

## The Everchanging Proposal

When I first applied for this grant in April of 2020 I was in the midst of applying for the Yale Summer Directing Program for the upcoming 2020 summer term. I was drawn to the curriculum with classes on textual analysis, vocal production, physicality, stage management, and design. I was looking forward to intensive training and learning in a new environment. However, the pandemic had other plans. With the Yale Summer Program being cancelled, amongst many other things, I updated my proposal this time for a research trip to New York whenever it would be possible to travel safely. Here I sought to conduct research on American Sign Language in Theatre as well as directing styles. I would have gone to the Lincoln Center branch of the New York Public Library, to the archives, to watch productions with ASL and read up on their presence in theater. I also proposed to watch some live performances in New York. With the remaining part of my budget I proposed funding for a small production at UVA with money going toward costumes, props, sound, etc. but once again, the pandemic had other plans. I moved forward and used my grant money to invest in experiences such as talkbacks and competitions and invest in a laptop with software that will help me professionally.

With the pandemic changing, and having to postpone and alter every plan and proposal, I met with my mentor, Dave Dalton, and came to an exciting conclusion: invest in a laptop and software that will benefit my artistic goals. These goals include writing more scripts, shooting and editing videos and films, directing virtually and in person, and creating a digital presence/outreach to share my work and to network with others all over the world. I am currently writing this from my new 2020 Macbook Pro. I am very thankful for this grant money as I would not have been able to invest in this on my own any time soon. I was able to invest in 2TB of storage, an [educational app bundle](#) including sound and video editing apps such as: Final Cut Pro, Logic Pro, Motion, Compressor, and MainStage. I also downloaded [Final Draft](#), a screenwriting software. I am very excited to move to a new screenwriting software with so many resources included. With so much of our entertainment moving digitally, I am very excited to have a tool that can help me be a productive artist in today's world and look to the future.

It is important to be adaptable and with this investment I can work on a digital presence as well as bringing the digital to the stage. Back in April of 2020 I had the pleasure to direct a student written piece for the Virginia Players Lab Series called "Watch Me" by Caky Winsett. This was my first attempt at directing a full play and my first time directing a virtual play and at that time I did not have the tools I have today. I met and collaborated with UVA alumni Andy Carluccio and was able to build a virtual world for the characters. As one of the first directors to attempt virtual theatre during the pandemic, I quickly began to figure out what worked and what didn't for us. Virtually I focused on character and character development. From there we continued to build on what was possible virtually. We began to play with virtual backgrounds, Zoom manipulation, and essentially how to interact with others over Zoom and create visual beat changes. After this experience I was able to jump into the KCACTF festival (which I will discuss in the following paragraph) with some experience and new ideas based on what I had tried or did

not try. I have been fortunate to continue to direct virtually and with this new laptop and software I am able to explore what else is possible in this virtual landscape. Of course I cannot wait for the day we can all meet again and engage in live performances, and I recognize that this new tool can be used for many aspects of my artistry.

Back in November, Dave Dalton sent me some resources and information for this year's Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival ([KCACTF](#)). With some of the grant money I applied and submitted as a director. I chose one of the ten scenes provided, began working with a group of extremely talented UVA actors, created a PDF "book" of analysis, and a pitch for my version of the scene/production. I also submitted a short video with examples, concepts, and a visual version of my pitch. With this, I went to round one where I met amazing student directors from other schools as well as two other UVA student directors. From this round we received feedback on our proposals, we had no idea how many students would move to the next round. Out of the eight students, four moved forward. In less than 24 hours we had to submit a video of the full scene we had been working on as well as a clip demonstrating us working with our actors and showing our directing styles. That night, I uploaded my submission and the following morning the four finalists met with the respondents to watch all four scenes and receive feedback. Both rounds I recorded my feedback from the respondents and it was so helpful moving forward as an artist in that I got to hear feedback on my process, what was coming across through my work, and things to think about if I was to continue working on the scene. That afternoon the winner of the region and runner up was announced. I am very grateful to say that I won the region and am now a fellow of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC). I had such an amazing time meeting these other student directors and the respondents. I am so thankful for everyone's feedback as well as everyone's work. As an SDC fellow, I am now eligible for resources and classes through the SDC and the Kennedy Center later this year and I am very much looking forward to that.

With a new opportunity to direct a virtual scene/production, I took what I had learned from April 2020 and asked myself how I could go further. One thing I wanted to try was to have my actors interact with pre recorded content. With five actors being double cast I had to bend the rules I had known to create a virtual playground for them. At the time I did not have the tools I now have and I look forward to taking my experiences and ideas and furthering them into existence.

[Region IV Announcement](#)

[My Submission](#)

In December of 2020 I attended a virtual event through the SDC called, "[Deaf Artists in Theater: History, Representation and the Future](#)." Here I witnessed the amazing presence of [Monique Holt](#) (who I had referred to in a paper for a class on Deafness in Literature and Film so I was fangirling a bit when I saw that she would be speaking at this event). Monique talked about her experience working with both hearing and Deaf actors, work as a DASL (director of artistic sign language) and translation of English into ASL in dramatic texts. A DASL can perhaps be

grouped with dialect or speech coaches for hearing actors. A DASL can help actors in translating lines from English to ASL, or regardless what language the play was originally written, help actors in their choice of sign or classifiers. In ASL, classifiers are used to describe things, whether that be the shape, location, or way in which something is done or used. Another role of a DASL can be to help actors use signs true to the time period a play is set in but also make it understandable for a modern audience. I found this particularly interesting and have since reached out to Monique over email.

Some other aspects of this event that were particularly interesting were talks on intersectionality with artists of color discussing their identities as both deaf and bipoc individuals. The audience witnessed some truly amazing pieces of art during this talk and I am so grateful for being in their presence. An intimacy director was also brought to the discussion.. This was also helpful for me as this semester as part of the *Overcranked* film class I am filming a screenplay I wrote which includes somewhat intimate physical comedy, so hearing an intimacy director talk in conversation with other artists was very beneficial.

Another event that I went to was just last month called, “Broadway Signs.” Here I witnessed different Deaf performers translate and perform pieces of theatre, signing songs and sharing stories. Storytelling is a large part of ASL and Deaf culture and I thoroughly enjoyed this event. Please check out this link for more information and lookout for any upcoming performances: [Broadway Signs](#). I relish in these talks and performances as I am planning to minor in American Sign Language here at UVA alongside my major in Drama as I want to work with both Deaf and Hearing artists.

After taking Directing I with Professor Dalton in Fall 2019, I found myself yearning to learn more about the craft. After having previous training in acting, directing was a new venture. Though I have choreographed in the past and helped produce showcases (collaborating with sound and light designers), working with actors and staging a scene was a whole new world. Dave’s constant support is greatly appreciated as he has answered questions and concerns as well as provided me with opportunities to grow and learn throughout my UVA experience thus far. I am very thankful for what I have learned from him so far and that is why I have chosen him as my mentor. Thank you so much Miller Arts Scholars for helping me to fund investments in my artistic journey, and thank you Dave Dalton for helping throughout this process and for your constant support and guidance.

| Expense Type   | Cost | Description/Justification          |
|--|------|------------------------------------|
| <u>Events:</u>                                       |      |                                    |
| Broadway Signs                                       | \$10 | Ticket for virtual event           |
| DEAF ARTISTS IN THEATER: HISTORY, REPRESENTATION AND | \$25 | Ticket for three day virtual event |

| THE FUTURE               |            |   |
|--------------------------|------------|---|
| KCACTF Festival          | \$30       | Registration fee  |
| <u>Tools:</u>            |            |   |
| Lights (Love and Info)   | \$20       | Bulbs, two clip lamps   |
| MacBook Pro              | \$2,441.90 | with educational pricing and educational apps (final cut, sound editing, etc.)    |
| Final Draft              | \$99.99    | Educational price/license   |
| National Theatre at Home | \$129.99   | subscription for theatre productions at hometown watch, respond to and learn from |