

A Summer of Live Theater

For my fourth year award, I will return to my original artistic passion: theater. Stage performance was the primary reason why I applied for the Miller Arts Scholars program. Since my acceptance, I have explored other forms of art, but I always end up returning to the stage. Over the course of this year, I directed a mainstage production for Shakespeare on the Lawn, performed spoken word for an intermission show, judged a Shakespeare monologue competition, and co-wrote two short plays. Upon reflection, it is evident to me that theater persists as my first and foremost passion. Last summer, I ventured outside of my usual realm to explore filmmaking. My experiences at the Champs-Élysées and Edinburgh International Film Festivals successfully piqued my interest in film, and as a result, I entered the department's yearlong filmmaking class with a whetted and insatiable appetite for screenwriting. Most importantly though, my rising third year award made me fall in love with the festival atmosphere. Ever since leaving Europe, I have craved another immersive, artistic experience. Thus, I want to cap my Miller Arts experience by attending a theater festival. At this point in my life, I have seen a plethora of contemporary plays and musicals. To depart from my usual fare, I will either attend the New York Musical Festival or the Shaw Festival in Canada to experience innovative, new shows as well as overlooked classic plays. Exposing myself to such plays will broaden my definition of quality theater. I hope to discover inspirational shows akin to Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*, which upended my narrow definition of musical theater when I saw it on Broadway four years ago. While engaging with these festivals, I will keep a daily blog that analyzes these works and craft original short plays of my own.

When perusing summer theater festivals in North America, the New York Musical Festival and the Shaw Festival struck me as distinctive, reputable programs. Each festival drew my attention for several reasons. While it has not yet announced its 2019 season, the New York Musical Festival's past seasons indicate that it will showcase an eclectic group of musicals. As expected, the festival is centralized in the Midtown theatrical district. Every year, NYMF debuts at least a dozen musicals in a span of only three weeks. According to [Playbill](#), twenty-three of NYMF shows have succeeded in securing Off-Broadway runs and four have enjoyed Broadway runs, including one UVA favorite, *Next to Normal*. While not likely, I dream of seeing the next *Hamilton* or *Dear Evan Hansen* while attending this festival. Taking the time to analyze these musicals' plots, styles, and themes will help me better understand the genre and hone my abilities to critically engage with it.

The Shaw Festival is equally exciting. A *New York Times* article from 2017 highlighted the Shaw Festival as one of the "top festivals...around in the country." During this year's season, the Shaw will showcase thirteen plays on three different stages. Unlike NYMF, the Shaw does not only focus on debuting shows -- such as *The Horse and His Boy*, which premieres at the Shaw this April -- but they also resurrect older, lesser known genre plays -- like *Brigadoon*, a Scottish musical. And, of course, they have a few George Bernard Shaw plays as well. As

someone who both loves genre theater and has always wanted to read Shaw, I have no doubt that this festival will be an worthwhile experience for me. It will expose me to a greater variety of theater that I am unable to partake in at the University. Furthermore, it takes place in a pleasant location: Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada, which is a mere 25 minute drive from Niagara Falls. It will be especially interesting to see how the denizens treat live theater differently than me if they differ at all.

I emphasize location on purpose. As of late, I have experienced a heightened emotional attachment to places. I only discovered a love for my hometown, Nashville, TN, once I had left it, and with my time at the University coming to a close, I feel preemptive nostalgia starting to enter my thoughts. Until recently, I have never understood on an intimate level how an artist's environment impacts their emotional state and by extension, their artistic process. I will use these festival experiences to pay intense attention to how space impacts theater. Among other points, I will take note of how the performance space impacts the work, how the festival's host city impacts its content, how each work's setting impacts its character, and the reverse of all these relationships as well.

In addition to location, timing was another integral factor in choosing these festivals. Currently in the throes of application and audition season, I am unsure of which festival best works with my summer schedule. Thankfully, the Shaw Festival starts in April and runs all summer, and the New York Musical Festival runs from July to early August. I have equivalent enthusiasm for both, and flexible timing guarantees my ability to attend one of them regardless of my summer involvements.

Similar to last summer, I need little equipment for this immersive adventure. Since I have a deeper background in theater, I will incorporate more rigorous, critical thinking into my fourth year award outcome. Daily blog posts will showcase a brief analysis of each work as well as a brief playwriting exercise. With graduate applications on my mind, I feel the need to establish a habit of writing over the summer. A final portfolio will consist of a compilation of these blog posts, one expanded piece of playwriting, and a summary report. Just as with my past Miller Arts awards, I hope to produce high quality, original pieces and introspective reflections to share with our community. I would thoroughly appreciate the program's support in my rising fourth year award.

Timeline

SPRING

- Before the festival:
 - Choose which festival (and fill out international travel form if necessary)
 - Decide which shows to see
 - Pinpoint special programming (Meet the Directors, Backstage Tours, etc.)

SUMMER

- During the festival:
 - Keep a daily blog that includes analysis of the work and a short playwriting exercise inspired by the work

FALL

- After festival:
 - Compile blogs into one pdf
 - Extend one of the playwriting exercises into a one-act
 - Write a summary report of my experiences

Budget Proposal for New York Musical Festival

Item	Cost	More Information
NYMF Pass Plus	300	https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/store/52/packages
Lodging (for 7 nights)	1400	preferably in midtown theater district
Flights	400	from Charlottesville to NYC; checked bags
Meals	350	\$50 a day
Transportation	100	public transportation; taxi to and from airport
Total	2,550	

Budget Proposal for Shaw Festival

Item	Cost	More Information
Gold Tickets for 5 Shows (one musical, one family show, 3 non-musical shows)	490	https://www.shawfest.com/visit/ticket-seating-info/
Lodging (6 nights)	1060	preferably close to the theater
Flights	550	from Charlottesville to Canada; checked bags
Meals	350	\$50 a day
Transportation	100	public transportation, to and from airport
Total	2,550	

All in all, I am requesting \$2,550 for my rising fourth year award. Thank you for your time and consideration.