

Jakob Cansler

20 March 2020

Art Scholar Third-Year Award Outcome Report

Faculty Mentor: Dave Dalton

A Summer Internship for Directing

This past summer, I completed a volunteer position as assistant director for a production of *Steel Magnolias* at Heritage Theatre Festival. For four weeks, I observed and helped with rehearsals for this professional production and learned a lot about directing and the directing process at the professional level. Under the direction of Claire Karpen, I observed many parts of the process of creating this large-scale production. For the first week, as the cast and director participated in table-work and discussions about the play, I engaged in discussions with them and helped with analysis of the play. Then, in the following two weeks, I observed as the show moved through staging and into full run-throughs and as the director worked very closely with actors to develop characters into three-dimensional people. Finally, in the final week of rehearsals, I helped the director take notes during technical rehearsals and observed creative meetings post-rehearsal.

Overall, the process was very enlightening and taught me a lot about the theatrical directing process. I had many discussions with Claire Karpen about her directing process and how she approaches rehearsals and the creative process at-large. She taught me many useful things about how to take notes during run-throughs and how to talk to actors while doing character-work, as well as how to approach the work from the first rehearsal through the final rehearsal. I also asked her about her experience working with designers and production teams, and she gave me some extremely helpful advice on how to approach collaboration with other creatives. I didn't get very much hands-on experience, and I didn't expect to, but I now have a much better understanding of how productions go from the conceptual stage to a fully-realized, large-scale show at a professional theatre company. I also gained a lot of first-hand experience with the theatre industry at-large by having discussions with the cast and crew about their previous work. Two of the cast members were full-time performers based out of New York, so learning about their experiences was very insightful in learning about the theatre industry and the life of an actor.

Since this was a volunteer position that required up to 40 hours of work per week for a month, I ended up utilizing the full amount of funding from this grant to offset the cost of accommodations. I'd like to thank the Miller Arts Scholars program for making this experience possible and to my faculty mentor Dave Dalton for advising me throughout the entire process. This experience was illuminating to me and will be very useful as I pursue future directing projects during undergrad and post-graduation.



The view from my desk during the final week of rehearsals.



Production photos from *Steel Magnolias*.