



DRAMA

Want to put the fear of God into a parent? Seven words:

I want to be a theatre major.

Many a student has done that as they embarked on their journey through Wheaton. But their parents have survived and they have thrived doing what they love. Their career paths have led straight to the theatre via various vehicles, including stage and screen acting, playwriting, comedy and technical supervisory work behind the scenes.

When Liza Lentini's parents dropped her off at Wheaton they told her she could take any courses she wanted—anything *but* theatre. Lentini '94 is a playwright today because she ignored that directive.

"I think my parents really wanted me to become a doctor," said Lentini, whose play *Roxy Font* had a five-night run in New York City last summer. "I had every intention of trying something else, and even cruised through several majors as all first-year students tend to, including religion and classics."

Lentini, who has written for the stage since age 18, knew where she was headed, even as she tried other directions.

Amelia Randolph Campbell '04, who is pursuing acting in New York, also knew that trying not to be in theatre would be like trying not to breathe: "I knew I wanted to be an actress from the time I could speak a word. A life in the theatre means that I get to be in the center of myself,

QUEENS AND KINGS

BY SANDY COLEMAN



staying as alive as I possibly can be, and create a whole other character from that place.”

At Wheaton, they all found a place to give in to their true heart’s calling, take creative risks and soar, with plenty of support from faculty like Professor of Theatre David Fox.

This fall, Wheaton students captured that crazy love in a dazzling production of *A Chorus Line*, which was directed by Assistant Professor of Theatre Stephanie Burlington ’97, with musical direction by Assistant Professor and Choral Director Tim Harbold, and dance and rehearsal directing and coaching by Associate Professor of Theatre Cheryl Mrozowski.

“It takes guts and bravery to be in show business. It takes a bit of insanity, as well,” said Burlington. “Try

and imagine a career where rejection is not a bad day, but a known quantity to rely on each week. A young alumna who is currently making it work as an actress in New York City told me recently that if she has six auditions in one week and gets rejected at each one, she has to believe that these rejections are not failures, but seeds planted for future projects. That is the perseverance and commitment exemplified in each one of the characters in *A Chorus Line*. We, who are in this crazy theatre-making business, do it out of necessity, because there is nothing else that drives us and feeds us in the same way.”

In these pages, we feature some of the crazies (not all of them, of course; there are too many). Curtain up!

STAGE DIRECTION

Alumnae/i who have gone into theatre offer a road map:



"Make sure it's what you have to do because it will take everything you've got. Make sure you stay hungry for it and go into it knowing what kind of work you want to do, what platform. Do your best to not be distracted to a fault by image obsession and commercial surfaces—focus first and foremost on the art of your work. Keep on the race against yourself, not against others—their path will never be your path."

Amelia Randolph Campbell '04, *New York stage and screen actress, dancer, singer and choreographer*



"Surround yourself with kind people who drive you. Take help from anyone willing to give it. Swallow your pride, but don't lose it. Don't waste any time."

Mike Dorval '96, *comedian and actor, starring in Shear Madness*



"Find a way for theatre to be integrated into who you are rather than be dependent on the highs and lows inherent in the career. Otherwise, it will drive you crazy."

Rebecca Fisher '93, *actress and creator of the one-woman-show The Magnificence of the Disaster*



"Join some institutional groups, network and try to learn a new technique, trick or skill. The more experience you have the more attractive you are to an employer. On more than one occasion I have had to hang a light, record a sound cue, build a platform out of wood, weld a wall out of metal, edit some videos, build costume electronics and create the billboard poster, all while keeping track of the budget with Excel."

Andrew Gitchel '01, *technical supervisor at Harvard University*



"To be in the world of theatre and performance, one has to be passionate, committed and persistent, and have a vision of the world that lives and breathes through one's core. For me, theatre and performance is the way I was wired as my way of making the world a better place."

Karen Malmé '88, *co-founder, producer, writer and performer with Queer Soup Theatre in Boston*



"Internships are a great way to get experience... Learning by observation and asking questions is very important. Not only does your knowledge base grow, it gets noticed. Most people are willing to talk about what they do."

Peter Hurowitz '95, *sound engineer and resident sound director at Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, R.I.*



"Remember that sometimes good things take time. Have patience and be smart about your career. If you want to play around and make it your hobby, there's nothing wrong with that, just be honest about it. If you want to make it your career, just be realistic—without losing your dream."

Liza Lentini '94, *playwright*