
 News from the Yorktown Theatre Arts Department

BACKSTAGE

Letter from TAP Co-Presidents

It's hard to believe that the final quarter of the school year has begun! And, far from winding down, our theatre arts students and teachers are busier than ever! As this newsletter goes to press, Theatre IV students are sharing the fruits of their 4-year odyssey in this amazing program. As parents, we can be very proud, not only of the skills, but of the maturity our offspring have gained in their year-long preparation for their One-Person shows. We hope that students in Theatre I, II and III—and their parents—will attend as many of these performances as they possibly can, and learn from them.

We also are excited about the upcoming spring show, *James and the Giant Peach!* From what we've seen so far, behind the scenes, this imaginative production is going to win over many in our community, some of whom are Yorktown-bound!

Finally, we look forward to the opportunity to see our Theatre IIs in action, as they present their class one-acts in late May.

Once again, you parents have responded to every call for help: the trip planners and food coordinators, the technical assistants and costume contributors, the car pool drivers and scenery haulers, the chaperones and picture-takers, the promoters and inviters, and those who jump into cars, buses, and planes on short notice, just to be in the audience showing support. Thank you, everyone!

--Patty Kime and Susan Nestleroth

Director's Notes

One-Person Shows—Apr. 9&10
***James and the Giant Peach* Performances**—Apr. 22–24
Theatre Arts II One Acts—May 27

One-Person Shows

To push students in the self-discovery process, the Yorktown Theatre Arts curriculum includes sequential exercises throughout the 4 years: in-depth characterization exercises, ensemble and “trust” work, exposure to various theatre forms and acting techniques, and the use of abstraction and heavy emotional content in productions.

The culmination of this 4-year process is the One-Person Show: a 30-minute play written, directed, promoted and acted by the student based on a real or fictional character from history.

The driving force behind the show is a universal statement, or message, that the student wishes to convey—usually a topic or concept a student feels passionate about. Students pick and choose biographical facts that lend theatricality and meaning to the show. Portrayals have ranged from the mythic to the military, to villains and their victims, to poets and pop culture icons. This year, some of the portrayals include Bruce Springsteen, Donny Brascoe (Joe Pistone), Nellie Bly, Harley Quinn, Patty Hearst, and King Arthur.

Students spend months working on their scripts, characterization, acting, and staging for their pieces. They create their costumes, select props, choose sound effects or voiceovers, and design lighting. The effort is intentionally collaborative. To prepare, students write and perform 5, 10- and 20-minute versions of their shows and receive critiques and suggestions from their classmates. In addition, each performer has two “outside eyes,” students whose job it is to critique, advise, support, and help with technical aspects such as lighting and sound during the final performance. If students have difficulties completing their projects, they are assigned another student to help them through the writing process.

The One-Person Shows are the culmination of 4 years of intensive self-exploration and skill-building. And it is in the creation of original work that students express the best in themselves.

For a schedule of the One-Person Shows, please see page 3 of this newsletter.

SETC

by Elisabeth Lerner

Excitement ran through my veins on our first day at the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) in Lexington, which also happened to be the most important day: the day we were to perform. After driving to Kentucky after school on Wednesday, stopping only to eat, we had arrived late the previous night. We slept in, hurriedly ate breakfast, and went to a show at the Lexington Opera House. The opera house is a gorgeous theater with ornate balconies that overhang a good-sized stage. I couldn't wait to perform there! The first show we watched was extremely well done, as was every one I saw at SETC. Only after watching a show did I realize how intense our competition was. Everyone was working just as hard as we were, and it showed.

After we did our run-through, we got ready to perform. We warmed up outside the theater, all excitedly shivering in anticipation and cold. When we were ready, we went inside. Ms. Cadby gave us, for lack of a better term, a "pep talk," and then we went onstage. To perform in the Lexington Opera house was a living dream. We had performed so many times in so many different spaces, but that show was unique. Ms. Cadby is always telling us to "find something new," and at SETC there is no denying it was new. Although it was not our best show, it was definitely an experience worth having. We played with our characters by making new choices and finding different visualizations. Although we did not place, we did the best show we could under the circumstances.

That night we ate happily, watched some more fantastic shows, went to the pool, and bonded. The next day is a blur of going to the gym with my roommates, exploring Lexington, attending conferences with people who are at a completely different level of theatre than I am, watching shows, seeing my friends prepare and then audition for colleges, meeting people from other casts to discuss how they do theatre at their schools, making new friends, and even meeting with college representatives and discussing how theatre impacted their lives and how it might affect mine in the future.

At SETC there was always something going on—always a show to be watched or a presentation to be

seen. Each moment during the conference was interesting and fun. My favorite workshop was on how to eat, smoke, and drink onstage, where they taught us how to make fake alcohol, blood, and vomit. I really enjoyed learning from such educated professionals.

On our last full day we went to Louisville, where Ms. Hunter's sister kindly showed us around the theater where they house the Humana Festival. The festival highlights many new shows over a short period of time, and it was amazing how fast the tech department works to change between shows. The experience was different from the rest of the trip because it was more tech-focused. We ended up being able to see only two of the three theaters because there was a rehearsal going on in the third. But on the upside, we also talked to a man who was doing an acting fellowship, and he explained what they do for productions, including technical and theatre aspects as well as doing a show to showcase their talents for scouts at the end of the program. It was neat to meet someone who was doing theatre at a level that many only dream about.

We ended the day by going to the gala, where we ate well and the SETC winners were announced. We concluded the trip with a dance party and finally went to bed. We departed the next day, content that our time in Kentucky had been well spent and worth all the months of fundraising and shows. SETC had been an opportunity like no other.



One-Person Show Schedule

Yorktown High School Black Box
April 9&10, 2010

Friday, April 9th

6:00 p.m. Kaitlin Towberman—*Andy Kaufman*

6:40 p.m. Lucy Bonino—*Joni Mitchell*

7:20 p.m. Paul Kenney—*Joe Pistone, a.k.a. Donnie Brascoe*

8:00 p.m. Emily Johnson—*Josephine Nivison Hopper*

Saturday, April 10th

11:00 a.m. Malaika Bain-Peachey—*Shannon McFarland*

11:40 a.m. Sam Taylor—*Jonathan Strange*

12:20 p.m. Callie Nestleroth—*Lewis Carroll*

1:00 p.m. Mark Joyce—*King Arthur*

1:40 p.m. Carly McMullen—*Ella Fitzgerald*

2:20 p.m. Ben Taylor—*Jimmy Page*

3:00 p.m. Allison Ham—*Evelyn Nesbit*

3:40 p.m. Jane Foster—*Nellie Bly*

4:20 p.m. Nick Beirne—*Bruce Springsteen*

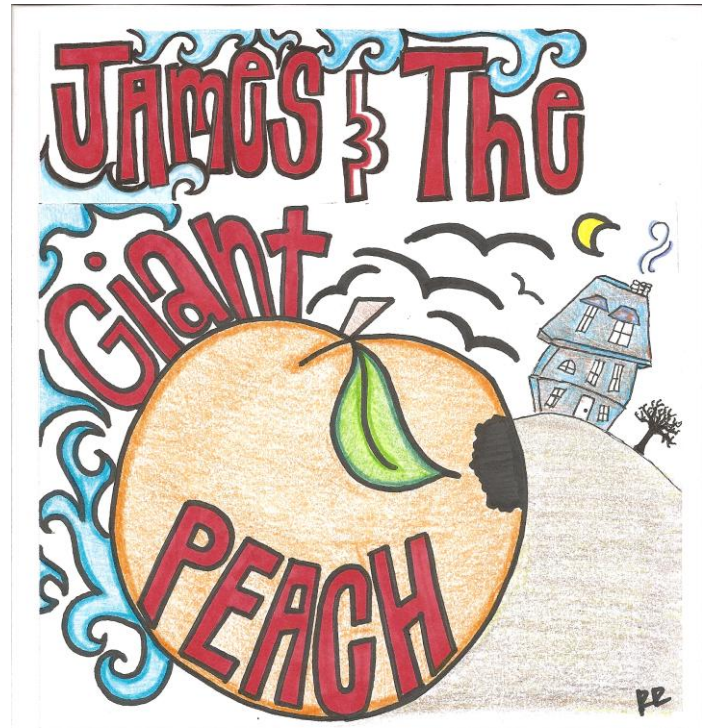
5:00 p.m. Raphael Regan—*Andy Warhol*

5:40 p.m. Eileen Sugameli—*Patty Hearst*

6:20 p.m. Philip Baraoidan—*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day*

7:00 p.m. Claire Withycombe—*Allen Ginsberg*

7:40 p.m. Catalina Ruiz de Gamboa—*Harley Quinn*



Yorktown Theatre Arts

Thurs. April 22 & Fri. April 23, 2010 at 7 p.m.
Sat. April 24, 2010 at 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.

Williamsburg Middle School Auditorium
3600 Harrison Street, Arlington VA 22207

Admission: \$8 students, \$12 adults

Information & tickets: yhstheater.org,
jamesandpeach@gmail.com
703-228-5414

VHLS States

by Sarah Gold

The Virginia High School League (VHSL) state competition was like no other experience I've had. Even though the theatre fours had told me that it was fun (having gone the previous year), I didn't realize just how exciting it would be.

After school on Friday, the entire *Nora's Lost* cast and crew loaded onto the bus for the drive to Charlottesville. The bus ride was wild. What more can you expect when you put 39 theatre kids together in a small space for several hours? Upon arrival, we went for dinner at the Golden Corral. After dinner, we went cosmic bowling, which is bowling in the dark, with glowing colored lights. We blew off steam and got rid of some stress before the competition the next day.

Everyone woke the next morning exhausted, but still alert for our show. By 7:30, the entire cast was in full costume and make-up. We boarded the bus and tried to focus. *Nora's Lost* was to be the first performance of the day, so we needed to blow the judges away. Everyone had their corks in and was practicing their diction and running over cues in their heads. The show had to be spectacular.

When we arrived at Piedmont College, where we were to perform, we filed off the bus and collectively decided to go for a run by the lake and into the forest around back. It was quite the spectacle: a horde of teenagers dressed in very uncharacteristic clothing running after a Vietnam draftee and chasing an old woman into the forest. We practiced our enunciation together as well as our volume by splitting up and attempting to hold a conversation across the lake. Before heading inside for our walk-through of the stage, we all recited "Dover Beach" together as the sun rose higher in the sky and the birds chirped encouragingly. The trees seemed to quiver with anticipation for *Nora's Lost*, and the breeze calmed our nerves.

"Yorktown High School, please head to the dressing rooms!" We all simultaneously jumped up from our seats in the theater. It was time. After all the usual preparations for the show (physical, vocal, emotional), Ms. Cadby delivered one of her impromptu, inspiring speeches and then handed each of us the traditional pre-performance bead

and a wish for a good show. We looked at each other with heavy hearts, knowing that this would be the last time we would do this. Then we remembered that we had 10 minutes until showtime. It was time to focus.

We began. Every person in the cast was committing, throwing themselves into their roles and living the reality of their given circumstances. The emotions were more real and raw than ever before. It was an extremely intimate show. We were each personally connected with our characters in a way we'd never been before. We were honoring the work that we had done, that tech had done, that Mrs. Johnson had done, that Mrs. Millan had done, that Shizumi had done, that Ms. Cadby had done. We all left that stage knowing that we had each done our best. In the words of Mrs. Millan, we did ourselves proud.

We spent the rest of the day watching the other schools' shows, which were all excellent. We were even able to play a game of Frisbee with one of the schools and make new friends. The judges took an exceptionally long time to deliberate. To pass the time, all the schools sang songs together while waiting in the theater. It was wonderful to bond with a huge number of new people that shared a common interest.

Finally, the judges announced the winners. We didn't come in first, we didn't even come in second, and frankly, we didn't care. We all knew that we had done an incredible job. No matter what the judges thought, we'd had a very strong show, and we all felt secure about it.

After a colossal dinner at a Chinese buffet (new tradition in the making?), paper plate awards, and ending speeches, everybody piled back onto the bus. This was the last time that *Nora's Lost* would be together. We savored every moment of it. It was the perfect end to our 6-month run. Though we didn't win any awards at VHSL states, *Nora's Lost* went out with a bang.

Backstage is a quarterly publication of Yorktown's Theatre Arts Parents (TAP).

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