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A Summer Experience as a Paid Actor: It's Not All Broken Legs

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Reagan James

A Summer Experience as a Paid Actor: It's Not All Broken Legs

Thesis Statement: Finding out that you are going to be paid to act sounds like a dream come true, but there is a lot more to it than just the glitz and glam of the final product.

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Part 1:

While attending East Tennessee State University I have majored in theatre and minored in dance. As a theatre major, one of the very first things I learned is that there are different methods to acting, which determine the way you approach a play or project. The East Tennessee State University's Division of Theatre and Dance has a primary focus in the Stanislavski system of acting. Many people have heard famous actors talking on television about method acting, which Lee Strasberg created by putting a primary focus on Stanislavski's idea of substitution from his system of acting. Although it may look as if the well-known actors seen are just naturally talented, and just learn the words and do it, the Stanislavski system teaches that there is much more to the process than that. Acting is a process and Stanislavski even went as far as applying scientific principles to acting, so it could be looked at in the same way one might look at a science. But who is Stanislavski and why is he so important?

Constantin Stanislavski was a director and actor in Russia in the late 1800's and early 1900's. He was one of the two men who co-founded the Moscow Art Theatre in Russia ("Moscow Art Theatre"). He devoted his life to finding truth on stage. Stanislavski studied theatre as a science, which is a very uncommon approach to theatre, but it helped him to create a system that actors have used for many years and are still using to better their craft today. Before Stanislavski actors were not commonly using and aware of using their personal experiences to help embody the characters they were playing. The Stanislavski system taught actors to harness their own experiences in life and use them. Stanislavski helped to create a common language among actors, which

allowed actors and directors alike to understand and communicate with one another (“Constantin Stanislavski”).

Stanislavski’s system of acting focuses on tapping into your subconscious, and harnessing your life experiences, then using them to bring a character to life. To do this you must be completely aware of what is going on in the character’s life, and be able to put yourself in that position. Stanislavski was aware of how hard this could be at times, when actors did not feel like they could relate to their characters. This led to the invention of “the Magic If.” “The Magic If” simply allows an actor to say that although they have not been in the specific situation of their character, “What would I do if I were in this character’s situation?” The actor can then compare similar situations to the character’s situation, and come up with scenarios that he or she can remember, and how those scenarios caused the actor to respond. “Emotional Recall” or recalling the way that the actor felt at a specific time in their life to trigger the correct emotion can also be used to help the actor relate to the scene throughout the rehearsal process. The comparison of real life scenarios to the ones in the play can then be a substitute that is in the back of the actors mind, and can be called upon for inspiration in the moment they need it. When the actor has gone through their process and has become the character they are playing they enter Stanislavski’s state of “I am,” which is where the actor can say that they are the character, and give themselves up to the character they are playing completely (Stanislavski) (Moore).

Some other important tools according to Stanislavski are: “The Method of Physical Actions” and “Communion.” “The Method of Physical Actions” states that the correct physical action triggers the correct emotional response. In “Communion” the

actors actually listen to what their fellow actors are saying, let this affect them emotionally, and then respond. This lets the audience believe they are witnessing a real conversation and pulls them in. “Communion is vital for reaching “The State of I Am.” These techniques that Stanislavski used require a lot of work from the actor, it demands that everything the actor does be justified. In making sure that justification for the actors actions is present, it also makes everything extremely clear for the audience to understand. The audiences’ understanding is very important to Stanislavski, because without the audience the performance does not benefit anyone. The theatre is considered one of the only art forms where an audience is present during the process, and does not just see one final product, which also makes the audience very important (Stanislavski) (Moore).

Stanislavski wanted to make sure that his actors made everything look as if it were real on stage. It is very easy for an actor to look robotic when they are on stage, and forget the fluidity that their body has when functioning in every day life. Stanislavski wanted it to look like the actors were actually doing life and to make sure that was the case he had to make sure that nothing happened by chance. This once again ties into that everything an actor does should be justifiable. The movement an actor makes must match the actions of the actor, because in every day life our bodies will show how we feel before we say anything. Stanislavski knew of this connection between movements and internal meaning and called it a “psychophysical” connection. To make sure that connection was clear and natural to an audience Stanislavski enforced that nothing should be done in a general way, but everything should have a purpose that drives it forward.

This may help to clarify the “subtext” or the text an actor presents behind what he is actually saying and doing.

The subtext of a character in a play is often created from the “given circumstances” of a play, or the things we know from simply reading exactly what the play says. We find the “given circumstances” by reading the script and finding what each character says and does, as well as what other characters say about that character. Then you can research the playwright and the history around the time when the play takes place. You will have more “given circumstances” once you learn about the set and costume designs. The actor can then use their imagination to fill in any missing details.

Researching the information that is given to you in the play is often the first step of a successful show. At the beginning of every production the actors, director, choreographers, and anyone else involved has to do research on the characters, setting, and anything else that may influence the production. The time, place, and culture of the story will significantly impact on how the play is presented. Many of the things that characters were dealing with during the indicated time and place of the play will differ from today, which has a huge impact on how each character is played. This is why it is important to research and understand what influences cause the character to do the things they do. All of this comes from research done on the “given circumstances.”

For my first show of the summer, Steel Magnolias, I had to do a lot of research on what made Shelby respond to life the way that she did. Two of the major influences in Shelby’s life are her life as a member of a sorority and dealing with diabetes. As someone who is neither a member of a sorority, or had diabetes, these were the two main areas I focused on with my research into this character. Although diabetes is the main

issue dealt with in this play, and has the largest impact on this character, and all other characters in this play, understanding how life as a diabetic works is probably the single most important aspect of my research. I did find that Shelby's sorority also played a big part on how she personally dealt with all of the things going on in her life.

I found that Shelby was a member of Phi Mu. I actually stumbled across this fact on accident. While I was with my family one weekend, a family friend asked me what my next play was, and when I told her I was working on Steel Magnolias, she told me that Shelby was a member of her sorority. I asked her what sorority she was in and she said Phi Mu, so as soon as I got home I looked it up myself. I found that Shelby was a member of Phi Mu at Northwestern State University, Louisiana. The Phi Mu chapter that Shelby was a part of was the Kappa Iota chapter ("Phi Mu Facts").

I looked further into the sororities at NSU, by going to the schools website, and then accessing their Greek life. I was then redirected to a site specifically for Phi Mu's that gave me a lot of information that is special to members of this sorority. The Phi Mu mission statement says that, "Phi Mu encourages vibrant living, encouraging members to achieve their personal best" ("Phi Mu Fact"). I think that living vibrantly describes Shelby's character perfectly. Phi Mu then goes further in describing what a "vibrant" life consists of by saying, "Vibrant means having or showing great life, activity, and energy" ("Phi Mu Facts"). Shelby seems to demonstrate this quite frequently throughout the play. One example of this is when Shelby is getting ready to go through with her kidney transplant and instead of telling everyone about it and showing her fear she decides to get a new hair cut and a manicure. At this point in the play everyone assumes there is a special occasion for Shelby's makeover, but it is not until later during her manicure when

the rest of the cast sees the bruises Shelby has from dialysis and figure out it is not the happy special occasion they all assumed.

I also noticed that the website was mostly pink, which the play states is Shelby's favorite color, and is brought up many times throughout the play. Shelby even does her wedding in "blush and bashful," which are "two shades of pink," as she puts it. Phi Mu's colors are rose and white, which is also a shade of pink ("Phi Mu Facts"). Shelby also shows a great deal of love and compassion to children during the play. Steel Magnolias mentions Shelby working with babies at a hospital, and the deep desire she has to have a child of her own. Phi Mu's philanthropy is the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, which would give her a direct tie into working with children in the hospital ("Phi Mu Facts").

On the topic of being diabetic, a lot of people do not understand why Shelby has such extreme episodes, because most people with diabetes do not react the way Shelby would. I found that Shelby has type one diabetes, which only around five percent of people with diabetes have ("What is Insulin?") ("Type 1 Diabetes"). This means that the insulin produced in most peoples' bodies is not produced in a type one diabetic body. (diabetes.org.) As a type one diabetic, the body will destroy beta cells in your pancreas ("Type 1 Diabetes Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments"). The lack of insulin is a lack of hormone that helps the sugar, or glucose, to enter cells in the body. The entering of glucose into the cells creates energy ("Type 1 diabetes" Mayo Clinic.)

In the play when Shelby has an attack it is described in the stage directions as her having a fit. Shelby's diabetic attack is often choreographed by showing her becoming dizzy, disoriented, and breathing heavily, which is remedied by giving Shelby juice. This

can be explained by the symptoms of a serious attack, some of which are thirst, a dry mouth, feeling tired or weak, vision blurring, and difficulty breathing (“Type 1 Diabetes Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments”). The fact that Shelby’s body is low in sugar also helps us understand why a sugary drink, like juice, would help to remedy the fit that Shelby goes into.

Beyond the online research I did on diabetes, I also talked with several people I know that are diabetics. I did not know anyone that has type one diabetes, but I still found it helpful to hear stories of people dealing with diabetes today. A lot of the people I talked with mentioned that they have to watch what types of food they eat, because it can throw off the blood sugar levels in their bodies. Some of those I met with had to try to avoid sweets, while others needed to keep a sweet snack with them just in case their blood sugar dropped. There was also a difference in distribution of insulin, some people today have pumps to monitor their blood sugar, and some have to check it regularly and give themselves shots if their blood sugar is off. The one thing that all of the people I talked with agreed on is that they have to make adjustments daily to manage their diabetes the best they can.

I also paid extra close attention to the dynamics between families and friends during this show. Getting the dynamics right for this show was extremely important, and to do that I needed to observe relationships between people that are as close as the ladies in this play are. I probably paid the most attention to the relationship I have with my mom for research purposes. In this play, Shelby and her mom have an amazing relationship, where they love each other deeply, but they definitely disagree on a lot of things, like most moms and daughters do. I thought back on a lot of the different

arguments that I have had with my mom, and realized that although they may have been silly, they meant a lot at the time. My mom and I also have a great relationship, and at the end of the day we love each other no matter what we argue over. I had to really hold on to that throughout the rehearsals and shows of Steel Magnolias. I used the anger from our fights, but the love we have that goes beyond that to make my relationship with the lady playing my mom in the show just as authentic.

I also observed the relationships between best friends that are always there for each other during my time working with Steel Magnolias. I do not have many friendships that are as close as the ones between these ladies, but my dad and his best friend have this type of relationship and it has always stood out to me. As I looked at the way my dad would call his best friend for anything and vice versa. I realized that my dad's best friend was there for my whole family because we belong to my dad I really started to grasp what that friendship was like. The ladies in this play are the same way, Shelby can call on them for anything, because she is her mom's daughter and these ladies would do anything for her mom.

I also found myself going to get my hair done during this show, just to listen to the way girls talk and react when they are in a hair salon. I did notice that everyone likes to gossip while getting their hair done, because otherwise it just feels awkward to sit silently while you wait for the hairdresser to finish. I noticed how similar the conversations were while I was getting my hair done, to the conversations that are written in the play. I found it nice that the conversations in the play were so close to real life, because it made more sense on why the ladies interrupt each other and go off on random tangents, once I realized how busy and lively it feels when I get my hair done. I think the

energy you feel in a hair salon pushes you through the day and revives you, and this play has that same feeling to it.

The second show that I acted in this summer was Grease. Grease has been a favorite of mine since I was a little girl, and although I knew the movie backwards and forwards, there were a lot of things about the time period, in which Grease takes place, that I felt that I needed to explore further. To better understand my character I felt the need to better understand 1.racial issues of the 50's, 2.the behavior of teens of that period, especially involving the social acceptance of drinking and smoking, 3.the dating rituals of the 50's. Although these topics may not be a focal point within the play, they do have an impact on how the characters would act, which would affect Stanislavski's method of "I am" in acting the part. Thus, it is important to look into how these topics affected the lives of people in this time period.

All through the late 1950's racial divide was a huge issue in the United States. Students of color were fighting for their rights to be treated like Caucasian students. Although schools were starting to integrate there was still a vast amount of tension around allowing colored students into what were at the time all white schools ("Today"). With the entire racial divide it would have been common for students to look for distractions from the upheaval society was experiencing. During this time, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and many others were constantly taking a stand for people of color. Whites were used to the divide, and the laws that allowed them to be separated from people of color, therefore they did not know any better ("How Did the Montgomery Bus Boycott impact the Civil Rights Movement?"). Whites would band together, just as African Americans would, because everything they knew to be true was changing

violently right in front of them. It would have been common for white students to use derogatory remarks about race, which explains the excessive use of racist terms in the Grease script. This also gives us a better idea of why the “T-Birds” and the “Pink Ladies” were so close and did not allow outsiders in, and helps us understand why they would behave as a gang.

Throughout Grease it is a common theme for the high school aged students to be drinking and smoking. This may be a shock to us today, since the legal drinking age is 21 and the age to purchase tobacco is 18. While working on this play we discussed that maybe the laws were a little more loosely enforced years ago, or that maybe the play was the way the playwright remembered high school, instead of how it actually was. This led me to do some digging into legal drinking ages, and legal age to purchase tobacco over the years.

Once prohibition was repealed in 1933 due to the 21st Amendment, states were granted the rights to chose their own legal drinking age. It was common that most states chose to set that age as 21. After the 26th Amendment was passed in 1971, which changed the voting age to 18, many states decided to lower the drinking age as well. States had a range of drinking ages from 18-21 during that time. It wasn't until 1984 that National Minimum Drinking age became a suggestion to continue receiving highway funds from the federal government. It was not until 1988 that every state had risen their drinking age to 21 (“State History of MLDA 21”).

With all of the changing back and forth there may have been some years that students could purchase alcohol while in high school. It is also possible that it was not strictly enforced since it could differ by state, and ages for legal alcohol consumption had

varied so much. Also, since a state is never mentioned in the script as the location for this play, it could have taken place in a state that had a legal drinking age of 18 all along (“ANIMATED MAP: The Minimum Drinking Age in Every State Since Prohibition”).

Tobacco, however has been another story. For a while there were no restrictions on the purchase of tobacco, but by 1950 there were laws in place to prohibit selling tobacco to minors, which was in general anyone under the age of 18 (“State History of MLDA 21”). This age restriction would have allowed older seniors to purchase cigarettes and other forms of tobacco, and share it with their friends.

After learning all of this information about legal drinking and smoking ages, it was still unclear to me on what it was like to be in high school in the 1950’s. So I found several people that were in school in the 50’s and talked to them about the acceptance of drinking and smoking during that time. Many of them mentioned that it was not difficult to get a fake ID for purchasing these products. Those that did not have fake IDs mentioned that they knew of places that you could purchase these products illegally without being asked for an ID.

Dating in the 1950’s was a completely different situation as well. Dating actually replaced calling, which was the common practice throughout the 20’s. Dating was originally the form of calling for those less wealthy that could not afford a proper calling session. Eventually dating spread to all the classes, and became a common phenomenon. The first big difference in calling and dating was that calling was specifically for finding a potential spouse, where dating was something people wanted to do because they enjoyed it. Dating was the first time that boys and girls were allowed to be together without their parents to supervise them (“Teenage Dating in the 1950’s”).

By the 1950's it was common to go on at least one date a week. Most girls during this time went on their first date before the age of thirteen. Through the 1950's dating was a process that everyone knew the steps to. The stages of dating were as follows: meeting as children with no intent of romance, talking to one another, double or group dates, and then "going steady." When a couple was "going steady" the boy was required to give the girl something that belonged to him that she could wear, and had to call the girl and take her out on dates so many times a week. "Going steady" became a trend that popular students were the main ones to partake in. Men had to be the ones to ask the girls out during the 1950's as well. "Petting/Necking" or touching one another below or above the neck was expected on dates. Also "parking," which is parking the car at a monitored place and exploring sexual acts without going all the way was a frequent act among dating couples. Losing one's virginity was devastating in the 1950's, and highly frowned upon by society ("Teenage Dating in the 1950's").

With all of these dating standards in play, we can see why the characters in Grease act the way they do. It makes sense on why it is such a big deal when asked to "go steady." It also explains why boyfriends and girlfriends are seen out in groups frequently throughout the play. This helped me to see how I would react, as Frenchy, to Sandy and Danny "going steady," Rizzo being pregnant, and Doody being shy about asking me to "go with him." This also helps explain the locations that were frequently used throughout the play, such as soda shops, the drive in, parks, and school.

I also had to be able to play a character that drops out of school to go to beauty school, and then later realizes she is a horrible beautician and goes back to school. I talked to several hairdressers about their jobs, and how they got into fixing hair. Many of

the women I talked with love their job and are successful at their job, so it was hard to imagine someone who was so bad that they needed to go back to high school. I also talked with several friends I have that dropped out of college to go into cosmetology, and some of them do regret the fact that they do not have a degree. I still felt like I needed more experiences to harness the feelings that my character, Frenchy, would have had at this point in her life.

The more I thought about Frenchy's situation the more I realized I could compare it to situations in my life. As a student about to enter my senior year of college I know how scary the future can be. Although I am about to graduate with a degree, it is still confusing to know where and how to start a life in the working world. This gave me a reference for how Frenchy would feel about the decisions she makes. I also thought about ice-skating for another reference. Although ice-skating may not be as detrimental to my life as finishing school and getting a job, it is something that I am not good at. I remembered how in high school I went ice-skating with some friends, and I really thought I would be good at it and have fun, but I was wrong. I quickly realized that I could not stand up in ice-skates on solid ground let alone on the ice. I was enormously embarrassed by my inability to skate around the rink with my friends, and as I spent most of my night sitting on the ice instead of skating on it I felt deflated and defeated. This felt like a great reference point for me to understand Frenchy's frustration.

When it came to choreographing Beauty and the Beast Junior, my research was somewhat different than the research I did as an actor in the show. Instead of focusing on one specific character and their life, I had to focus on the cast as a whole. I needed to understand their relationships with each other, and how they would move with each

other. I also needed to understand how people would have danced in the time period in which Beauty and the Beast is set.

Beauty and the Beast Junior is based off of the original book, which was written in 1740 (“Marriage Can Be Monstrous”). To choreograph for Beauty and the Beast Junior I needed to see how people danced in the 1700’s. Beauty and the Beast has been rewritten and reproduced many times since it was originally written, and had become widely known as a Disney Princess movie. Since Disney owns the rights to Beauty and the Beast Junior I also had to keep the energy and fantasy that Disney gives to their creations alive. Disney actually sent a video with suggested dances moves on it for the choreography.

Although I had the material from Disney at my disposal, I wanted to create a blend of suggested moves from Disney with moves from the 1740’s and create some of my own movement as well. I studied the Quadrille and the Waltz, which were both popular dances in the 1740’s. I tried to embody the classic movements, while making them exciting and fun for the kids involved in Beauty and the Beast Junior. While putting the choreography together, I also had to keep in mind that the kids cast in this show only had two weeks to learn and perfect this material before they performed for an audience. The children cast in this show were ages 4-18, so I also needed to make the choreography suitable for all of the actors no matter what age they were. I did my best to blend all of these elements together and keep the dances as fluid as possible.

I also looked at the dynamics between royals and the people that worked for them during this period, and compared it to how coworkers treat each other while working today. I used the relationships of those that work together, and the specific type of

friendships that are built in a work environment to find ways to make each of the characters relate to each other and work together in the dances. It was also necessary for me to watch the way animals moved, and embody that in the dances as well. Since most of the characters are not human thinking through how they would move, and how their costumes would affect their movements was vital as well. There were many factors to observe and consider before putting the choreography together.

As I prepared for all of these plays I found myself using Stanislavski's techniques and methods without realizing I was doing so. I used "emotional recall" frequently; to help me relate to the characters I was playing. As mentioned I thought of situations that I could put myself in that I felt would be similar to that which my characters were dealing with. I also found myself frequently observing the people and situations around me. In Stanislavski's "An Actor's Handbook" it is mentioned that an actor should study and take from those whom surround him, and I used the relationships I saw between other people to help further the depth of my characters.

Being able to use similar scenarios proved very helpful to me as an actress, because I have not experienced many of the things that the characters I played have experienced, but was able to relate to them anyway. The experiences of my own life, combined with my own observations allowed me to use the "Magic If" more easily. Being able to ask myself what I would do if I were in the same situations was something that would not have come to me as easily four years ago, when I had not studied the Stanislavski method. Through this work on my own this summer I realized how much my education has helped me to become a better actress.

I also frequently had to consider the relationships of characters to other characters in each play. Stanislavski realized how important the relationships on stage were to a performance, and mentions that there must be “communion” with the partners in any acting relationship. Any two people on stage must adjust based on the other actor’s performance, and their relationship to each other in the content of the play. This is accomplished by making sure everyone in the play understands the “super objective” or the point of the play. As long as everyone is in agreement on what the “super objective” is it will be easy to work together to make sure the “super objective” carries through to the audience.

Part 2:

February 26, 2016

This is the day I auditioned at East Tennessee State University for Parkway Playhouse. Parkway is a summer theatre in Burnsville North Carolina, and they held an audition at East Tennessee State University for students interested in working there over the summer. Parkway is similar to that of a community theatre, in that not everyone working at Parkway is paid for the work they put into the theatre. However, if I were to be selected then I would potentially be paid for my theatre work there, depending on the role I am selected for. Parkway could more easily be compared to that of Johnson City Community Theatre than to Barter Theatre, which is considered a professional Equity Theatre. Although Parkway does have some year round positions, they are mainly operational in the summer months, which keeps them from being a full time professional theatre. There are a lot of roles that are filled at Parkway that are unpaid, which also keeps it from being considered a professional theatre. The audition process at Parkway, Barter, and Johnson City Community Theatre however are very similar, as it is in all theatre settings. Community theatres and professional theatres alike want to see monologues and several bars of music at your audition, so that you can be properly considered for that theatre's season. I presented sixteen bars of the song *Somewhere That's Green* from Little Shop of Horrors as my musical audition, along with a monologue from Mean Girls. The second portion of the audition consisted of a dance from the musical West Side Story. I think my ten years of training in dance and fifteen years of training in cheerleading really gave me an advantage in the dancing portion of

the audition and I felt good about my overall performance, and received a callback for March 1 at Parkway.

March 1, 2016

On the 1st I went to Parkway for my first call back and was expected to sing my audition piece again with accompanist playing them, and do some cold reads. A cold read consists of taking scenes from a play and reading them with other people auditioning without much time to prep. An actor does not always know which scenes will be pulled, and must be able to understand what the scene is about and present it to the best of their ability just a few minutes after receiving the scene. I read for every show in Parkway's season multiple times, but the entire process was finished within an hour of my arrival. The group in charge of casting told me I was free to go home, or invited me to stay and watch the rest of auditions. I chose to stay; an actor can always learn something new from watching others. After I left the audition I received an email later in the evening notifying me that I was being called back on March 5 for another round of cold reads.

March 3, 2016

Although at this point in time my callback had not taken place, I received an email notifying me that Parkway would like to cast me as Shelby in Steel Magnolias. This overlapped with a show I was already cast in at East Tennessee State University, *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, but Parkway agreed to work with that schedule to the best of their ability if I would accept the role of Shelby. I chose to accept the role, and was very excited to know that I would be paid for acting in this show. Being paid to act

in a show is a very big step for an actor, and many actors will cherish the first time they were paid for a show forever, because it is an early step in the process of becoming a working actor. I had never seen Steel Magnolias, so I did not know what to expect, but I knew that many people consider the show and the movie a classic, and it means a lot to many people. For me, this meant that I would have to really research the play outside of rehearsals to grasp all of the elements that made this show a classic, and find why it meant so much to so many people. I also wanted to make sure that all of my research was done based on elements found in the script and not by replicating other famous actors' work. This is a challenge for actors, because it is very easy to find clips of other actors doing the same roles in popular plays, and even easier to steal from that actors work without realizing it. To avoid stealing from someone else's work, I decided to avoid watching any part of Steel Magnolias all together.

March 5, 2016

On the 5th I went back for my second callback. I did another cold read for West Side Story, as well as a cold read for The Great Gatsby. This callback was even shorter than the first callback, and I read two times for each show and was then dismissed within fifteen minutes of being at the audition. This goes to show how fast the audition process goes, and emphasizes that every moment of an audition counts, because a moment may be all an actor gets.

March 10, 2016

I received an email on the 10th offering me the role of Rosalia in West Side Story, a position as dance captain for West Side Story, and a position as choreographer for Beauty and the Beast Junior. I was told that I would receive pay for my role in West Side Story similar to the pay I would receive for Steel Magnolias, and would also receive pay for choreographing Beauty and the Beast Junior if I were to accept these positions. I agreed to accept all positions, and was very excited to start my work the next month.

April 9, 2016

The 9th was the first read through of Steel Magnolias, as well as the first costume fitting. We met as a group from 10:00-2:00 and everyone was very excited to get started. Everyone in the cast filled out sheets with all of the information on our sizes for costumes, and met the costumer for the show. We then did a table read of the play, and everyone was brought to tears during the read through. Although the energy was very high, and everyone was extremely friendly, I could not help but feel like an outsider. The entire cast knew each other and had all worked together on projects in the past for Parkway. I knew that this meant that I would have to work harder to make myself feel at home at Parkway. As soon as rehearsal finished I had to leave for Johnson City, because it is about an hour and a half drive, and I still had a show at East Tennessee State University.

April 10, 2016

I had to miss our second rehearsal, because I had a show during the scheduled rehearsal time. The playhouse worked with me on this, and scheduled the rest of the cast

to run the final scene and work on blocking for that scene, since I was not in this part of the play. Blocking consists of the movement that an actor does within the play, such as standing in one place and then walking to another place and sitting down. Blocking is the movement that we make in every day life, but is choreographed for the stage, so that it looks realistic, but allows the audience to see the same show every night. Blocking also allows the actors to know what will happen next, and how to respond to it more easily than if the actors were to move however they felt necessary each night. Finally blocking also keeps the actors from running into each other, props, and set pieces, by keeping paths traveled the same every night.

April 12, 2016

This was the third rehearsal for everyone else, but only the second rehearsal for me. Although I did not miss anything from my scenes, I could tell that the cast had already started to form stronger bonds, and I felt left behind. The director helped block the actors in Act II Scene 1 tonight, and ran it several times before we were dismissed. I worked well with the cast on this scene, but knew that I still had a long way to go to get ready for an audience.

April 13, 2016

The cast ran Act II all the way through on the 13th, and I had the opportunity to see what the ladies had worked on the day I was not able to attend. Rehearsal ran from 7:00-9:00 and went smoothly. This play already looked like it was starting to come

together, and everyone had really put a lot of work and effort into the show already. I cried a lot during the scene I was not in, because it was a very powerful scene to watch.

April 14, 2016

The focus of rehearsal on the 14th was running Act II again for the first hour, and then a photo call for the next two hours. The cast and crew ended up working from 7:00-10:00 this evening. The cast has not been assigned costumes yet, which made getting ready for the photo call extremely difficult. The entire cast went into the dressing room and searched through items that had been pulled as possible costume pieces trying to find something to wear for the photo session. Everyone came out with random pieces of clothing on, most of which we were told, by the director, would probably not be used in the show. There was one salon chair in the middle of the stage, and no set built yet. We all took turns posing in the salon chair with aprons on for the photos. The director told me to put some curlers in my hair for my shots, and I was given some old clip in rollers, the stage manager helped me figure out how to use them.

April 16, 2016

On the 16th we met from 10:00-2:00 and worked on blocking for Act I Scene 1. As soon as rehearsal was over I had to drive straight back to Johnson City for another show that I was in at East Tennessee State University.

April 17, 2016

We worked on blocking Act I Scene 2 on the 17th from 6:00-9:30. This finished off all of the blocking for the play, and allowed us to work on running it, and memorizing lines for the rest of our rehearsals. We also had a hairdresser come in and work with the girls playing Truvy and Annelle on how to do different 1980's hairstyles. In the play these two characters are hairdressers, and actually have to do hair on stage, so learning some techniques for this was necessary. Truvy and Annelle picked up on the techniques really fast, and I had an 80's up-do in before the hairdresser left. Our director stayed true to the script by setting the play in the 80's, which is why 80's styles hair is what the girls were going for.

April 19, 2016

Rehearsal ran from 5:00-9:30 on the 19th, because we ran Act II a few times, and then took some time to try on different costumes, and figure out what all we still needed for the show. The costumer had pulled several options for our costumes, but Parkway does not have a wide variety of costumes to pull from, and very little budget set aside for buying costumes. I realized that Parkway does not have many shoe choices to offer, and I was asked to supply three pairs of my own shoes for the show, as well as two pairs of pants, two sweaters, and one shirt. I didn't have a lot of clothes that fit the description of a preppy girl in the 1980's, which is the look I was told to go for, but when I got home I pulled everything I could find, and prepared it for the next rehearsal.

April 21, 2016

From 6:30-9:30 on the 21st we did several line throughs of the show. A line through is where the actors sit and say their lines, off book, without doing the blocking. It became obvious fairly quickly that the cast did not know their lines for the show off book. This was frustrating, but everyone was willing to work through it. I received my wig for Act II at this rehearsal and I loved it. The wig is a brown pixie cut style, and although it is difficult to get all of my real hair under it, it looks great. It was also the first night that I began to feel like I was not an outsider, but a part of the group. We all laughed at the things we were struggling with, and tried to help each other out when we could.

April 23, 2016

Today from 10:00-2:00 was supposed to be another line through, but the cast talked with the director and decided that the blocking helped us remember some of our more difficult lines, so we tried to run the show using our scripts as little as possible. It was definitely a struggle, but we did the best we could.

April 24, 2016

The cast and director realized at the last rehearsal that Act I still needs more work, but Act II was coming a little more easily, so from 6:30-9:30 we ran Act I. We ended up running Act I three times, but still came to the consensus at the end of rehearsal that it needed the most work. There was also some time during this rehearsal that the cast really bonded by telling stories that the script reminded us of. We learned that everyone in the cast had dealt with the death of a loved one at some point. We discussed how hard it was

to lose someone and ended up crying together for most of the rehearsal. It was an extremely emotionally bonding rehearsal, and we all left feeling a lot closer.

April 26, 2016

Tonight was the first night that we were all required to be off book. We were told that we could call for our line all night if we needed to, but that we could no longer consult our scripts. This was extremely rough, and everyone forgot multiple lines, but for the first time off book it was not as tragic as we expected it to be. The cast and crew stayed from 6:30-10:30 tonight, and all of the costume pieces that we supplied ourselves were looked at and either approved or rejected by the costumer and director. All but one sweater was approved for me, and the cast helped look until a sweater was found to substitute in for the sweater that was not approved.

April 27 and 28, 2016

On both the 27th and the 28th we did a run of the entire play from 6:30-10:30, and both nights the memorization of lines was still tragic. The director told us that by the 3rd of May there would no longer be someone to give us our lines if we forgot them, and that we all needed to work on them some more, but that the show was starting to come together overall. It was starting to become frustrating to me that the cast was not doing the work required at home to be off book. I knew I needed to work more as well, but it becomes difficult as an actor to do your lines correctly when none of your cues, or words that you use to know what comes next, are given to you.

April 30, 2016

From 10:00-2:00 on the 30th we ran the show again, and although some lines were still a little off, we could all tell that everyone had really looked at their lines and was trying extremely hard. We had another story session, where we told personal stories to each other that helped us relate to what was going on in the play. We also discussed the relationships between the characters in this play, and found some very interesting dynamics to play with. One of my favorite things I learned about my relationship with my mom in this play is that the little details in a scene where you are arguing matter the most. The director gave me the advice that in a scene portraying argument, once the actors are less than 12 inches from each other they have to either hit each other or kiss. Since neither of those two things were appropriate between a mother and daughter that are arguing about a child, the lady playing my mom and I had to be careful not to get too close to each other while arguing. This was also a day filled with tension, because an official email was sent out explaining that due to the HB2 law that had passed in the state of North Carolina, West Side Story was possibly going to be pulled from the Parkway Playhouse season. Musical Theatre International (MTI), the company that owns the rights to West Side Story, had decided that no theatre company in the state of North Carolina could have the rights to MTI plays unless the HB2 law was repealed. The HB2 law requires “single sexed” bathrooms only, and is considered to be one of the worst “anti LGBT” laws to exist. Musical Theatre International stated that they were a supporter of the LGBT community and did not want to “support” this law by allowing people that follow this law to use their material. This was not good news for the season at Parkway, if MTI were to choose to enforce this decision.

May 1, 2016

On the 1st we moved from the rehearsal hall to the main stage. We ran the show from 6:00-10:00 and although lights and sound were supposed to be added in during this run, due to all of the issues with West Side Story, the focus of the director and the crew was elsewhere. Sounds and lights were not worked on prior to rehearsal, and were not able to be added to the show for lack of preparation. This caused some frustration from the actors, because we wanted to know what we would be working around.

May 2, 2016

We ran the show with costumes on the 2nd, and worked on figuring out all of the quick changes in the show. I had a quick change that went from summer clothes to winter clothes and an up-do hairstyle with flowers in it to a down-do in less than a minute. When the crew finally figured out all that needed to be done in this quick change they realized that it would take four assistants to help change me. I also had to look like I had been through dialysis later on in the show, and did my first attempt at stage make up dialysis during this rehearsal, which was too light to see on stage, and I was told to make it darker. Parkway also received news today that West Side Story had officially been pulled from the season. The artistic director announced that a replacement show was being looked for to allow the actors that were promised a salary to still have a show to do.

May 3, 2016

On the 3rd the director announced that nobody in the cast was allowed to call for a line. As the run began the cast became so lost that the stage manager had to start the show over and fed us the lines that were completely skipped. Although frustration was evident in the cast, the director and cast agreed that it was probably the nerves of not being able to call for lines that messed everybody up. We knew we would do better the next night. Although my bruise for the dialysis scene looked better tonight it still wasn't quite dark enough, and I was told to try again but darker at the next rehearsal.

May 4, 2016

On the 4th lights and sound started to be added in. The entire cast did well enough on our lines that we got through the play without assistance from the stage manager. My dialysis bruise was approved tonight. By the end of the night it was snowing outside. The theatre had no heat and it was extremely cold, the cast and crew were dismissed without taking notes to avoid getting sick. The cast was told to check in when we made it home, so the stage manger knew we all made it safely.

May 5, 2016

It was a much warmer day on the 5th, and although it was still a little chilly when everyone was in the springtime costumes, it was not too cold to rehearse. We ran the show again, and realized that Annelle's quick change from not being pregnant to being pregnant just wasn't working fast enough. There were not enough people to help her get into the pregnancy suit. Since I am not in the final scene it became my job to make sure she got into the suit and changed in time. The show was really starting to flow smoothly,

except for two scenes that still got everyone mixed up each night. The dialysis scene and the slap scene, so the cast decided with the permission of the director and the stage manager to put the two scenes on the preshow warm up list and run them every night before the show.

May 6, 2016

We had our final run of the show on the 6th and it was the best it had been to date. Everyone was really excited to open the show the next day. The set was finished by this rehearsal and looked great. There were still some issues with the lights and sound cues being off, but the cast and crew made it work the best we could.

May 7, 2016

The show opened on the 7th and it was great! The house was a large house, and the energy was really up. There were a few lighting and sound issues, but nothing that took away from the show. After the show was over we had a reception, where we got to meet everyone on the board of Parkway, and our families could all stay and eat as we enjoyed the fact that we had officially opened. I was so proud to have done my first show as a paid actor.

May 8, 2016

After the show on the 8th we had a talk back for the audience to ask any questions they had about the show and our process. The audience was very interested in the fact that I had never seen Steel Magnolias before, but managed to receive a role in the show. I

informed everyone that I refused to see the movie until after the show ended. I explained to them that I just wanted to bring my own flair to what I thought Shelby was like and not be influenced by the amazing Julia Roberts.

May 13, 2016

The first show back after having a whole week off was very nerve wracking. I was more nervous on the 13th than I was opening night. It was hard to throw myself back into the swing of things after having a full week away from rehearsals and performances. I wish we could have had a rehearsal Thursday night to get us used to it again, but that is not how the process works at Parkway. Once you leave rehearsals for the first show you do not “need” to rehearse anymore, because the show is ready whether you are or not. This is also the case, because the next show of the season has started rehearsals, and needs the space and time to get ready so they can open as soon as we end our show. Although there were a couple of sections in each scene that were a little rough the show was not as rough as I expected, and I managed to remember everything.

May 14, 2016

Almost all of the assistants back stage were in high school, and took the night off to go to prom. This would not have been a problem if their replacements had been able to come to a few rehearsals to know what to do, but they did not. So tonight was a lot rougher than normal. We had a whole new crew running the show that had never worked on the show before. There were a lot of mistakes in light and sound cues, and the quick changes took much longer and were not nearly as smooth as normal. The show went on

despite the mistakes, although some props that were needed were not set and everything ran differently than normal, the cast was prepared enough to keep going and make it look like everything was planned. I was very proud of how everyone carried on, and nobody complained about the things that went wrong. However, it did not feel good as an actor for so many things to go wrong, because of the lack of planning and communication. It also felt unfair that the people in the audience paid the same price to see the show as they did every other night, but the show was extremely sloppy for them due to the mistakes made by the new crew. It seems to me that someone should have known about the original crews need to miss this performance, and would have scheduled a time for the new crew to learn what to do. This night made the theatre feel a lot more unprofessional than normal.

May 15, 2016

The 15th was another show with a talk back afterwards. The talk back went well, but the questions were a little stranger, and people were ruder with the questions they asked. One man made the comment that he did not know if the lady playing the character Ouiser was supposed to be a woman or a man, because he thought she looked manly. Another man wanted to know how the girl playing Annelle made a pregnancy suit work, and asked if he could see what was under her dress. The questions made everyone uncomfortable enough that the actors were asked to leave the stage and stay back stage until the house had cleared. Then there was a photo call after the talkback, and the cast had to go through the play scene by scene to get some of the pictures needed for the records.

May 17, 2016

On the 17th I received an email letting me know that West Side Story had officially been replaced with Grease, and that I needed to respond if I wanted to be re-cast in Grease instead. I of course said that I would love to be re-cast in Grease. There was no further explanation on how the recasting process would work, which was slightly frustrating. I think that respecting people's time is very important, and not knowing if I would need to come in and re-audition to be re-cast in Grease kept me from doing other things, because I could be called in at any moment as far as I knew. I was, however, thrilled with the news that we would be doing Grease instead. Most of the other people that had been cast in West Side Story were disappointed with this news because they had their hearts set on West Side Story, but to me this was exciting. Grease had been my favorite movie since first grade and I could not wait to be in it.

May 20, 2016

The 20th started our last week of shows, and everyone was sad. The ladies had all gotten into a routine in the dressing room. When the actress playing Ouiser did not show up at her normal time for this show it made everyone a little nervous. The actress playing Ouiser normally helps with the actress playing M'Lynn's hair and so everyone is affected by her absence. About twenty minutes after Ouiser usually shows up, she called in and said that her car wouldn't start and she needed help getting there. Ouiser lived thirty minutes away, and at this point the show was supposed to start in one hour. It took the full hour for someone to get to her and get her back for the show, but a crewmember left

to get her immediately. Although everyone else was nervous because the habits we had developed had been altered, when Ouiser walked in crying everyone tried to help calm her down and get her ready. The curtain was held for ten extra minutes, and then we started the show. At this point Ouiser was still not ready, but her first scene was later on in the act. Ouiser finished getting ready while the rest of the cast started the show. Even on stage everyone was still rattled from the close call, but the show went on.

May 21, 2016

The 21st was the final show, and everyone was sad to go. After the show we had strike, which means to take down the set, put the props and costumes away, and get ready for the next show at Parkway. It took a few hours to get everything put away, but it went by fairly fast, and everyone was ready to leave by midnight. Working with a group of such talented women was the best way I could have asked to start off my summer, even if there were quite a few bumps along the way. I learned so much from the women I worked with who were older than I, and had a lot more experience, but still took me into their family. I loved working on Steel Magnolias, and was so proud that my first paying job was this show.

May 25, 2016

On the 25th I received an email informing me that I had been cast as Frenchy in Grease. Everyone that was cast in West Side Story and had now opted to be recast in Grease was recast in the role closest to his or her original role. I was happy with the role of Frenchy and all my family members told me that they thought Frenchy was the perfect

role for me when I called to tell them the news. Our rehearsal schedule had been announced as starting June 18th, which meant I had to sit and wait for rehearsals to start.

June 18, 2016

The 18th was the first read-through for Grease. We all met up at the main stage; because there are so many of us it would be too crowded in the rehearsal hall. The cast consists mostly of young students, and is age appropriate casting for this show. This means that there is a mix of college students and high school students. Everyone goes around and introduces him or herself and tells what part they will be playing. We find out that all of the leads have been given to people 18 and over, so that nobody underage is having to say anything that their parents might be offended by. We are missing several members of the cast from this first read through. We were also introduced to the music supervisor for the show, Ginger, and she informed us that we would have a 4 or 5 piece band. It is interesting that Ginger is a music supervisor instead of a music director. Normally a musical has a music director to help us learn the music, but Ginger was specifically referred to as a music supervisor, which means she will just supervise us learning the material. The cast was shown the design ideas for the show to help us get an idea of what we would be working on, since it would be a while before we could actually be on the set. The costume designer was also at this first reading, and took measurements for the cast. As we read through the play we found out that the songs *Grease is the Word*, *Hopelessly Devoted to You*, *Sandy*, and *You're the One That I Want* had been approved for us to add into the show in place of several other songs in the script. We also found out that we would not have sheet music for these songs, and would have to do our

best to learn the music without seeing it. The cast seemed really great, and seemed to have a lot of energy and excitement for the show.

June 19, 2016

Rehearsal on the 19th was moved into the rehearsal hall, since it only required us to sit down and learn the music. Everyone was called, and we managed to learn *Freddy My Love*, *Summer Nights*, *Hand Jive*, *We Go Together*, and *Shakin at the Highschool Hop*. The cast members playing Patty, Sonny, and Miss Lynch were missing from rehearsal, but it didn't affect the progress we made on the music all that much. I also had a meeting today for choreographing Beauty and the Beast Junior. At the Beauty and the Beast Junior meeting, I was finally given the dates that I needed to work with the kids. I was informed that the camp was not a one-week camp like I was originally told, but a two-week camp, and the dates were during a time that I had to work for a cheer company, and had a summer class. I talked to the other members, and they informed me that it is not a big deal if I have to miss several of the rehearsals, since I was not given the information that I needed in a timely manner. The miscommunication was due to the fact that the lady that was over the children's program quit immediately after the team had been hired for the show. This explains why she would not respond to my emails asking about the show weeks earlier. Nobody on the team was ever given any of the information they needed to do their jobs, and everyone was willing to help each other out and work through this together. We came up with some design plans, choreography concepts, costume ideas, and prop ideas that were needed for the show and set up a second meeting for July 7th to make sure we were prepared for the show.

June 20, 2016

On the 20th only the girls were called to music rehearsal for Grease, to really go over all the female parts in depth. We reviewed *Summer Nights*, *We Go Together*, *Freddy my Love*, *Hand Jive*, and *Shakin at the High School Hop*. After reviewing all of the material from the day before we went over *Grease is the Word*, *You're the One That I Want*, *Beauty School Drop Out*, and the *Rydell Fight Song*. The actor playing Jan was missing from this rehearsal, which threw off who is doing what part in places, and caused a few small problems while we were trying to learn the music, and place everybody in the correct spot vocally.

June 21, 2016

Everyone was called to rehearsal again on the 21st, and we quickly reviewed all of the songs we had already learned. We then added in the songs *Mooning*, *Grease Lightning*, and *Look at Me I'm Sandra Dee*. The choreographer for the show then came in and we all got to meet her. The original choreographer for West Side Story was supposed to stay for Grease, but had quit due to a conflict of interest, so we had no idea what to expect in our new choreographer, but we all had ideas of what the choreographer would be like in our heads. Her name was Julie and she was much older than we expected. After Julie left we looked through the lyrics to the songs, and discussed what some of the words were supposed to be because they are different in our scripts than they are in the music supervisor's vocal book. We agreed as a cast and music supervisor on what the lyrics should be. The actors playing Jan, Patty, and Sonny were missing from

rehearsal. We have now noticed that the actor that was playing Sonny has not been to any rehearsals yet, and everyone was starting to get frustrated with his absences. Everyone was also slightly frustrated with the music supervisor, because she seemed to have not heard the songs in the show before, and kept trying to make them sound differently than the classic way everyone knew them. The director, who was at rehearsal for the first time since our first meeting, noticed this too, and mentioned to the music supervisor that she needed to listen to the music more before our next rehearsal.

June 22, 2016

We ran all of the music we learned again, and listen to the soloists' for the first time. The show was already starting to come together, and it was very exciting. The parts, or who sings what, were off in *Freddy my Love* and we were all asked to stay after to work on it. We went over the parts again, but were still unsure of the correct key because the music was played differently every time. The music supervisor, Ginger, said to learn it in all of the different keys she had played, and we will let the director pick which way he wanted it done. This was a very difficult and unorganized way to go about learning the music, and needed some more direction. This would have been a great time to have a music director instead of a supervisor.

June 24-26, 2016

At all of these rehearsals we attempted to fix any trouble spots that we were having in the music, and cleaned the songs up to the best of our ability. At this point we had learned all of the music on our own, and making it sound as good as possible was the

goal. The group from Johnson City that had to make the hour and a half trip over every day attempted to carpool, but had difficulty figuring out how to carpool fairly. One member of this group only had one seat available comfortably in her car, which eliminated her car from being used. Another member did not have a car for the carpool, and two members of the group were having troubles with their cars. This left my car and one other car available for the carpool. There were six people that needed to be included in the carpool, so both of us had to drive every time, which would have been fine if the other members of the group would have helped out by giving money for gas, but nobody even offered.

June 27-28, 2016

We had two days off to work on the music on our own.

June 29-30, 2016

The cast got together for a final review of the music, but I had to miss these rehearsals due to a conflict that was listed before I was cast in this show. Since there is a break coming up this means it will be quite a while before I get to work on the music again with the group, but I feel confident with the material we have learned so far.

July 1-4, 2016

During this time we are off for the fourth of July. On the 3rd, I woke up in terrible pain and spent my day in the hospital. I found out that I had a kidney stone, and was given pain medicine, and medicine to help the stone pass. My family is out of the

country during this time and not able to help me. Finding people to drive me to and from the hospital, rehearsals, doctor's appointments, or anywhere else I needed was difficult. My dad's best friend was great and drove in to help me any time I needed to go out locally, but could not drive me to and from rehearsals. The medicine prevented me from being able to drive to rehearsals. This caused the carpool to have to change the way that everyone had been riding over, since I could no longer drive. This meant people that were previously known to have car troubles or limited seating had to drive as well.

July 5, 2016

The 5th was my first day of rehearsal back with a kidney stone. Although I survived rehearsal, I had to take several breaks from learning choreography due to the pain. I was not given time off to recover because it was crucial that I learned all of the material immediately. This was also the first day that we worked on the choreography for the show. We worked for about six hours straight trying to cram in as many dances as possible. The cast managed to make it through a lot of material for *Hand Jive*, *We Go Together*, *Shakin at the High School Hop*, *Summer Lovin*, and bits and pieces of dances that are interchangeable for the entire show. With the entire cast in the rehearsal hall this gave us little room to practice the show. Every single piece of furniture had to be stuffed into hallways and bathrooms to try to make enough space for everyone to move. The lack of space also made it extremely hot and extremely hard to see. The room began to stink from the massive amounts of sweat, and the windows were opened as an attempt to keep the smell from being too strong. We also decided that material needed to be reviewed in small groups and videos needed to be sent out for everyone to know what

was going on. As dance captain I had to set up times to review with everyone, and teach those that missed, but everyone agreed they wanted a few days to go over the material on their own first.

July 6, 2016

On the 6th I attempted to go to rehearsal again. I had to have Trenton (my best friend and fellow cast member) drive me to rehearsal, because of the medication I was on to help control the pain I was in from the kidney stones. I started hurting on the way to rehearsal worse than I should have been while on my medication. At the start of rehearsal everyone started to review the material, but I was in too much pain and asked if I could sit and watch. I end up spending the first hour running back and forth to the bathroom in pain, and nauseated. I began to sweat from the pain as well while watching rehearsal, and my director suggested I lay down on a couch in the lobby for a few minutes to try to ease the pain. I agreed to this idea, and while lying down for about thirty minutes my director and three other cast members checked on me. When my director came to check on me again I admitted that I could not take the pain anymore, and needed to go to the hospital. This caused Trenton and me to leave rehearsal early. My director was fine with this and sent us out. We had to make it all the way back to the Johnson City hospital, and Trenton did an amazing job of driving me home quickly in the rain to seek medical attention. I spent my evening at the hospital, was given pain medicine, and was scheduled for an appointment with an urologist for the next day.

July 7, 2016

On the 7th I went to the doctor, and scheduled a day for surgery in case the stone didn't pass before then. I was also put on even more medication for the pain, which made me even less able to drive. I then went to rehearsal, which was a lot more bearable with the medication. We learned the choreography for *Beauty School Dropout* today, and reviewed all of the other material we had been working on. It is a good thing I was able to go since Trenton and I are the main focus in the song *Beauty School Dropout*, and they wouldn't have been able to work on the number without us. The guys also learned *Grease Lightning*, and that gave the girls some time to sit down and watch, which was nice. I had the next day off as well, which was great because I needed some time to rest from the kidney stone.

July 9 & 10, 2016

We cleaned up the material we had already learned the past two days even more, and started to have a set idea of what the show needed to look like. We have also worked on a lot of the other blocking, and only had one scene left to block at this point. A lot of people that missed the initial days of learning material are really falling behind now, since the videos were never sent out. We found out the videos had been lost today, when we asked if someone could please send out the videos for us to work with, since we had been waiting on them since the first day of learning choreography. We had all been doing our best to review the material on our own, but could have really used the videos for reference. The videos were also taken so anyone who missed could watch them and learn the dances on their own. The stage manager said she sent them to the director, and the director said he never got them. When the stage manager went to send them again they

had all somehow been deleted. I had to set times to come in and work with everyone that needed help instead, since I am the dance captain. This was extremely hard for me, since I had been battling the kidney stone all this time, and was not completely present for every choreography rehearsal due to the trips to the restroom, pain, and hospital runs.

July 11, 2016

When I woke up on the 11th I intended to go to auditions for Beauty and the Beast Junior and help cast the show. I would then attend rehearsal for Grease after casting Beauty and the Beast Junior. My body had other plans and I passed my stone, which was extremely painful. I was not able to attend auditions or rehearsal, and had to spend the day calling different doctors, and letting my body recover. I also had to video my choreography for the director to learn and help teach the Beauty and the Beast Junior kids. I spent several hours putting choreography together, videoing it in sections, and sending it in between taking pain pills and trying to rest.

July 12, 2016

After discussing me not having the schedule in time for Beauty and the Beast Junior to be excused from my summer classes, the members that will be running the summer kids camp have agreed to learn the material and teach what they can without me. I would then come in on the weekends to help teach the rest and clean it up. On the 12th they taught the *Gaston* material I sent them. They did this without me because they said it was easy to teach from the video. I started working on the choreography for *Be Our Guest* on the 12th, and even though I hadn't finished yet I had a good start. Grease

rehearsal on the 12th was still hard on my body since I was still recovering. The best part of rehearsal though, was I got a set of fake boobs for the show. I wore them all night to adjust to dancing with the extra weight on my chest, and to see how it would change my movement. Several of my dances had to be adjusted, because the boobs got in the way of what I was supposed to do. The boobs were added because my character, Frenchy, mentions how large hers are several times throughout the script. Several other characters also mention that they think I stuff my bra throughout the script. Adding them to the mix really helped to put me even more in the mindset of my character.

July 13, 2016

I got a phone call on the 13th telling me they needed all of the Beauty and the Beast Junior material done, filmed, and sent in by that night, or they were not going to pay me for my work. This was frustrating, because we had all agreed that I would send the material in, but nobody ever said it all needed to be sent in by the second day of rehearsals for Beauty and the Beast Junior. Rehearsals for Grease consisted of more reviewing of all the material. We also learned that there would be a change in the casting, because the actor playing Sonny had not shown up for a rehearsal yet. Nate, who was playing Vince Fontaine, would be taking the part of Sonny, and another guy would be pulled in to play Vince. Although this changed the dynamic some everyone was excited for Nate and knew he would do great stepping in to the part. We were also glad to finally have someone to fill in those spots in the show. As soon as rehearsal was over I went home and finished *Be Our Guest*, and stayed up until 2 in the morning videotaping

it. I informed everyone that I would personally teach the “wolf dance” and the “waltz” when I come in, as well as going over whatever needed more work.

July 14, 2016

On the 14th I went over *Be Our Guest* with the director and the rest of the team in person to clear up any confusion on material at a Beauty and the Beast Junior meeting. At Grease rehearsal I got to try on a few pieces of my costumes, and six different wigs that will possibly be used on me in the show. Some of the wigs were a little small, and we still didn't have the pink wig that I had to have for the show. One of the costume assistants and I also discussed how we would get all of my hair under the wigs, and decided that it would be trial and error. Some of the possibilities included pin curls, French braids, and wig caps. The cast and crew had the night off from rehearsal the next day.

July 15, 2016

I went in to help with Beauty and the Beast Junior today, and was shocked to find out that the material I was told “had to be sent in” two days ago had not been touched on yet at all. I taught all of *Be Our Guest*, *The Mob Song*, and most of *Gaston*. The kids were wild, and it was very difficult to get through any material, let alone all that we needed to get through.

July 16-17, 2016

When I went in to Beauty and the Beast Junior today I choreographed the “wolf dance” and the “waltz.” We also reviewed all of the other dances the kids already learned. At choreography for Grease, my dance partner, Wolfe, was absent, so I could not do all of the material that was choreographed for me. We changed some of the material and cleaned up the rest, and I met with some of the cast that hadn’t learned the material yet afterwards to help them learn the material.

July 18-19, 2016

We met up a couple hours before rehearsal to clean up the dances even more and make sure everyone had a grasp on the material before we moved to the theatre the next week, and added the set in. My dance partner Wolfe still wasn’t back, and I was really ready to have him come back in so I could practice the rest of my choreography. I know his time off was approved, but we had not planned on me being weak from a kidney stone for a good portion of rehearsals and now needed some extra practice. Putting your trust in someone that you haven’t really been able to work with is a very difficult challenge that I was facing at this point.

July 20, 2016

On the 20th we came back to the music that we hadn’t reviewed in quite some time. We also got to meet Brad, the pianist for the show. Brad did an amazing job with the music, and really got everyone pumped up to meet the rest of the band. Everyone was a little rusty on the correct notes of the music, but we pushed through. We got the music cleaned up to the best of our ability in one night, but were glad we had another

night to review before we switched spaces. Some of the music the band was playing didn't match the music we had practiced dancing to so there was a lot of talk about how we could fix this.

July 21, 2016

We put the music with the dancing on the 21st, and as expected it was tragic. We forgot words, got all the notes wrong, and were so out of breath we could hardly sing, but we worked hard. By the end of the night it didn't sound horrible, and just needed a little more work on our own. Brad, the pianist, was fantastic and worked with us in any way he could. The 22nd would be our last day off for this show, and everyone could use the rest after the past two rehearsals to refresh before tech starts.

July 22, 2016

Even though we had the night off from rehearsal, I was invited to the theatre to see Beauty and the Beast Junior. I decided to stay home and use the time to rest instead, and see the show the next day.

July 23, 2016

We ran choreography with music again one more time before we moved to the theatre. After rehearsal I went to the final performance of Beauty and the Beast Junior to see how the kids were doing with my choreography. The little kids did well considering they only had two weeks to put the show together. The costumes and set looked great! I was so proud to see my work on stage, and was proud that the little kids did pull it all

together, even the 4 year olds. When the show was over the kids had pictures taken, and then we had to strike everything, and get everything set up for Grease to move in the next day.

July 24, 2016

We moved everything into the theatre today. The set wasn't completely up so we still hadn't seen how the set would change the choreography, but we at least had some ideas of what needed to be fixed now. We ran everything the best we could in the space without the set. My partner Wolfe came back and was lost on all of the changes that were made to the dances. I stayed after to teach him what had changed. I was so glad to have him back. It was extremely hot in rehearsal, and about half of the cast spent most of the night in the bathroom throwing up from the heat.

July 25, 2016

We ran everything again today, and broke everything down in small groups. We remembered that there were a few scenes that still hadn't been blocked, so we finished those off to the best of our ability. Everyone had their shoes for the show so far, but that is all we had costume wise. We had some of our props at this point, and about half of the set. After rehearsal we did a costume parade to see what we had and what we needed. I was given my main outfit, my bedroom outfit, and a prom dress. The director said he would watch the dress for prom while I danced and make a final decision. We also learned that we didn't have enough Pink Ladies jackets for everyone, so some of us would not be wearing them. The girls playing the Pink Ladies were upset by this news,

and we all-rush ordered our own matching Pink Ladies jackets. I also decided to order saddle oxfords. The costumer was not present for any of this, and the cast and crew were upset that she had not done more work on the costumes. I learned that she still had not ordered my pink wig, and one of the costume assistants said he would figure something out immediately. The director was very upset with the costume situation, and told the stage manager to make sure the costumer was at the next rehearsal.

July 26, 2016

On the 26th we wore the costumes that we had while running the material. The costumer did not show up for this rehearsal like she was asked. After seeing me move in the prom dress that was selected for me, the director informed the costume team members that were there that he hated my prom dress and they needed to find me a new dress immediately. They let me know that they would have something by tomorrow. While standing in the dressing room our choreographer and set builder rushed in covered in blood. Everyone was asked to leave the dressing room so they could get cleaned up. It turns out the choreographer fell down a set of steep stairs outside with a glass bottle and nicked a vein. She ended up being fine after a short trip to the hospital, but it was a scary moment.

July 27, 2015

On the 27th we finally ran the entire show with costume changes, lights, sound, and everything for the first time. I had a new prom dress waiting on me that was white and a size 2. I fit in the dress myself, but when I put on the fake boobs that I had to wear

for the show, it didn't come close to zipping. I found another pink and black dress that I liked in the costume storage room, after being asked to go look myself for something else, but the skirt was too tight for my dance moves. The director and costume assistants allowed me to try the dress anyway, since they were running out of options. While dancing the skirt ripped completely up the back, and my partner Wolfe couldn't stop laughing at the fact that my entire backside was showing. Luckily I did have shorts on under my dress. The lights and sound were a little bit crazy since it was the first time doing everything. We met the band and they were fantastic to work with. They didn't mind trying to change things to help us out, and they would stop and start as many times as they were asked. The show had to stop several times once we saw how many costume changes there were, and to fix music, lights, and sound cues. It was a hectic night, but very exciting to see everything working together. The set was finally finished, and we got the car for the show. It was decided that the car needed some work done to it, but it could be done. A lot of the scenes also had to be adjusted around the car, since we didn't know what we had to work with until this point.

July 28, 2016

My dress had to be sewn together again last night, since it had a giant rip in it from the choreography. The stitching was not the strongest, and I told the costume crew that I thought it would probably rip again, but they suggest that I try it out anyway since we were running out of options. Some of my other costumes were taken away tonight and given to another cast member because she didn't like her costumes, and I was given the ones that she didn't like. This made me feel a little unhappy, because it felt like they

were saying I am less than her, but I made the best of the situation and grew to love all of the pieces I was given. The costumer showed up for fifteen minutes tonight, but when she saw all of the issues we had that she was supposed to fix she quickly gathered her things and left. One of the cast members was told that he would now be in charge of making the costumes work. He had been on the costume team all along, but had not been prepared to take over. I was also taken out of a number in the show, because the costume change was just too fast and not going to work. As predicted the dress ripped again, this time not only showing my backside, but also ripping up onto my back. When we searched for ways to fix this dress we found a different black skirt that we could pair with the top half of the dress, to make it look like one dress. The costume crew decided they would fix it tonight, so hopefully I would have a dress that would work for our final dress. The lighting, sound, and music were coming together better, but there were still some trouble spots that needed fixing.

July 29, 2015

The 29th was our final dress rehearsal before we opened! The new skirt had been sewn into the top half of the dress, and the back of the dress had been sewn up. The new skirt had a better flow, and gave me a lot more space to work with. The dress worked for all of my choreography! I received my pink wig for the show, and since the costumer forgot to order it one the costume crewmembers made me one using as old George Washington wig and some pink hairspray. It was not the ideal pink wig, but it would work for the purpose of the show at this point. The car had been altered dramatically, it was basically taken apart and rebuilt, and it has been repainted. The work that was done

on the car made it much more suitable for our needs, and it was better for fully-grown men to sit on. It still wasn't the most ideal car ever, but it worked much better. The lighting, sound, and music cues were getting a little better every night. Everything had come together well enough for a show just in time, because we opened the next day!

July 30, 2015

It was opening night and the show went pretty smoothly overall. It was extremely hot during the shows since we had a house packed with people, and not the most ideal air conditioning situation. The amount of sweat on everyone's clothes was crazy. We made it through the show without anything too tragic happening. The only thing that was remotely a problem was one of the younger cast members jumping off the back of the set in the dark and almost landing on several other cast members, including myself. But the show worked as a whole.

July 31, 2016

The 31st was our second show. It was during the day so the heat was even more unbearable than the day before. We also had a talk back after the show, but not very many people stayed around to talk due to the heat. This show went fairly well overall. The same cast member jumped off the back of the set again, and several other cast members agreed that it needed to be addressed before our next show.

August 5, 2016

Our third show was on the 5th, but it was the first show that we had after an entire week off from rehearsals. I had to address the cast about using the assigned exits today, to avoid getting hurt, because the stage manager told me if I wanted it fixed I needed to handle it myself. We also had a cast member that had to withdrawal from the show, and so before the show started we all had to show up early to help rework some of the choreography since her spot was now empty. The audience was not nearly as responsive as they were last week. Also our director went out of town and was not here for this show for the first time. Our director had been running lights and sound, so there were some issues with lighting and sound at this show. My dress ripped again, and had to be fixed after the show. Everyone was feeling a little down after the show, because there were so many small things that went amiss compared to last week. We had a short pep talk before we left to remind everyone to review his or her material since we had had some time off. Everyone agreed but still seemed discouraged as they left.

August 6, 2015

On the 6th, Wolfe, my partner, had a pep talk with everyone before the show to try to avoid another night with low energy like the night before. It seemed to work, everyone was extremely pumped up before we went on stage. The audience was amazing; they were very responsive to everything. Having an audience that really gets into the show, and laughs and claps always helps a performance. This was the best show so far, and everyone felt so good at the end that they all mentioned that they wished they could have this audience every night. It also helped that everyone had looked over their lines again before the show, and had the previous night to remind us what we were doing.

August 7, 2015

The show on the 7th went well, and it was announced that we would have a new air conditioning unit by the next show, which was exciting. The audience was not quite as good as last night and the night before, but they were still enjoyable. We had another talk back, and more people stayed around this time, which made the talk back a lot more fun. They had some great questions for us, and we loved being able to actually talk with them. We also had a photo shoot after the show, which made us stay a lot later than usual. The photo shoot was a blast but everyone was hungry by this point, and a little grumpy. Overall it was a productive and successful day.

August 12, 2016

On the 12th on my way to the show I got my first speeding ticket. I was not happy about the ticket, and was almost late for call because of it. The show went well, but everyone was starting to get sad about the show coming to an end the next day. The new air conditioning was a great experience! It cooled the cast, crew, and audience down a lot, but the cast was still pretty sweaty by the end of the show. The only other issue was a nosebleed by the guy that plays Sonny during the show. He turned the nosebleed into a joke about getting hit in the face while taking hubcaps off of a car, which let the crew know he needed help. The guy playing Danny wanted to tell him to go to the bathroom in the scene, but the location of the scene was not clear so it did not fit. The crew had stuff to clean him up as soon as he ended the scene, and he managed to keep the blood off his clothes. I had the next scene with him, and he sneakily asked me to help him

throughout the scene to make sure no blood was getting on him. He handled everything extremely well.

August 13, 2016

The 13th was closing night for Grease, and it was very sad to know that my summer was finished with Parkway Playhouse. The show went extremely well, and when it was over we had a small reception with finger foods to celebrate. Then we began striking the set. I was given the “R” from the word Rydell on our set, and was super excited to take it home with me. I mainly worked on props and costumes, which consisted of putting costumes away, and putting props away. Taking everything down was very sad, but it is always nice to do it with a company of people you have come to love. The show started at 7:30 as usual, but we didn’t manage to get the audience cleared out and the reception over until around 11, which meant that we didn’t finish strike until after 1:30 in the morning. On the way home my best friend Trenton hit a deer, and we had to wait on the side of the road for a tow truck to get his car before I could drive him home. By the time we got home it was around 3:00 in the morning, and not only were we sad, but also exhausted. I guess you could say it ended with a bang.

Part 3:

My experience as a paid actor was nothing like I expected it to be, but nothing ever is. Being in a show as a paid actor is a lot more work than others may realize. Everyone sees the final product and thinks about how cool it would be to be on stage for a living, but nobody thinks about what it takes to be there. Yes, being on stage may seem glamorous, but the work put into it, and all of the problems along the way are not as glamorous as one may think.

Each character and play an actor works on requires a lot of research both internally and externally. Every choice that a character makes has to be justified by a full understanding of whom that character is. This means that the actor must spend many hours doing research to find answers about the circumstances surrounding the character's life. The actor also needs to do some internal research for similar scenarios and situations that they can recall and use to help create truthful emotions on stage. For just one show hours of character research are put in. All of the details from what life was like in the time the play is set, to what it was like to have a disease that affects the characters life, to what type of dancing would have been done by the character can all be important aspects to consider in the research process. Every single "given circumstance" must be considered and worked through for a successful performance.

For a professional actor the rehearsal process can be brutal. Actors put in hours upon hours of time into rehearsing, regardless of whatever else is going on in their lives. Although it is understood that occasionally there are emergencies that come up that are out of your control, an actor can only miss so many rehearsals before the actor is replaced in a show. If an actor is not at rehearsal they are not only affecting their own work, but

the work of the other actors in the show. On top of the scheduled rehearsals actors go to, they also have to rehearse on their own time to make sure that they have their lines memorized, and have a full understanding of what is going on in each scene. An actor needs to know exactly which emotions they need to be able to connect with, and be ready to present that at called rehearsals after spending the time working on it on their own. An actor also has to take time after the end of one rehearsal and before the start of the next rehearsal to review the blocking and choreography that was taught at the previous rehearsal. This assures that the actor is not confused about material that was already taught when the next rehearsal starts.

Beyond the work put into each show there will also be plenty of conflicts that arise within the working environment. For example in this work experience there were costumers that didn't do their job, schedules that were never sent out, videos that were lost, and a director who wasn't there when you needed him. All of these are things that I experienced first hand this summer. The greatest of these issues I dealt with was the lack of attendance from the director of these shows. Stanislavski frequently mentions that the director is the person that keeps the play consistent, and makes sure everything is heading in the right direction. I noticed a huge difference in the quality of productions from Steel Magnolias to Grease and the fact that the primary difference between the two was the lack of presence and guidance from the director. Although I understand that the director had a lot going on in his personal life, it was still unfair to the company of each show performed that he was not completely there for every rehearsal. Because the director was not there conflicts arose from people not giving as much as they probably should have to the jobs they were assigned.

Keeping all of these things in mind you have a choice, you can either let it bother you and bring you down, or you can choose to work with it and find the good in any situation. As an actor you have to be willing to let it all go and make your character the best you can. Stanislavski understood this, and although he came up with the method of “adaptation,” or overcoming an obstacle, for the situation on stage, I believe it also applies to working with others in general. When you step on stage you leave everything else at the door, and become one unit to solve any issue that arises.

Sure there are down sides, and it is okay to be upset about things, as long as you learn from it. In every situation that arose this summer I found a way to better myself along the way. Most of the situations that came up taught me how important it is for me to make sure my work is always taken care of in advance. This way I am prepared and ready to adjust when an unexpected situation does arise. If I know that my work is done in advance, it gives me an opportunity to learn something new from the situations around me.

Eventually you do have to let things go and move on. I was very upset that I actually lost money working as a paid actor this summer, but now I have that experience and know to consider how much you will spend on gas before taking a job. Making the hour and a half drive every day cost me quite a bit in gas, in fact a lot more than I made, and I was not given a gas stipend, but I learned from it.

Sure I wish the work environment at Parkway Playhouse had been more professional this summer, but I am grateful for the experience that I did gain. There were a lot of issues going on within the full time members of the Parkway Playhouse team and board that inevitably effected the work environment. Had the circumstances been

different with the personal lives of these members my summer experience probably would have been completely different then it was, however I do not hold anything against these people for their lives impacting the theatre.

There were also a lot of stressful times revolving around the HB2 law being passed in the state of North Carolina, which is where Parkway is located. The law was not a law that the people of Parkway Playhouse wanted to support, but because of the location of the theatre they were punished regardless of their individual beliefs. The stress of this law combined with everything else had a permanent impact on Parkway for not only my time there, but for years to come. There were a lot of changes in the members of the board and full time members while I was at Parkway this summer, and no one yet knows how these changes will impact Parkway Playhouse.

As an actor it is sometimes hard to work with other people that are involved in the project, but theatre is a group production, and you have to learn to collaborate. Sure, another actress decided she didn't like the costumes that she was assigned, and yes she took mine instead, but I learned to love the costumes I ended up with. There were times that the dressing room was a little too cramped, the theatre was a little too hot, and supplying costumes and makeup for myself was a little aggravating. All of these experiences were unique to my time at Parkway though, and taught me valuable lessons. I chose not to complain about any of these things that seemed a little unfair, and I gained friends and connections that I can use for the rest of my life in return. I don't know where any of the people I worked with this summer will end up, but I will remember them, and they will remember me, and we will be able to help each other out in the future.

In a lot of my classes at East Tennessee State University I have been told that theatre is a very small world. Just from my experiences this summer alone I have found that to be true. You know when someone walks into the room what other people have thought of their past experiences working with that person. Being someone that others want to work with and be around is absolutely crucial to this industry. Knowing how to use the connections you have made is also just as important. I am thankful that East Tennessee State University has shown me how to do both of those things.

I was also able to use the knowledge I have gained about the Stanislavski system of acting this summer. Being able to put his system to use was helpful in making my performance the best I could on every show I worked on. Putting things I've learned into action really showed me how much my education is paying off. Applying "the magic IF," the state of "I am," the "psychophysical" system, the use of "subtext," and the many other wonderful teachings of Stanislavski was a very eye opening experience. I never realized how much I would use these methods of working until I reflected on everything I worked on this summer.

I feel that my ability as an actress has grown tremendously since I first started my education. I came from a high school that did not have a consistent theatre program, and stumbled across acting by chance. When I first auditioned at ETSU I had no clue what any of the terms I have discussed in this paper were, and did not even know the proper protocol for an audition, let alone the protocol for being an actress in a theatre. I would definitely have to contribute my knowledge about everything I used to get a part at the auditions for these shows to my education, and now I can say that ETSU contributed to my learning even more through the experiences I gained this summer.

I am forever grateful for the things that I have learned during my time in school here, and the connections I have made. The impact that my education has had on my work is immeasurable. Looking at my summer and thinking back to where I was before I came to college I know I would have been overwhelmed and less prepared for all of the challenges I faced this summer without the education I have received. I also would not have had the opportunity to work as a paid actor and choreographer in these shows had it not been for the connections that I have begun to make through East Tennessee State University.

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