

## Yale Directing Intensive & Directing a Student Written Play

### **Yale: A Practical Approach to Directing**

First, without sounding too dramatic, the Yale program changed my life. I was surrounded by directors from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and experiences, all hungry to learn. I am still in close contact with my peers and will be working with one of them right after graduation as an assistant director to them on a Mozart Opera. The cohort was and is so incredibly supportive which is truly a gift as directing can be a lonely role and is often a competitive field. Directors are often known to be “fighting for the same jobs” so to be a part of a community of directors who support each other, help each other find opportunities, and overall build each other up is truly wonderful. I am so grateful for my peers and my teachers.

The classes that we took covered textual analysis, scenic design, lighting design, movement, stage managing, and directing practice. We learned how to work with and build strong relationships with designers, stage managers, and actors as well as different tools, exercises and practices that can be used in the rehearsal room. I have used many of the tools that I learned during this course in the rehearsal process for the Lab Series show I directed last semester called *Peace by Piece*, and also in my current project *Ismene: piecing together a woman*. One practice that I bring with me to each rehearsal room and even brought to Miller Arts Scholars is Session Agreements. This practice works to lay the groundwork for creating a safe space. Everyone involved will sit together and read the main session agreements suggested by the director and then will have time to either make amendments or add to the agreements. The scholars used this tool this past semester after being divided into groups for in depth discussions. This is a very important tool which I encourage everyone to refer to throughout any process to make sure that we are all on the same page.

Due to covid, we had presentations in class instead of a lab at the end of the program. For our movement class we presented pieces using Shakespear’s *The Winter's Tale* and other texts. For directing practice we used Tennessee Williams’ *Glass Menagerie*, digging into the characters’ and the many stimuli around them. For design we used *Antigone* by Sophocles, bringing in three images to represent the setting, the chorus, and a main character. And finally for textual analysis we applied Elinor Fuch’s essay “Visit to a Small Planet” to *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage. This deep dive into textual analysis, frankly, blew my mind. Each class culminated in a lot of light bulbs going off in my head. This program is an integral part of my growth as a director.

### **Directing a Student Written Play**

I had to adapt a bit when it came to preparing for the student written work I applied to direct. Together, I and the writer of the original piece I proposed, decided to postpone that particular project. In seeking to find an alternative I decided to revisit some thoughts that had been circling in my head for some time. I decided to tackle the character of Ismene from Sophocles’ Theban Trilogy. This project originated from a workshop I attended during the

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national portion of the 2021 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival where we explored the story of *Antigone* and what our Brechtian fables would be. Mine was thus:

After losing her parents and both brothers, Ismene is tired. She has lost almost her entire family. Her sister, Antigone, insists that both brothers be buried the same way (after Creon denies Polynices' burial). Ismene fears that she will lose her sister too. Exhausted, she fights for her sister to stay alive beside her. When Antigone puts up a fight, Ismene must fight to die with her if Antigone wants to risk her life. Antigone rejects Ismene and Ismene is forced to watch as her sister is sentenced to death. When there is hope that Antigone may be released, her body is found and Ismene is left to grieve alone.

I had read *Antigone* several times and never really paid much attention to Ismene until this past year. I found myself wondering, at the end of the play, does Ismene bury Antigone? If so, how? Sophocles takes Ismene out of the picture halfway through the play and she never comes back. Why? The more I thought about this, the more I wanted to know who Ismene was and who she could be.

I've been meeting Dave Dalton, my mentor for Miller Arts Scholars, this semester as part of an independent study. In our discussions, Dave and I have explored "feminine" vs "masculine" storytelling amongst other things. The Aristotelian model of drama is often seen as the "masculine" form: stasis, inciting incident, rising action, climax, and falling action. The "feminine" model is often described as more "circular." Dave mentioned a play to me called *a feminine ending* by Sarah Treem. Upon reading this play I saw discussions of gendered language, sentences, and "feminine" vs "masculine" endings in music. It got me thinking, did Antigone get a "masculine" story and a "masculine" ending? I wanted to give Ismene a "feminine" story and a "feminine" ending.

Tha actors and I began our process by reading both Ann Carson's translation of *Antigone* and Sarah Treem's, *a feminine ending*. With journals that I purchased for each person, we reflected on the two plays as well as other prompts that I provided. The first few rehearsals were very discussion heavy as we explored the plays, their relation to each other, and personal parallels and connections. The next part of the process that we agreed upon was that I would write the script based off of our discussions and journaling and together we would direct and edit the script in rehearsal. We had group rehearsals on weekends and a week with one on one rehearsals where we worked on monologues that I had written for each Ismene based off of something that each actor wanted to explore. We've made live edits in the rehearsal room, and have had things not make it into the final presentation.

I wanted us to explore what being an Ismene is. Perhaps we have all been Ismenes in our lives. We've regretted things, we've felt the pressures of the expectations of women in society, and have had a fear of being left behind. The goal was to produce a piece where we could explore this. It evolved over time and became an exploration of the relationship between Ismene and Antigone and, perhaps more importantly, the relationship Ismene has with herself.

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<b>Expense Type</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Description/Justification</b>
Yale Application Fee	75	
Yale Tuition	950	
Yale Tech Fee	85	Virtual program due to Covid restrictions
Yale books/supplies	35.99	Purchase of three plays for the program
Antigone Script	111.61	Six scripts
Feminine Ending Script	80.71	Seven scripts
Journals	25.41	Six Journals
Costumes	364.20	Four dresses, four head pieces, four pairs of shoes
Props	269.89	Trunk of props to play and experiment with
Posters	20.57	Printed 30 posters
Photography	150	Photography of dress rehearsal
Tickets	470	Trash, Science, For colored girls who considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf, a Strange Loop
Misc	362.62	Transportation, folders, extra tools and materials
Total	3000	