

Outcome/Update: Experiencing the London Stage

Currently, I am studying abroad in London at NYU Tisch's Shakespeare in Performance program at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art with the help of a 3rd Year Miller Arts Award. I received a \$500 mini-grant so I could experience London's wonderful theatre scene while I am in the UK. The goal is to see as much live theatre as possible, and to experience a wide variety of styles and genres. Already, I have seen more theatre within the first six weeks than I normally do inside of a year, and it has been an incredibly rewarding experience culturally and artistically.

When I first applied for the mini-grant, I had a very strict schedule and list of shows I wanted to see. This plan immediately fell apart due to recommendations, discoveries of new shows, tickets selling out faster than expected, and my tight schedule at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

For example, I was very excited to get tickets for the *Back to the Future* Musical, but then several of my friends went and thought it was terrible, so I decided to spend my money elsewhere. On the other hand, one of my course instructors at RADA worked as the movement instructor for *Running With Lions*, and I never would have gone to see it without her recommendation. Keeping the list open allowed me to spend my money wisely and make more informed decisions about what I want/wanted to see.

So far (as of March 10th, 2022) I have seen seven shows, planned and purchased four more, and have **\$152.74 of unplanned funds**.

My program will end on **May 17th**, so I will spend the remaining money on shows before then. I am still considering how I would like to spend my remaining \$152.74, because there are so many shows that I would want to see. I am hoping to see at least two more shows, and I am carefully considering which ones would be different enough from the ones I have already seen for my custom season to be well rounded. The following is a "midterm" up date of the shows I have seen, the shows I plan to see next, and the shows I am considering for my remaining grant money.

Show Reflections & Reviews

1. *The Great Gatsby* at Immersive London (dir. Alexander Wright)

I am very interested in immersive theatre, so this was an obvious first choice for me. It gave me a lot of ideas about how to cultivate the necessary environment for a truly immersive experience. This show has inspired me to do more research into immersive theatre and how it operates. As far as the content goes, I am a big fan of the source material, so I really enjoyed myself, although I thought they leaned too heavily on Baz Lerman's aesthetic choices from the 2013 film. Also, occasionally their American accents slipped but I am sure I'm the only one in the room who noticed.

2. *The Dinner* created by the MA Students at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (devised)

Tickets to see RADA shows are free for RADA students, so my whole class jumped at this opportunity. The work was devised (meaning created collaboratively from scratch) and very experimental. It did not have a plot, per se, but it was more so an exploration of familial issues, violence, and relationships. It was incredibly well executed, but there were some controversial

moments that caused some difference of opinion between my NYU classmates. For me, it does take a bit of effort to let go of the struggle to “get it”, because with devised work it is not necessarily supposed to make sense.

3. *Running with Lions at the Lyric Theatre* (Written by Sian Carter, dir. Michael Buffong)

I was very excited to see this work not only because I knew someone who worked on it, but also because it was the playwright's first work ever put into production. It was a very moving family drama, and we saw it pretty soon after it opened. It was obvious that there were still some parts of the scripts that they were working on, and we were able to speak to the cast afterwards about the process of working on a new text.

4. *Wuthering Heights at the National Theatre* (Wise Children, adapted by Emma Rice)

Like *The Great Gatsby*, I am also a big fan of this play's source material. I think I could write a four page paper on why I loved this show. It was certainly an ensemble production with the exception of Kathy and Heathcliff, who are never really a part of the ensemble. There was singing and music, but it felt more like sung spoken word poetry than musical theatre. I had some issue with the characterization of Kathy and her mental illness, but the acting was still amazing. Emma Rice truly loves this text and that comes across in this production. It was a true adaptation, and the novel was completely transformed.

5. *A Number at the Old Vic* (written by Caryl Churchill, dir. James Macdonald)

Last Fall, I was a member of the cast for UVA's production of Caryl Churchill's *Love and Information*. I really love her work, and it was wonderful to be able to see a professional production of this play. What really struck me about this production was that they stayed true to the haunting simplicity that marks so much of Churchill's writing (at least for me). The set was uniform, monochromatic orange, and the Old Vic itself felt a lot more intimate with the way they closed off a part of the stage.

6. *Six at the Vaudeville* (written by Toby Marlow, Lucy Moss; dir. Moss)

My Mom came to visit me and she bought the tickets. This musical has a lot more substance than most people give it credit for. It is an imagined pop concert starring the six wives of Henry VIII. It was surprisingly moving, and was a great example of art being used not only to poke holes in a historical representation of a person, but also to criticize the idea of set historical narratives. Not to mention, the songs are A+.

7. *& Juliet at the Shaftesbury Theatre* (written by Toby Marlow, Lucy Moss; dir. Moss)

I saw this with a bunch of my peers for free as a school field trip. The idea of the show is that Anne Hathaway (Shakespeare's wife) wants to change the ending of *Romeo & Juliet* so Juliet does not die. It is a sickly sweet early 2000s jukebox musical featuring hits like “Hit Me Baby One More Time” and “I want it that way”. My entire class simultaneously agreed that although the premise was enticing, and the actors did a fantastic job, the story simply was not good. It was carelessly dismissive of the issues that *Romeo & Juliet* raises, and was more interested in spectacle than substance. However, the commitment and sheer talent of the performers made it worth the two and a half hour runtime.

Current Budget:

Show	Date	Price USD	Price £
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> at Immersive London	February 6th	\$19.66	£15
<i>The Dinner</i>	February 11th	Free	Free
<i>Running With Lions</i>	February 19th	\$45.88	£35
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	February 22nd	\$86.51	£66
<i>A Number</i>	February 25th	\$45.88	£35
<i>Six</i>	March 6th	Free	Free
<i>& Juliet</i>	March 8th	Free	Free
<i>Ocean at the End of the Lane</i>	March 22nd	\$96.90	£79.93
<i>The Woman in Black</i>	March 30th	\$32.77	£25
<i>The 47th</i>	April 6th	\$19.66	£15
<i>Hamlet</i>	April 19th	Free	Free
TOTAL AS OF MARCH 10TH, 2022		\$347.26	

Shows Under Consideration

Moulin Rouge!- A Broadway transfer, but I have not seen a proper two act musical, and it could be interesting to see what changes they make from the original cast version.

Cock (Starring Taron Egerton)- This one is a longshot because tickets are mostly sold out and remaining ones are very expensive, but I am entering the lottery just in case.

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child- What's more British than this?

My Fair Lady- Scratch that, what's more British than *this*?

The Mousetrap- This is the longest running show in the world, and it was on my original list.

But I'm a Cheerleader the Musical- I have not have the chance to see a show with queer themes yet, and I would like to before I leave.

The Handmaid's Tale- This is a brand new Opera and I have never seen an Opera.