden area, museum, foyer, vault, and the refrigerator. Of course, winners have the latitude in choosing where their statue will rest. Some actors have candidly admitted that their award is in the bathroom because "it matches the fixtures" or their bathroom is serene. But when the award makes its way to a bathroom and constitutes as a toilet paper holder, this derision reflects poorly on our profession.

In the February 2015 edition of InStyle Magazine, Jennifer Aniston gloats about the placement of her Screen Actors Guild Award she won for an outstanding performance by an ensemble in a comedy series. Amy Synnott interviewed Ms. Aniston for the article entitled "How Sweet It Is" at her Bel-Air



home. Ms. Synnott noticed "The Actor" in Ms. Aniston's first floor powder room. The statue sits beside the toilet with a roll of toilet paper on the erected left arm holding the mask of comedy. When asked about the placement of the Screen Actors Guild Award,

Ms. Aniston stated: "I mean what else was I going to do with it?" Aniston giggles when complimented on her ingenuity. "With that little arm sticking out? I hope it doesn't seem like a big F-you to the Screen Actors Guild."

Ms. Aniston's faux pas is ungracious. Did Ms. Aniston believe that her performance did not deserve recognition? Is her

commentary a slight to SAG AFTRA?

One of the unspoken responsibilities of being a renowned artist like Ms. Aniston is that she is a role model for the younger generations of thespians. Spectacles create an inaccurate perception of our profession that only benefits the tabloids. If she fails to represent herself as a merited professional, she tarnishes our industry.

As we honor and celebrate great artistry this season, let us be grateful for our unions, our associations, and our profession.

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The Power of the Selfie

By Ioana Ligdas, ITA Creative Drama Division Representative

What better way to get into character than with a series of selfies? If you teach middle school, I urge you to use this technique for character development.

Students choose their characters for said activity or project. Then they do the usual character history questions - where am I from? What do I look like? What do I sound like?



Then, very simply, they take a series of "selfies" of their characters in different situations (they will like bringing their phones/iPads to class). They can superimpose a background picture in with their "selfies" to add more setting to the shot, and they can add a caption as well.

For example, a photo of an overtired housewife might have a mess of pans and dishes in the background. They have to choose "3 selfies" in a row that shows off their character's personality traits.

This is a simple and easy technique to develop character for middle school students which uses their favorite ingredient...technology.

Students can also "airplay" and share their "selfies" with the class, if they want to.

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Why Don't They Write?

By Fr. Dominic Garramone, ITA Member

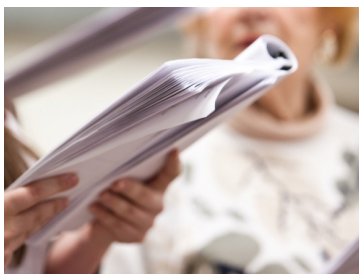
I attended this year's IHSTF in January along with a handful of students and chaperones. We had our customary excellent Fest, and kudos to the Fest committees which have made that happen

reliably year after year. Based on some experiences I had this time, however, the rest of us--the teachers, moderators and other theatre professionals---evidently have something we need to work on. Our schools and the Fest itself would benefit from greater emphasis on play writing.



I know that there is writing component to many high school theatre curricula throughout the state, and I don't want to make any sweeping condemnations or thump anybody with the Guilt Hammer. I'm certainly aware how budgets cuts, crammed schedules and Common Core don't make it any easier. And even at Fest this year, there were a total of six workshops on some kind of writing. I remember at least one year when there were none.

Nor do I say this because the Fest workshops on playwriting were sub-par. I attended the one by Quinn McGavin and Christina Harrington of [ISU](#) and was impressed with how much we learned in a short span of time. I'm sure the others were valuable as well. But I had conversations with students all weekend long about writing, and I got the impression that many students don't feel much encouragement to explore play writing or have opportunities to receive training, guidance or feedback.



Here are two examples: One girl described her creative process for writing (which included careful observation, developing an ear for intriguing dialogue, and creating tension through conflict), and then ended with "So I guess my method isn't really 'normal.'" She could have said this for any

number of reasons, but I hope she wasn't repeating something she heard from others. She certainly sounded discouraged or at least embarrassed. Another student at the ISU workshop was a bit quiet, but had genuinely outstanding ideas in our small group. I told she had a good mind for scripting and asked if she wrote plays. She looked a bit wistful and said, "Oh, I used to, but I don't anymore." It broke my heart to hear her---what happened? Why do we have thousands of kids who are enthusiastic about acting and dance and tech, but have potential writers who don't feel "normal" or have given up?

Maybe my experiences were coincidental and things aren't as bad as they seem. It could well be that what I saw was ordinary teenage self-doubt or reluctance to talk to a stranger with "Father" on his name tag. But I can tell you this much: Recently we started up the latest edition of the Genesius Project, our playwriting guild at [Saint Bede Academy](#). We're producing the scripts for next year's Fall Theatre Evening of One-Acts. I was considering submitting the shows for adjudication for next year's Fest, but maybe I need to bring the guild to present a workshop instead.

How about you? What can you do to encourage, train and mentor the next generation of playwrights?

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ITA Member Spotlight: Mary Ellen Everett

Submitted by Judy Klingner, ITA Second Vice President

What is your name?

Mary Ellen Everett

Tell us about your education/training in theatre.

I started my training at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale learning about Stanislavsky. I spent a summer in New York City studying Meisner Technique at the William Esper Studio, which was an incredible experience and on a personal level really set me on the right path as an actor. In addition to the Meisner Technique, the program encompassed voice, movement, film, Alexander, and Balinese mask. It was a wonderful experience! This past summer I had the opportunity to train with the Moscow Art Theatre in

Cambridge, MA at the Stanislavsky Summer School. This program was extremely intense and ingrained a strong sense of discipline and self-awareness that I had never experience before as an actor. The program truly changed the way I approach my work. Lately I have been in the thick of the improv scene, studying and performing in Chicago. Just recently I was accepted into the Conservatory at Second City, and I have been taking advantage of the many useful workshops hosted all over the city to better prepare myself for the business side of acting.

How did you hear about the ITA?

A friend from my improv group knew about the ITA's Statewide Professional Auditions and pulled the rest of us into the loop. I am really lucky to have found a cohort of actor friends that are constantly looking out for one another and pushing each other to go after new opportunities! There is a lot out there and a lot to stay on top of.

Tell us about your career path.

My career path has been unusual I think-kind of a "slow and steady wins the race" approach. I was living in southern Illinois when I really committed to my pursuit and wanted to pack up and move to Hollywood! But my husband works in agriculture, so there were some obvious issues with that (and thank goodness). Southern Illinois may not seem like a normal place to have a home base if you want a professional career in acting, but I worked with the resources at my fingertips, had the goodfortune of falling into the hands of some world class training right in southern Illinois, and met other actors just as passionate and dedicated to the work as I was. There is some really great theatre happening in southern Illinois! I am now living outside of

Chicago, and I commute to the city for work. I am so thankful that I had time to grow and mature before really putting myself out there, and all of my training that I have been able to do has really prepared me to hit the ground running as I enter a larger professional market.

**What is the best advice you have received regarding your career goals?**

I, like most actors, can get in my head very quickly and tell myself "no" before I have even given myself the chance to succeed or fail. Being in my head and constantly analyzing doesn't help me in my daily life or in my work. I once had a

director say, "Actors should be a little bit stupid." It's a fun way of saying don't think so much, and I really soar when I get out of my own way.

What are you looking for in a graduate program?

Intensity! Take me through the ringer; it's what I'm paying you for!

Please share details about your recent summer theatre adventures.



Working with the Moscow Art Theatre was a crazy fun adventure. They have an approach to acting that is unlike anything I have experienced before. It's about the work and there is a job to be done. Our days were very long this summer- start at 9 AM and finish by 2 AM if you were lucky. Every night as an ensemble we had to prepare new work for the next day in addition to preparing for our showcase at the end of the term. We had Sundays off, but by the end of the second week we were working on Sundays as well. It wasn't required, but we were all working so hard for the same goal, that it wasn't a question if we were going to work or not. It's what needed to be done. By the end of the summer I had gone 21 long days with no breaks, and it was the happiest I had ever been! There was so much reward in working with an ensemble like that. I will never forget the experience and how it made me feel.

What is the biggest challenge you face related to your work in the theatre?

Owning my voice.

Of what theatrical accomplishment are you most proud?

My musical theatre productions. I love to sing but am VERY shy about it and really don't care to ever hear anyone critique my singing voice. Anytime I step out on stage for a musical theatre production, I am truly facing my fears.

Tell us about your experience at the recent ITA Professional Auditions.

Smooth sailing. It was organized so nicely and the staff did a great job making everyone feel comfortable. It was such a cool opportunity to be able to put myself in front of so many people. I was especially grateful for the mock audition clinics. Ninety seconds is a very short amount of time to show who you are and what you can do. ITA's Executive Director Aimee-Lynn Newlan really prepared me to give my best audition.

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