

Lydia Newman
Third Year Arts Award Outcome Report
2021
Faculty Mentor: Tovah Close

Musical Theatre Training Through Summer Intensives

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the J. Sanford Miller Family for their contribution to my artistic education. As a Miller Arts Scholar, I have been able to pursue opportunities that have allowed me to grow immensely as an actor and an artist. This past summer, I spent three weeks at Boston Conservatory at Berklee's Musical Theatre Acting Intensive. These three weeks included some of the most artistically fulfilling moments of my life, and I could not be more grateful for the knowledge and experience I gained.



The summer programs that I applied for were Boston Conservatory's Musical Theatre Acting Intensive and Broadway Artists Alliance, and I was admitted to both. I chose to attend Boston Conservatory at Berklee because their Musical Theatre BFA degree is a renowned, rigorous program, and I felt that this program would best supplement my Drama degree at UVA.

My faculty mentor, Tovah Close, was my first acting professor at UVA. In Tovah's Acting 1 class, I gained confidence as an actor and highly enjoyed the education I received from her. I chose Tovah as my faculty advisor because I value her advice, and she is someone who I respect and trust when it comes to my education as an actor. In starting this process, I reached out to Tovah first for summer program recommendations.

This summer, I intended to receive Musical Theatre performance training that is not offered at the University of Virginia and supplement my degree in Drama with a more rigorous theatre performance track. Before attending this program, I didn't know what an intense acting program looked like, I had a shaky sense of myself as an actor, and I felt a bit lost in what I wanted my future in the arts to look like. My goals were to gain confidence in myself as an actor, to learn more about the performing arts industry, and to make connections with professors and fellow students.

While at BoCo, I was placed into a cohort of 16 actors aged 17-20, and I was one of five college students. I was anxious when I first arrived at BoCo; I knew that the people I was going to be around had a lot of experience, and I was worried that I would feel behind. I was also concerned that training in a rigorous program in a field that has a reputation for being very competitive could lessen my love for theatre. However, throughout this program, my cohort and I supported one another's artistic endeavors and became close friends. Training with a group of actors gave me a strong foundation of support, and the members of this cohort were some of the most talented and driven individuals I have ever met. It was truly inspiring to be around people who, although younger than me, made me want to work harder and pursue a career in acting, and it also gave me a lot of hope for a future of training in theatre without judgement.



My cohort in class

Each week, we had five days of classes with a weekend break. We had 3-4 classes per day, taking place from 9:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. On the final day of the intensive, guests were invited to watch two final performances, and my dad came to both of these. One of the performances was a medley of scenes from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, where I performed in a scene as Claudio, and the other was a musical theatre concert. The entire intensive of approximately 60 students performed ensemble music together at this concert, and each student had a 16-bar solo in a mashup. My solo was an excerpt of "That's What You Call a Dream" from *Bonnie & Clyde*. A video of this performance is linked here:

<https://youtu.be/BF-YxSz0aDc>

For my cohort's final physical character class, we had to choose a music artist to impersonate and perform as. My roommate, Gia Marino, a sophomore musical theatre major at Millikin University, and I decided to perform "Timber" by Pitbull and Kesha. I dressed as Pitbull, and Gia dressed as Ke\$ha. A video of this performance is linked here:

<https://youtu.be/BA6bjGiTSWs>



The classes I took included Acting for Camera, Shakespeare, MT Solo, Musical Meisner, Voice & Speech, Physical Character, Dialects, Improv, Alexander Technique, and Vocal Ensemble. These classes were phenomenal, and I am honored to have studied under the wonderful professors at BoCo, including Laura Marie Duncan, Christopher Webb, Jessica Webb, Marcus Giamatti, Bret Silverman, Dennis Trainor, Kenny Raskin, Isaac Leaverton, Lee Nishri-Howitt, Ashleigh Reade, and more.

MT Solo with Lauren Marie Duncan was where I had many “lightbulb” moments. Laura Marie taught us that we need to make choices in our acting; if you sing horribly but act incredibly, it is way more interesting than just standing on a stage and sounding pretty. This is a concept I will carry with me always—I have always thought too much about the sound of a song, when I really need to focus on the story I’m telling.

In Jess Webb’s class and masterclasses, I learned a lot about the Alexander technique, which I had never studied before. Something that Jess would say in class was, “1 2 soles of the feet, 3 4 palms of the hand,” which was a reminder to us as actors to listen to our bodies. I have never taken a class like this one, and Jess taught me so much about how important it is to listen to my body as an actor. As actors, we have to focus on how we feel, physically and emotionally, in order to empower ourselves to make choices in our work and in our life.

I am especially grateful for the education I received from Chris Webb. His physical character class was absolutely fascinating to me, and impersonating Pitbull (interestingly) gave me a lot of confidence and allowed me to break out of my shell. In one of our final physical character classes, Chris had a Q&A with all of us. He discussed the benefits of getting an MFA in acting or musical theatre, the realities of an acting career, and what being a professor of acting is like. This discussion led me to the conclusion that I would like to audition to get an MFA in acting after I graduate from UVA.

I accomplished all of the goals that I had outlined for myself before attending this program. I gained confidence as an actor, I made many connections, and I figured out what I want to do with my future. In addition to these accomplishments, I made many new friends, explored Boston, and had a lot of fun. My time at Boston Conservatory was everything I could have hoped for and more. I cannot thank the J. Sanford Miller family enough for their contribution to my acting education, and I am so grateful to Tovah Close for her guidance in this process. This experience shaped who I am as an actor and has prepared me for my future career.

Final Budget:

Boston Conservatory at Berklee MT Acting Intensive

Tuition- Tuition for rigorous program modeled after Boston Conservatory's top-ranking musical theatre programs.

Tuition for on-campus musical theatre acting intensive session, July 12th- July 30th, 2021	\$2330
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Housing and Meals- Housing and meals for summer program students. Housing is provided by Berklee.

Students living on campus will be housed in residence halls and receive meals at Berklee dining halls.	\$2075
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Travel- Travel to and from Boston.

Driving from Boston.	N/A
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Supplies- N/A

TOTAL:

Budget Income, Funding, or Other Awards

Income Item: Third Year Award	\$3000
Income Item: Personal Contribution	\$1405
Total	\$4405