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Third Year Arts Award Outcome Report
Faculty Mentor: Marianne Kubik

Breaking into the Business: A Summer of Acting and Networking in NYC

I would first like to thank the J. Sanford Miller Family for their generous contributions to my artistic career. My membership in the Miller Arts Scholars program continues to enrich my future from both a networking and financial standpoint and I cannot thank the Miller Family enough. It is their support that brings me to write this outcome report today, wherein I am excited to share the hard work and acting progress I made in NYC this past Summer.

In summary, my goal was to expand networking resources and improve my acting base by attending the Stella Adler Studio of Acting Summer Conservatory. I endeavored to forge industry connections across voice/movement classes and specifically, TV/Film classes. I went into the summer unsure of where my acting career would lead me (Musical Theatre, Straight Theatre, or Screen) and I am proud to announce that the connections I made both with my peers and instructors led me to a more concise focus – this will be expanded upon later.



First day of class with my Summer Conservatory cohort. 06/03/19

My faculty mentor, Marianne Kubik, is a professor in the Department of Drama at UVa. I chose Marianne as my mentor because she was an integral aspect of my straight theatre learning foundation during my 2nd year wherein I took both Acting II and Stage Combat under her mentorship. Beyond a foundational respect for her craft and insight, I chose Marianne because I valued her opinions in selecting an acting studio to attend. I began my journey with her beginning in early March 2019 when I initiated a series of office hour meetings to discuss confusion about my artistic path at UVa. Recognizing that UVa's holistic drama major wasn't necessarily sufficient for my learning needs, she recommended that I look into transferring universities or supplementing my learning via a summer conservatory.

I attended the Southeastern Theatre Conference for professional acting auditions and summer stock in late February 2019 only to find disappointment. None of the theatres I auditioned for piqued my interest, and the only offer I even considered came from a theatre known as the Harold Clurman Lab. This theatre was an offshoot of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting, but the gig was year-round. I notified the casting agents that I was unwilling to commit to a year-round gig and instead, they offered me admission into the Summer Conservatory. I consulted with Marianne about this opportunity and it aligned with my desires to supplement UVA's lack of performing-centric courses. Marianne suggested that I read the Stella Adler technique by reading a list of books she recommended and her suggestions led me to accept the conservatory offer.

Attending the Stella Adler Studio of Acting Summer Conservatory in Manhattan this summer helped rewire my artistic brain, transformed the way I perceived acting, and lent me multiple industry connections. At first, I was concerned why the first 3 weeks of our 10-week program involved zero acting. We were working on stagecraft, prop movement, and most obscurely – and importantly – ensemble. Now, ensemble work was essentially group therapy combined with improv where we used Meisner partner connection techniques to tell realistic stories about our own lives. This process was grueling and frustrating for me where I was forced to tell personal stories to a room of strangers. It was only after this 3-week cycle that I recognized why it was a part of the curriculum: when you act onstage, you HAVE to tell the personal story of your character honestly to an audience of complete strangers. If you can't level like that in your own life, how can you ever bring your character's world to life?

For years, I struggled to act realistically because one of my middle school acting teachers told me that emotional recall and substitution were emotionally psychotic and harmful to the actor. Essentially, these techniques require the actor to substitute their own life experiences into the character's experiences in order to make their performance more relatable, and therefore, more realistic to watch unfold. This teacher's opinion clouded my judgment for years and suppressed years of acting progress, that is, until this summer. For the first time in years, I was able to fluidly transition from the reality of my own life into the shared experiences and feelings of my character, adding believable circumstances to my characterization. This not only made acting easier, but deepened my understanding of the human psyche: a reason why psychology and acting are so closely linked.

Thanks to my time in NYC this summer, I discovered that my true acting passion lies with Film/Television. We took 10 classes to include Scene Study, Voice & Speech, Movement, Shakespeare, Acting Technique, Improv, Ensemble, and Practicum; however, Film & TV remained my favorite course throughout the semester. The curriculum centered around an audition framework where each class began with a film audition. We had 14 scripts over the 10 weeks that escalated in difficulty each week from the easiest Costar/Under 5 roles to Dramatic Lead roles. Each week, I practiced my sides with my classmates in the hallways around the studio and my progress across a few of the sides is featured in the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgF1iySljDU&feature=youtu.be>

As for the industry networking aspect of my project, I expanded connections across the film/tv, musical theatre, and vocal training world. Our professors still email us casting calls and offer

free virtual coaching sessions via their websites. As an alum of Stella Adler, I am forever allowed to rent out rehearsal studios in the Stella Adler complex for free – a luxury that not a lot of NYC studios afford their students. Just today, I emailed my film/TV professor asking for a recommendation letter for LA and NYC film/TV studios for this summer!

My peers and I maintain active social media and text messaging and just last week, I was able to meet up with 4 of them for dinner during the Miller Arts NYC Trip! Again, I cannot thank the J. Sanford Miller Family enough for their contributions and I am forever grateful to Marianne for her insight into my application and decision process. My attendance at Stella Adler forever pivoted my acting career for the best and if anything, accustomed me to the hectic lifestyle of NYC. I am ready to move to NYC after graduation and I owe it to the opportunities afforded to me this past summer.



Last day of class with my Summer Conservatory cohort. 08/09/19