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## It Started on a Stage

Jordan Lockwood  
*Utah State University*

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**IT STARTED ON A STAGE**

by

Jordan Lockwood

**Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for graduation with**

**University Honors**

with a major in  
Theatre Education

in the Department of Theatre Arts

**Approved:**

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**Capstone Mentor**  
Dr. Amanda Dawson

---

**Departmental Honors Advisor**  
Stephanie White

---

**University Honors Program Executive Director**  
Dr. Kristine Miller

**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Logan, UT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The creation of *It Started On A Stage* aimed to answer if any amount of experience with theater can affect an individual. The show is a devised piece inspired by a series of interviews with 15 subjects. Devised theater is a branch of applied theater where individuals collaborate on creating the script. The interviewees all had varying levels of experience in differing fields of expertise. I asked them a series of questions regarding their past and current experiences with theater. Regardless of their level of involvement or whether they were currently pursuing it, all of these participants agreed that theater had impacted them and their careers today.

I transcribed these interviews and used the dialogue from the interviews to create a short 16-scene radio play. The show was created in a digital format, making it accessible worldwide. I collaborated with actors across the country, and they recorded their lines individually and sent them in for me to create the final performance. I then posted the first performance on YouTube to accommodate audiences everywhere so they could access it for free and at their own convenience. Around the time of graduation, I posted a secondary option which was an immersive version of the performance on YouTube.

The show told these interviewees' stories of how they started in theater, their love for it, and what they wish could be different. It also explored universal themes of support, accessibility, representation, and inclusivity while validating all experiences and the positive impact they made. I removed any detailed information that could point back to the interviewees to respect their privacy and allow audiences to identify and reflect on their experiences.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Dr. Amanda Dawson and Stephanie White, thank you for supporting me throughout this year and believing in my crazy ideas for this piece. I felt empowered knowing I had a strong group of women backing me up every step of the way.

To the individuals who made this piece what it is. Thank you for being vulnerable and sharing your experiences and love for the theater. This piece would have been impossible without you.

To Brandon, J.C., Josh, Levi, Tucker, Brynn, Timo, Ethan, Elizabeth, Samantha, Ben, Megan, Rachel, Brian, Brooklyn, Jenna, Shannon, McKenna, and Scott. Thank you for sharing your voices and helping me bring this piece to life.

To the Theater Department, thank you so much for strengthening my passion for theater and helping me do anything I set my mind to.

To the Office of Undergraduate Research and the Caine College of the Arts, thank you for generously funding this project and continuously offering resources and support to see that I would succeed.

To my friends and loved ones. Thank you for always encouraging and supporting me and all my theater endeavors.

To my Mom, "My Precious Girl." Thank you for being the one to spark my passion for theater at such a young age. Thank you for your endless support on my journey and for always encouraging me to chase my dreams no matter how big. You are my inspiration, and I would not be where or who I am today without you.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table Of Contents.....	v
List Of Figures.....	vi
Methodology.....	vii
Script.....	xiii
Reflection.....	xxv
Professional Author Bio.....	xxvii

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

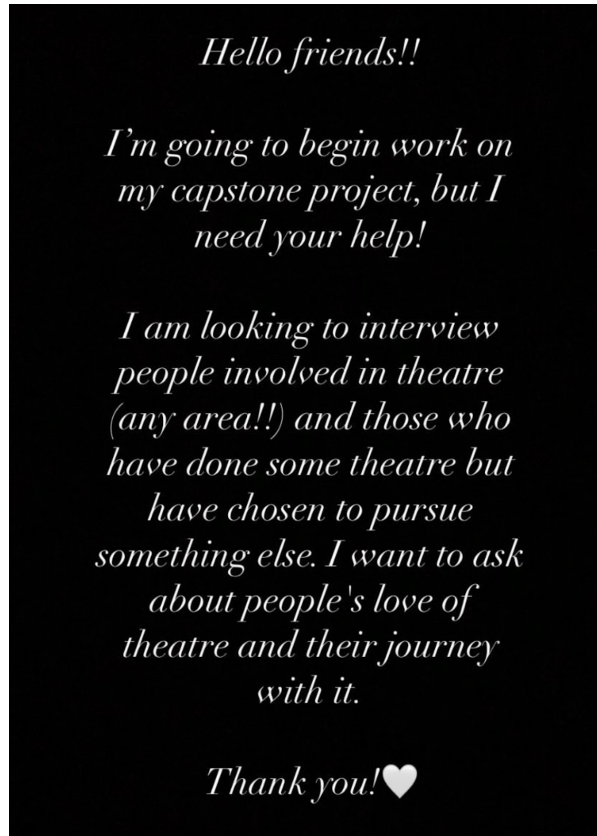
- Figure 1: Initial Instagram interview call
- Figure 2: Cast List
- Figure 3: Poster created by Morgan Johnson
- Figure 4: Live Listening and Talkback

## METHODOLOGY

### **Phase 1: Interviews and Data Collection:**

#### *Participation Recruitment*

I looked for individuals to recruit and interview through social media (Facebook and Instagram) and email. When selecting, I wanted to feature individuals of all theater backgrounds to make this a performance people could relate to. I acquired 15 individuals from varying theater backgrounds from across the country.



*Figure 1: Initial Instagram interview call*

#### *Interviews*

I conducted interviews on Zoom in March 2023. They each lasted 30 to 45 minutes and were recorded to transcribe later. My goal was to find out if regardless of their level of experience with theater, individuals would feel that it impacted them in some way. I created the following questions to ask participants:



## **INTRODUCTION**

1. What is your name?
2. What are your pronouns? (if comfortable sharing)
3. What is your current career status?
  - a. **Student** - What are you studying?
  - b. **Career** - How long have you been in this position?

## **PAST EXPERIENCE**

1. What is your earliest memory of theater? (Could be seeing, doing, etc.)
2. What moment or moments would you say sparked your interest in theater?
  - a. What about this experience was so impactful? This could be either positive or negative.
  3. Have you faced/or do you face any obstacles in your experience with theater?
    - a. If “yes,” can you tell me about one/some of those challenges?
      - i. Were you able to overcome them?
        1. If so, please elaborate.
        2. If not, what would you change about your experience?
      - b. If “no,” have you seen obstacles for others?
        - i. If “yes,” can you tell me about one/some of those challenges?
          1. Were they able to overcome them?
            - a. If so, please elaborate.
            - b. If not, what do you think could be done to improve their experience?
4. Do you/did you have anyone support your journey?
  - a. How did they make an impact on you and your experience?

## **CURRENT EXPERIENCE**

1. How would you describe your current level of interest in the theater?
2. What do you do today?

- a. theater-related
- b. Something else
  3. What made you decide to/or not to pursue theater?
  4. What have you learned from your experience with theater?
  5. Name two things you enjoy about your current profession.
  6. Has your level of involvement in theater impacted your current profession?

### **OVERALL QUESTIONS**

1. What would you change about theater?
2. What advice would you give your younger self who was in theater?

I received a unanimous response from all of the individuals who agreed that they each were impacted by their involvement in theater regardless of their level of pursuit.

#### *Transcription and Condensation*

I then transcribed and coded the interviews to identify common themes to explore in my show. Individuals all expressed that theater was a safe place where they felt like they could be themselves. They also weren't afraid to point out where they experienced a lack of support, representation, lack of accessibility, and inclusivity.

#### **Phase 2: Performance Devising**

##### *Script Writing*

This portion of the process took the most time, as it required me to make the difficult decision of choosing dialogue from the interviews. You'll find that the script doesn't contain an overarching plot but instead connects ideas that flow from one to another. The same went for characters. I combined similar experiences to represent individuals' professions, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age to create characters with universal qualities an audience could directly relate to.

##### *Recording*

I was fortunate enough to cast 19 willing individuals who lent their voices to help me bring this performance to life. Actors used their own recording methods to record their lines, and when complete, they sent their lines to me so I could put them into the final performance.

## IT STARTED ON A STAGE

### CAST LIST

ACTOR #1	BRANDON FOXWORTH
ACTOR #2	JUAN C. VASQUEZ
ACTOR #3	JOSHUA PIPER
ACTOR #4	LEVI HOPKINS
ACTOR #5	TUCKER ESCHMEYER
ACTOR #6	BRYNN FRANCIS
ACTOR #7	TIMO RASMUSSEN
STUDENT #1	ETHAN SHAW
STUDENT #2	ELIZABETH THORNTON
STUDENT #3	SAMANTHA CAPENER
STUDENT #4	BEN QUIROZ
TEACHER #1	MEGAN CODLING
TEACHER #2	RACHEL TILLOTSON
TECHNICIAN	BRIAN GARRICK
PLAYWRIGHT	BROOKLYN BULLARD
CHILD ACTOR	ELIZABETH THORNTON
CRUSH	JENNA HORTON
DIRECTOR	SHANNON GIBSON
THE TREE	MCKENNA FINLEY
PARENT #1	MCKENNA FINLEY
PARENT #2	SCOTT MOREY

*Figure 2: Cast List*

### **Phase 3: Performance Dissemination**

#### *Publicity*

To advertise the performance, I created an Instagram dedicated to the project so people could follow and keep up to date on the show. The theater department also shared information within their classes and weekly newsletter. My roommate, Morgan Johnson, created a poster that was put up on campus detailing the show's information and a QR code to access the online performance. (YouTube Channel: @ItStartedOnAStage)



*Figure 3: Poster created by Morgan Johnson*

### *Screening*

On December 8 at 7:30 PM, I hosted a private listening of the radio theater piece for USU faculty and students. Following the performance, I hosted a talkback to ask the audience about their experience with theater and for them to ask me questions about the creation process.



*Figure 4: Live Listening and Talkback*

### *Online Release*

I published two versions of the performance on YouTube so audiences around the world can have access. The first version, which was heard at the public hearing, uses stereo audio. In this version, the sound comes from a single source and the actors won't sound like they are moving. This listening experience will be similar to listening to something on the radio. The second version requires users to wear headphones so they can listen to a version show that uses surround sound. This will allow the listener to feel immersed in the actors' performance.

## SCRIPT

### MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

JORDAN

Hello. My name is Jordan. Thank you for listening to It Started On A Stage. To ensure the best possible experience, we recommend listening on headphones. This production is solely audio. You will hear actors on your left, right, and in front of you. Thank you, and please enjoy the show.

### SCENE 1 - EARLY TIES

*ACTOR #5, STUDENT #3, and CHILD ACTOR step back into their childhoods and move about the living room.*

ACTOR #5

I don't know how old I was.

STUDENT #3

I was probably 10, maybe?

CHILD ACTOR

I was a little bit dramatic.

*(Pause)*

A lotta bit dramatic.

*They all laugh.*

STUDENT #3

I always loved playing with my imagination. Honestly ever since I was really, really little.

ACTOR #5

My grandma always watched the Sound of Music a lot.

CHILD ACTOR

My mom, she would play musicals all the time. And so that kind of became a really big part of our relationship.

*They all move and sit in line with the LISTENER.*

ACTOR #5

I remember being taken to see Annie at this little community theatre. I don't remember the show that well. But I remember the curtain opening up and the orchestra starting.

*WE HEAR THE SOUND OF AN ORCHESTRA TUNING. A SHORT OVERTURE BEGINS.*

**SCENE 2 - FIRST PRODUCTIONS**

*THE TREE approaches center stage*

THE TREE

My earliest memory was being the tree, and we just stood there.

*CHILD ACTOR enters confidently and pushes THE TREE out of the way.*

CHILD ACTOR

I was really good at memorizing lines. I was that brat who could memorize everyone's lines and tell them when they got it wrong. The director finally was like-

*DIRECTOR walks quickly onstage.*

DIRECTOR

*(Annoyed, but trying to be patient)*

-Hey, buddy. So it's so great that you've got all these lines memorized. I think it's awesome! You're really good at that. But, hey, you don't need to correct the actors. I'll do that. Like, that's my job.

CHILD ACTOR

Are you sure? I'm happy to help! I got this.

*DIRECTOR escorts CHILD ACTOR offstage. STUDENT #1 enters from their exit and crosses to center.*

STUDENT #1

I personally was just this weird, messed up child who hated music, theatre, and arts. I thought it was the dumbest thing ever. And then this girl that I had a crush on came up to me after school one day-

*CRUSH has entered at this time.*

CRUSH

Hey! Are you gonna audition for the school show?

STUDENT #1

*(Trying to “play it cool”)*

You know, having a crush on her. I was like- “Uh yeah, I'm planning on being there!”

*STUDENT #1 come over to the listener as if they are in line and they are confiding in them.*

STUDENT #1

We had auditions. I had no idea what I was doing. But I was so excited. I ended up making it, and the girl I had a crush on ended up getting cut. And I was like- “Oh man! Maybe this is going to be a waste of time. Do I wanna accept?” But I had so much fun in the auditions. They just made me feel I had something to offer to the production. And so I did it. It seemed pretty natural for me to go into theatre in high school. I got more involved in the club and leadership positions. As time went on I was like, “Maybe this is something I want to do!”

*(Pause)*

And that really freaked my parents out. They were like-

PARENT #1

You can't do theater because it's not a viable career choice.

PARENT #2

It's not family-friendly! You will have to compromise standards and morals.

STUDENT #1

And so, when it came to college, I was like, “Oh yeah, they're right. I don't want to do it.”

### **SCENE 3 - THE DECISION**

*STUDENT #2 AND STUDENT #4 enter. They don't acknowledge each other until they start realizing their similar thoughts.*

STUDENT #2

I was majoring in anthropology my first year of undergrad.

STUDENT #4

I was double majoring in human biology and biochemistry.

BOTH

And I was miserable in those math and science classes.



STUDENT #2

It was like a foreign language to me.

STUDENT #4

And I did a whole year of that.

BOTH

And I was like, man, life without theatre stinks.

STUDENT #2

I would end up studying in the fine arts building anyway, or I'd always find my way over there.

STUDENT #4

And then, I just discovered that I love STEM and science and I love acting, but a life without biochemistry and science is a life I could still be happy in.

STUDENT #2

But if I don't have theatre, I just feel this big chunk of me is-

BOTH

-Missing

STUDENT #4

So I changed my major.

#### **SCENE 4 - LACK OF SUPPORT**

*More actors file into the space*

STUDENT #4

So, I decided to just pursue acting. And that really stressed my relationship with my parents.

ACTOR #4

I think a lot of my theatre experience has been a little bit solitary. It's just kind of been like me doing my thing. Which wasn't fun at the time.

PLAYWRIGHT

I think it's taxing on artists. I'll sit there and look around at my peers who auditioned for all the other shows except mine. I'll feel like the butt of a joke I'm not in on. And so I think overcoming that has been reminding myself that the art I do is just something that I have to be happy with. And if I'm happy with it, then what does it really matter that other people aren't?

## **SCENE 5 - SUPPORT**

*Another group of actors enter and feel guilty that they have to share their experiences after hearing the struggle of the previous scene.*

ACTOR #5

So I've been fortunate enough to actually have like my entire family really kind of be supportive of it and everything.

TECHNICIAN

Oh, yeah, I've had plenty of people in my life: friends, ex-partners.

TEACHER #1

My husband is very supportive.

ACTOR #3

My wife, totally. She put her own desires on hold to kind of let me go through my education path. She supported us financially in the first few years.

ACTOR #2

My high school theatre teacher went on to support me. For a long time, she came to everything I did, including going to the West End in London.

STUDENT #3

Yeah. My parents don't really- theatre. But I remember my parents would come to see my shows. And they drove me to practice when I didn't have a car. And they were just kind of always there, which was really nice.

PLAYWRIGHT

I come from a family that does mostly sports. And when I showed interest in doing theatre, my family pushed me. They pushed me to do theatre classes in high school. I'm really lucky because all the teachers I've had in my family and every person I've met have always been so supportive of seeing me do my best in the space I'm working in.

## **SCENE 6 - THE TECHNICIAN**

*The group leaves. TECHNICIAN stays behind and sits next to the listener. Sounds transform to indicate that the listener is now sitting in the booth.*

## TECHNICIAN

*(Whispering)*

I knew I was interested in the arts and didn't really want to go into a business degree like my parents wanted me to. But they supported my decision to pursue theatre and gave me that chance. And I feel like it's been very rewarding.

I did acting for a very long time, and then I started doing technical theatre my junior year of high school. And I'm now willing to accept that I'm not the greatest actor, but I did really have a passion for theatre.

I thought that technical theatre was a good route for me to go into. I enjoy the satisfaction of the workflow. It's a lot nicer than working a consistent nine-to-five, where you just do the same thing over again. It feels very satisfying to close a project and then start a new one. And that kind of excitement continues. I tell people that part of my job is troubleshooting and figuring out how to fix things and make them work. So it's always a challenge. I have a tendency to get very tunnel-visioned when it comes to theatre. And so when I get into the mode, when we get into tech, that kind of blocks me out from my other responsibilities in the world.

One of the things that theatre has taught me is that you are never going to know the time and effort that someone has put into something. There's so much work that goes into things, and most of it is done behind the scenes, so nobody gets to see it except your name in the program. And so coming into experiences, knowing that "I can't know exactly what someone put into this. But I do know that it's a lot. And so I'm going to respect that. Even though I don't comprehend that." That's part of my issues with theatre. It's rewarding but also punishing at the same time.

## **SCENE 7 - STORYTELLING**

*ACTOR #6 comes and sits next to the listener.*

ACTOR #6

It feels like the ultimate goal is to tell a story, right? And it's to express certain stories and have a message behind them. I'm encouraging young playwrights and other creatives because I feel like we are in a dry spell of new diverse stories. I feel like we would be giving our industry a wealth of new voices that I think it lacks. But where are they? And how do we get them to put ink to paper and share their stories?

## **SCENE 8 - THE PLAYWRIGHT**

*PLAYWRIGHT walks in frustratedly.*

PLAYWRIGHT

I'm a playwright. I've been writing a lot of work.

*(They take a moment to compose themselves)*

I'm at a place where I look around, and almost everything is inspiring. I currently have three plays that are being produced on campus. And whenever auditions happened for that, it felt very much like despite them being a part of the University black box season, they weren't taken seriously. Like student-written work is a joke. I didn't go into theatre to make money. I didn't go into the theatre to be famous. I wanted to go into theatre because I loved it. Everything becomes a new opportunity to create art. And that is so amazing because it means you get to do what you love every second of the day, and you're constantly thinking about what you love. Maybe in some ways, that can be all-consuming, and yes, you have to take time for yourself and take time and step back. But it catches you at the best times. And I really believe that if you just look at the world around us. There are so many beautiful things that inspire me to create, and I don't think I would have found that if it weren't for theatre.

*The PLAYWRIGHT exits.*

### **SCENE 9 - THE ACTOR**

*ACTOR #7 comes in.*

ACTOR #7

I spent my lunchtime going to the computer lab to write because I just didn't want to be around anyone. I wasn't popular. I was very much to myself. But when I got into theatre when I got into that black box- oh my goodness. There hadn't been any other place that I'd ever felt at home. It just felt like the perfect place. You get into a rehearsal room or a black box, and I just knew "I like this, I belong here." It was a safe place to be weird and nerdy about things. And then, when I performed that first time, I looked around and saw the other actors into it, and I realized, "Oh, this is it."

*ACTOR #7 exits.*

### **SCENE 10 - THE TEACHER**

*TEACHER #1 and TEACHER #2 enter, they all sit down.*

TEACHER #1

So, I teach high school theatre and middle school theatre.

TEACHER #2

I was really excited when I got the opportunity to teach theatre because it seemed like a good opportunity to like do something a little bit above and beyond just teaching a book. It seemed like a community thing.

TEACHER #1

I love it when students learn something new or get a new idea. And you can see that sort of spark, "I learned a new thing!"

## TEACHER #2

One thing that I didn't love, and again, you probably know a lot more about this than me because I only really taught theatre for a year, was this balance where you want the play to be successful so it makes a lot of money, and then you can put on another. And so you get really tempted to cast the same sorts of kids in all the lead roles, the ones that are really gung-ho about it and confident. But I learned that there are a lot of students who might not be that confident, and maybe, yeah their performance would be a little shaky, but with practice or time or finding the right part, they could be better. I guess I didn't pursue it because I got a job at a different high school, and it didn't involve theatre, and I didn't really push to include that.

### **SCENE 11 - THE STUDENT**

*Several actors enter and sit down next to LISTENER.*

#### STUDENT #2

I'm so, so thankful for all those people who major in theatre education, and the work they put into it, and the love they have for theatre. This is not a rag on them whatsoever. But I wish I had been exposed to the idea that I could do theatre for something bigger and be myself sooner.

#### STUDENT #3

Growing up in theatre was interesting because that's when you're the most insecure about yourself. But you're also expected to be on stage and watched by everyone. I struggled getting into it. I tried out for just those tiny little kid roles, but they don't like to pick people who don't have any experience. But I didn't know how to get experience to get the role. So that was pretty frustrating. Like, I wanted to do it. I don't act anymore, but I love watching it and I miss it.

### **SCENE 12 - LACK OF SUSTAINABILITY**

*The actors get up and take the places of the teachers.*

#### ACTOR #5

My acting cohort is a cohort of 6 right now. You know, spending all my time with them every day is a huge reason that we're such good friends. But we're a little uncomfortable with the idea of pursuing this full-time because it doesn't work out for everyone. There are days when I go on campus and I'm like, "Oh my god, I can't believe I'm doing this. Do I really want to be in theatre?"

#### ACTOR #6

I have only for a very short period of my time try to make it as an actor, and that was tough. There was a nine-month period where I had booked three plays, two episodes of a TV show, and one full-length feature movie. And all of that work didn't pay for the groceries. I mean like even with that level of, you know, "Yeah, I booked the gig!" The theatre stuff wasn't paying anything. Barely gas to get from where I lived to where I was performing.

ACTOR #2

And it's really hard to have a family. I had never really planned to have a family. As a young actor, I saw the writing on the wall. But then I met my wife, and that changed. I fell in love, and I wanted to be with her forever. So we got married. We're both actors and teachers, and that's been really difficult to navigate. You're taught as an actor to basically say 'yes' to everything. And every time I'm offered a gig, there's so many more factors that I need to weigh in as to whether or not I'm going to take that gig for both me and my wife. And so it becomes very difficult to navigate in an industry that isn't family-friendly. Most companies don't have any sort of way to help actors navigate being pregnant, having young kids, or having a spouse. I can say for myself and my spouse that both of us have to basically put ourselves at a very low priority. We prioritize our work, getting work, keeping work, doing good work, and making sure that the work keeps coming and that it is representative of the work we want to do. Then the kids kind of come right after that, and then we prioritize our relationship with each other, and self-care gets relegated towards the bottom of the list. And that's not really sustainable, but we've definitely been able to make it work so far by sort of borrowing from the future to pay for the present. But eventually, those bills come due. So, I don't know that I necessarily have a recipe for success. I will say that I have found some ability to say 'no' at this point in my life.

*These actors leave, and more take their place.*

**SCENE 13 - RACISM + LACK OF RACIAL REPRESENTATION IN THEATRE**

ACTOR #2

I'm not white. And I've always had an interesting relationship with race and casting in theatre. I was "indeterminate ethnicity." So, for so many roles, I was too ethnic. And for all the other roles, I wasn't ethnic enough. And so there was a lot of sort of trying to figure out who I really was in this industry. "Am I just ambiguously ethnic? And so, is my job to play any sort of ethnic roles that are difficult for companies to cast?"

ACTOR #3

As a white-passing BIPOC person, there have been shows where I've gotten cast over my BIPOC peers.

ACTOR #2

Certainly, that conversation has changed a lot during the time I've been an actor. But when I first started out, I was frequently playing villain characters and not being really taken seriously as a possible romantic lead. I played many characters I probably shouldn't have because I was a "Token Brown." And theatre companies sort of saw that as permission to cast me as any character whose skin was also brown.

ACTOR #1

I definitely have experienced microaggressions. You know, being put into a box, as well as not being understood. I am a black man, and black men, black people, are not a monolith. I have to think about, "Will the costume department know how to do my hair?" "Will they mess up my

hair?" "Will they darken my makeup or make my makeup too light because they don't have my makeup?" You know, these are the things a black actor has to constantly think about. And especially a black actor who identifies as a woman, that's even heightened from that. So I will say those obstacles can be a hindrance because, at times, it's like, I just want to act. But does that outweigh the beauty that I have experienced with theatre? No. It has not outweighed it, but it is a huge factor.

#### **SCENE 14 - LGBTQ IN THEATRE**

*ACTOR #4 enters.*

ACTOR #4

I am a proud and open member of the LGBTQ community. I came out when I was 25. And I discovered that, when I came out, there was still a stigma with actors living authentically. As a gay man, there have been roles that I have been discounted for because you can't play a straight person.

*The actor takes a deep breath together before proceeding.*

ACTOR #4

And so, for the first part of my career, it was very beneficial for me, as weird as it sounds, to remain closeted and not come out officially because I feared that it would affect my casting and people's willingness to want to work with me, or it would narrow people's opinion of my skill.

And I feel that could get into the idea of "Should straight actors be playing gay characters?" into "Should gay actors be playing straight characters?" And I feel, and maybe this is controversial, but I'll say it, I played straight to most of the people in my life for 18 years.

#### **SCENE 15 - INCLUSIVITY/REPRESENTATION/ACCESSIBILITY**

*More actors enter.*

TECHNICIAN

I feel like just being more inclusive is a great thing that theatre can really benefit from. And I do think it has come a long way. But I also think it has a really long way to go in terms of just having more people be involved and also just having accurate representation, both onstage and backstage.

ACTOR #1

I would change the center of folks, the people choosing plays for Broadway or community theatre. They're choosing plays and casting casts that don't look like the world.

PLAYWRIGHT

In the end, that doesn't say like, "Hey, let's cut white people from theatre." No, like, that's not what anybody wants. It's more of like, on Broadway, we have so many white male writers. Why

aren't there more women writers, or people of color, or trans people writing roles for people on Broadway, or queer people, like just the list could go on.

ACTOR #4

It's very important that we start looking around and seeing disabled people, and seeing queer people, and seeing people of all colors, and all sizes onstage because otherwise, so many people don't get seen on stage. And that isn't to say that the stories we currently tell aren't important. I think every story is important to tell. I truly believe that. I just think, within the media, we need to start prioritizing which stories we haven't told already.

TEACHER #1

But I do think it could be more inclusive, especially in educational settings.

TEACHER #2

I wish that in some places, there was the opportunity to do more plays so that you could have the time and resources to nurture kids who want to get better. In a lot of schools, especially rural schools, they can only do one performance. And so you're kind of pushed to put those really confident, talented kids and a lot to just generate money.

ACTOR #7

If you're saying I have a magic wand and I can just change anything? Every theatre would be full every time we performed a show. With exactly the people who should be there to enjoy it because I get that not everybody's going to enjoy something I do. I'm not suggesting that people should change their tastes. I'm suggesting that there are people out there who would really love what we're doing but aren't coming to see the shows for whatever that reason is.

ACTOR #6

I think as much as we try to make it accessible, theatre is still inaccessible to some people, right? And I don't know what the answer is. Because, you know, sometimes the very play that we're working on, we want to communicate to a specific demographic who frankly, just can't afford to even come to see the plays we're doing. But what's the answer, give away tickets for free? Because that devalues what we're doing. Dang capitalism.

### **SCENE 16 - IMPACT?**

STUDENT #4

As I've gotten more involved, I've realized what I want out of life and that theatre is the path I want to be on.

STUDENT #3

You have to trust yourself that you can actually do it. You might not be the best, but you can do it and try your best.



ACTOR #5

The more and more that I get involved in theatre, the more and more I have learned to be humble, and I have learned to be confident, and I have learned to exist.

STUDENT #1

I didn't pursue theatre, but I have found that it's helped me just be able to go up to someone and talk to them and start an exciting interaction or conversation, which is really important for my career.

TEACHER #1

Go for the big choices, fall, and then get back up and keep going. Don't strive for perfection or the right answer. I would go back and say, safely fail more, fail a lot more.

STUDENT #2

You have to believe in yourself more because all the people that you might say, Oh, they're better than me. They're not. They're just people. They're not, they're not icons.

ACTOR #4

I think it makes me much more empathetic. So I mean, most of my job is listening. And I tried to do that and to understand what the other person is feeling and saying. And I think those skills come from the theatre from getting rid of your ego and just trying to be there in the moment and be with somebody like that.

TEACHER #2

I learned so much about being a good teacher. I got to kind of see the struggles that the students put up with a little bit closer than I might. And so that's kind of become a focus of my research is like identifying kids who are underserved, that are struggling, and trying to make them feel more comfortable, or at least create a safer classroom for them. And I think that started for me with theatre.

ACTOR #1

Just keep going. Because it may suck right now. But like, one day, you will get here, and you're gonna look back, and you're gonna say, "Thank God, I went through all that."

## REFLECTION

The idea of *It Started On A Stage* was conceived during my sophomore year at Utah State University. I was in tech week getting everything ready for the university's production of *The Moors* to open the following week. I remember sitting in the stage manager's booth and looking around the room at all the other people who were there with me. It hit me how truly remarkable it was to be in the same room with so many other people who shared a passion for theater. I instantly wanted to know each of their stories and learn about what brought them to theater and why they still pursue it today.

This desire sat with me for some time until my junior year when I had the opportunity to take a devised theater class. Devised theater is a form of theater that can use individuals' dialogue to create original works. I felt inspired after taking this class and knew that I wanted to explore my idea from my sophomore year using this format. I decided to broaden my research subject group by including individuals with any amount of theater experience.

I took on the role of playwright, director, editor, composer, and producer of this show. This was quite the load compared to the individual roles that I was more accustomed to in past productions. As the playwright, I took on the task of interviewing and creating a script. I had the opportunity to interview 15 individuals who have impacted my own experience with theater. I found myself torn when it came time to create the script because I realized that I couldn't include everything they said. However, I am pleased with the result because it accomplished my goal of capturing individuals and their unique experiences in a way that was universal to an audience.

As a director, I cast the show with actors who would represent the interviewees and their experiences. I requested that actors send me recordings of their lines and different variations of them saying them. I took an untraditional approach and offered little to no acting expectations because I tried to be as detailed as possible in the script.

As the editor, I had the task of stitching all of the audio together to make them sound good with and without headphones. This process was possible because I received an URCO grant through the Undergraduate Research department. I purchased Logic Pro, which allowed me to achieve my vision for my show. I found that as I was editing, I experienced the most obstacles. This mostly came with the editing software because I had to get over the learning curve. Luckily, I found help on YouTube, so I gained foundational knowledge and skills on the software.

This project marked my composing debut, and as the composer, I wanted something to create a score that wouldn't overpower the stories, but instead, compliment them. I ended up writing music that emphasized the emotion within these stories. I enjoy writing music, so it felt amazing to finally implement this passion into my craft.

As the producer, I had the fun of marketing the show and seeing that it all came together. I enjoyed hanging posters and sharing information on my Instagram for the project. I have come away from this project having a greater appreciation for those who have marketed shows I have worked on in the past. It is not easy!

Soon, it came time to present my project. For my public presentation, I hosted a live listening of the show on December 8th. Until this point, I had been refining this piece to ensure it was

audience-ready. I found that it was quite difficult to finally let go of the project. I found myself constantly listening and finding something wrong with the littlest things. Eventually, I came to a place where I was satisfied and ready to share. I had my close friends, my professors, and mentors all in attendance. I was pleased to find that they all had enjoyed it. I had the opportunity to lead my first talkback following the show. I started the discussion by asking the audience to raise their hands if they had any experience with theater whether that was seeing or doing. I wanted the audience to see that they all had something in common. Then I followed up with questions asking the audience to open up about their experiences. It felt like I was hearing the sequel of my performance! I learned more about my friends who came to support me, and for some, I hadn't realized just how involved they were and how much theater had an impact on them.

This project ended up having a significant impact on me. With it being my senior year, I realized that I had reached a point of coming close to burnout, so there were times when I was struggling to remember why I loved theater. However, upon hearing the participants' responses in my interviews, I was instantly reminded of a little girl who would be in awe of seeing a performance, and come home immediately after to try and sing and dance the way she saw the actors did. This project itself was also in a way a time capsule. Choosing a digital format for this project, was initially my attempt at ensuring the right actors would be able to represent the interviewees and their stories. I came to find that the "right" actors were the ones who came from all points in my life. I ended up having my oldest childhood friend of almost 15 years, a friend I did high school theater with, my college friends I have done countless shows with, and friends with whom I have worked professionally within the industry.

I hope that those who will listen to this project will feel celebrated and that their difficulties will be recognized. I hope they are reminded of their calling and the moment when it all started on a stage.

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Jordan Lockwood is a senior in the BFA Theater Education Program in the Department of Theatre Arts at Utah State University. She loves doing all things theater and enjoys directing, acting, and intimacy direction. Recently she made her directorial debut on the show *Animals* by Kerri Kochanski. She also dramaturged and choreographed the intimacy for USU's production of *Waiting for Lefty* by Clifford Odets. When she has free time, she also has a passion for composing and writing shows.

After she graduates, she plans to continue to work in the theater industry and pursue a master's degree in directing. She hopes to also continue playwriting and composing.