



A Word From The Editor

“At any given moment you have the power to say:
This is not how the story is going to end.”

~ Christine Mason Miller

The curtain has closed on what can only be described as another incredible summer at Stagedoor Manor. It was difficult - as well as heartbreaking to so many - to not be in Loch Sheldrake participating in the phenomenal experience of the 9 weeks. However, even during these most uncertain times of COVID-19, social distancing, remote learning and more, it was quite a gratifying and hugely successful experience for all those that took part in our summer sessions.



Campers participating in Fosse class during one of the summer sessions.

So, how do you take something like a session at Stagedoor and bring the same type of intense, educational, thrilling, person-to-person involvement and top notch training without being there in person? Well...you move it all to a digital online platform with staff and campers that make it just as extraordinary as it would have been in-person.

Campers still got the chance to experience 23 shows, 120+ total classes, 3 Dramafest performances with 15 different winners/writers, a mash-up performance of the Players Ensemble and Our Time Cabaret, Camper Showcase, Staff Showcase and an abundance of camp events



The cast of the Players Ensemble/Our Time Cabaret 2020 mash-up performance.

over the 9 weeks. That’s definitely something magical!

Developing and creating something as immense as a session at Stagedoor Manor and moving it online couldn't have been accomplished without the marvelous talents of those involved. From our administration, artistic staff, counselors, stage managers, teachers, tech staff, kitchen and housekeeping staff, special guests and more, each person involved help bring to life that joyous connection through an online forum that provided each camper with something unique and different. For that, we thank each and every one of you for helping to keep the magic going this past summer.

With that, we’re back with *The Backstage Connection* and continuing to bring you all things Stagedoor Manor and keeping you connected with the arts. This month, we share news about our fall/winter online programming, *Curtain Rising* with Abby Austin, *Star Spotlight* with alum, Beanie Feldstein, a new *Fun & Games* and more.

Be safe and keep healthy, everyone!

~ R.S.



Campers & Stagedoor Staff face off in a game of Broadway Smirmish during an evening camp event.



COLLEGE CONNECTION



We're not just about summer anymore!

Stagedoor Manor Studios is bringing the magic of the summer directly to you via Zoom! We are launching weekly courses online beginning in October, with topics such as Acting, Vocal Coaching, Playwriting, Fosse, and Cult Musicals taught by the highly-touted Stagedoor Manor staff. Answering the pleas of associates past and present, Stagedoor Manor Studios has expanded by creating a year-round opportunity for kids to engage in the educational excellence offered during the summer at Stagedoor Manor. At Stagedoor Manor Studios, whether you are an actor, dancer, playwright, or have the passion for the technical aspects of theatre, we have got something for everyone. Students can immerse themselves in after-school classes available Monday through Thursday. They can explore all areas of performance and enjoy what they are most passionate about. Dive into the theatrical world guided by seasoned professionals who will inspire and motivate you.

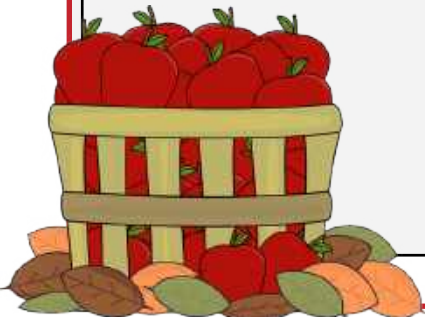
College Connection is a unique program designed to help high school students and their parents navigate what can be a confusing and challenging application process for college theater programs, especially at a time where visiting campuses in person is difficult. This program is designed to help give you the guidance and support you need to prepare for your college theatrical auditions.

We offer:

1. Two-weekend class-intensives in musical theatre and acting to help jump-start your audition preparations.
2. Live events that give you a glimpse of multiple colleges (faculty and students) and special topics in preparing for your audition journey.
3. One on one connections with former Stagedoor Manor alumni and current college students in programs of interest to you to help give you an “on-the-ground” sense of the schools to which you are applying.

All classes are between 10-18 participants. Acceptance will be on a first come basis.

Admission to both **College Connections** and **Stagedoor Manor Studios** online Fall programming is available at StagedoorManorOnline.com.



CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

CURTAIN RISING



Abby Austin once considered minoring in Math until she took Calculus II. Now, she's graduated with a BA in Theatre Design & Production and sits down with us this month to chat about her mom's influence on her to pursue a career in theatre, the best part of being a counselor/stage manager, how the arts give her somewhere to belong, and what her biggest takeaway about stage management is.

Tell us a little bit about where you grew up and where you went to school.

I grew up in the Nashville, TN area. I spent most of my time south of the downtown area. I just graduated this past May from Harding University with a BA in Theatre Design and Production with a production concentration, which is just a fancy way to say I studied stage management. Fun fact: I minored in French and considered double minoring in Math until I took Calc II. Too many tears were spilt in that class. No joke, I sprinted around the theatre department building screaming when I found out I passed that final.

Who are some of your biggest influences? Was there someone specific in the past that inspired you?

Oh, there are so many. The first person is definitely my mom. She introduced me to *Les Mis* and a few other musicals at a very young age. We would listen to them in the car and jam out all throughout my childhood. Her love of theatre opened the door for me to pursue it as a career. My biggest influences in the field have to be Cindee Stockstill and Britton Lynn. Britton Lynn was my academic advisor in college. He coached me through all of the shows I took part in while in school and taught me pretty much all of my concrete skills. He's also ridiculously sarcastic and very extra. If I can be half as cool as him someday, I'll have made it. Cindee Stockstill acts as a member of and staff ambassador for the stage management team in most of the mainstage shows at Harding, so we worked closely all through my college career. She is the person I try to be whenever I'm in a difficult situation, and just in life in general. She is patient, clever, and resourceful. I could gush about these people and



Abby pictured above with many of her prompt books & paperwork at a student-led fundraiser event for Harding Theatre Scholarship Fund this past February.

so many more for days, so I guess I should stop there.

Can you share with our readers what the first show was that you stage managed and what you took away from that experience? And...do you have a favorite show you have worked on?

This is a complicated question... My intro to stage management was gradual, so there are three shows between my senior year of high school and the middle of my freshman year in college that could qualify as the first show I stage managed. I think the one I should go with was when I was one of three stage managers on *Crazy for You* my freshman year of college. It was definitely a unique process, but the biggest and most consistently applicable lesson I learned is that it's ok to make mistakes. That show taught me that intense

Interview continues on following page



Abby Austin (stage manager) for Spring Sing, 2019. A show that has over 1000 cast members, 8 independent 7-min shows called Club Shows, 4 hosts/hostesses, and an ensemble of 12-15. Picture of one of the Club Shows.

perfectionism wasn't helping me, so I had to learn to get rid of it.

As far as favorite show I've worked on, the one that has my heart was Harding's production of *Big Fish* that I did two years ago.

What might people be most surprised to learn about your work as a stage manager?

We stage managers have worked hard to master our nothing-is-happening-that-is-particularly-concerning faces. It's one of the most important things we train ourselves to do. We do have emotional reactions to things, and those reactions are often very intense. We just don't always show them 😊. (We do slip up, of course. I know I have.)

What have been some of the most rewarding aspects of being both a counselor and stage manager at Stagedoor Manor?

For me, it's the people. I get to build relationships with both campers and staff through both productions and camp events that are full of trust and honesty. There's nothing better than watching my cast perform at Sneak Peek. There's nothing better than sitting on the floor with my campers at the end of the day and helping them digest the day's experiences. There's nothing better than bonding with other staff members (artistic, tech, camp, etc.) over shared experiences. Basically, there's nothing better than people. People are cool 😊 .

This summer, you took part in our Stagedoor Manor Digital Programming. What was it that made that format so unique for you to be part of?

Buckle up for this groundbreaking statement: this year has been impossibly hard. (Never heard that before,

have you). Being able to have Stagedoor, even though it looked different, gave me a much-needed taste of normal life. Stagedoor is home for so many of us, and getting to bring Stagedoor into our literal homes was pretty cool. It felt like when your theatre friends meet your non-theatre friends and everyone's a little uncomfy but it ends up working nicely. It was also cool to get to do theatre on Zoom for the first time. Technology is much more capable than I had thought it was before the summer! And we are more flexible than I think any of us thought we were!

Do you have any advice you could share for someone thinking about choosing stage management as a career?

Work on patience. It is one of the most important skills you can develop as a stage manager. It helps you give grace to everyone you work with, which helps curb some of the stress that makes tech and dress rehearsals so difficult. It also helps you extend grace to yourself. You will make mistakes. It's inevitable. I used to only allow myself one mistake per run, and I beat myself up mentally if I made more than that. I became a much better stage manager when I learned to be patient with myself. And I got to actually enjoy the process! I can't recommend patience enough.

How do the performing arts continue to impact your life?

The performing arts give me somewhere to belong. In this field, we are not afraid to be ourselves. We express ourselves freely and honestly through our work. The performing arts is the best way to get a real glimpse of the human experience, and I absolutely love it.



Harding University Department of Theatre Homecoming Show, Fall 2017. Annie Get Your Gun. "There's No Business Like Show Business."

On a less existential note, pretty much all of my closest friends are people I met through the performing arts. Performing together, whether everyone is onstage like in a choir or not like in theatre, is the best way I've found to make lasting connections.

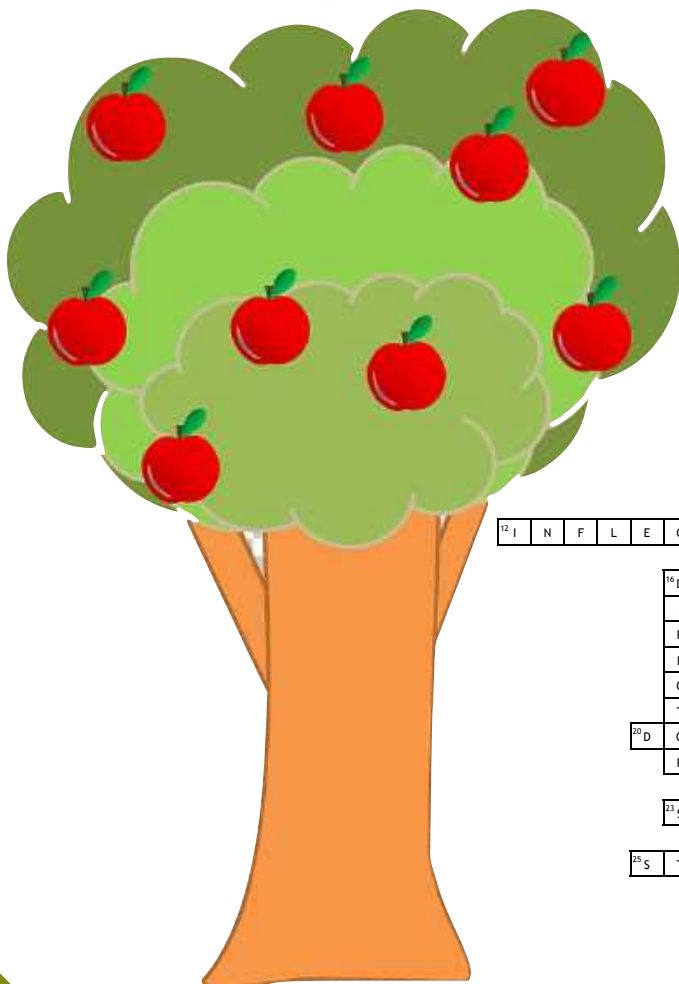
I also watch a lot of theatre (when it's available), TV shows, movies, scripted YouTube videos, and things of that nature in my free time, just like pretty much everyone else. I would be incredibly bored and very sad without them.

If you had to start all over, what job/career would you want to do?

I would be a teacher, and (my high school calculus teacher would get a kick out of this) I would probably teach math. I said I never would (which is why she would laugh), but even after the emotional distress Calc II bestowed upon me, I still love math. I haven't encountered anything that feels the way finishing a page long problem and getting the correct answer feels (I know... I'm a nerd). I could also be an English or a French teacher. All kinds of possibilities, and who knows. Life could still toss me over to that world someday, but hopefully my life will always include the performing arts.

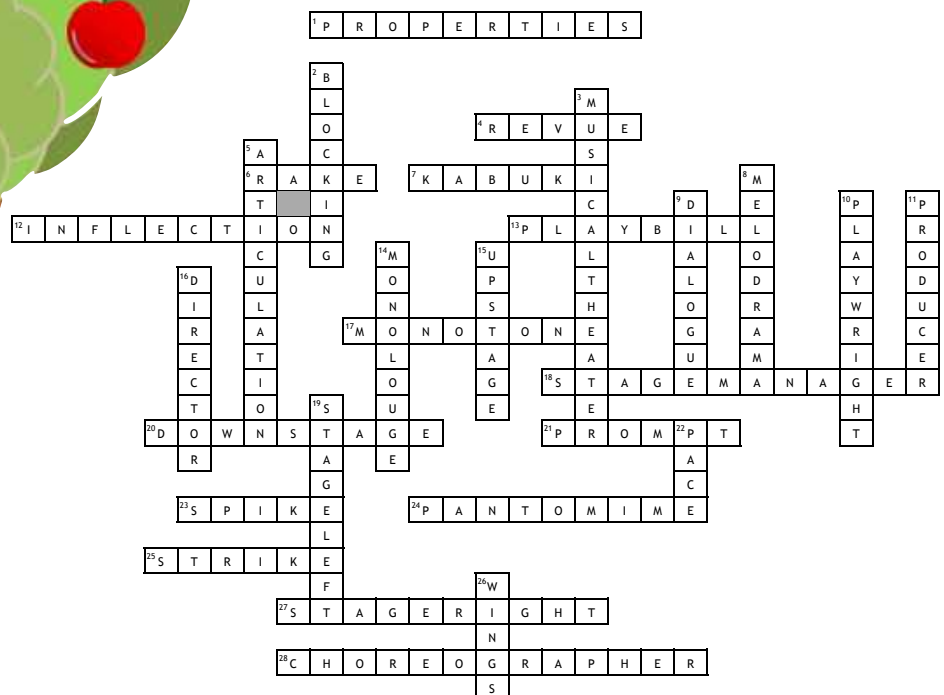


Tech rehearsal on Big Fish, Harding University Department of Theatre Homecoming Show Fall, 2018. Abby (assistant stage manager) watching from the side of the stage while the crew worked scene shifts.



STAGE TERMS

Answer key from the **Stage Terms** crossword puzzle that was in the May 2020 issue of *The Backstage Connection*





BEANIE FELDSTEIN is living every theater geek's dream. From Broadway to the movies, working beside legendary stars, making appearances on talk shows and walking red carpets on a regular basis. You may have laughed at her in *Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising* or taken a ride on the emotional roller coasters of *Lady Bird* and *Booksmart* (which earned her a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Comedy or Musical). She strutted the stage as Minnie Fay, in the Bette Midler Broadway revival of *Hello, Dolly*, and dabbled in episodic television with *Grey's Anatomy* and *What We Do in the Shadows* (just to name a couple). She leaps from outrageous comedy to painful pathos, her face a beguiling landscape of emotion. The girl does it all. The future is packed with projects.

Better check Wikipedia for the extended list of credits! Her latest, *How to Build a Girl*, is a coming-of-age comedy released stateside and on demand in May.

Beanie attended the Harvard-Westlake School in California and graduated from Wesleyan University. She came to visit Stagedoor several times in the past few years. Her honest energy is an inspiration for us all. She IS living the dream, and took time to share some of that magic with us!

Stagedoor Manor Resume:

- 2005 – *Once on This Island*
- 2006 – *Seussical*
- 2007 – *Jesus Christ Superstar*
- 2008 – *The Producers*
- 2009 – *Cabaret, Urinetown*
- 2010 – *Thoroughly Modern Millie, Evita*
- 2011 – *Spring Awakening*



Beanie as Penelope Pennywise in 2009's Urinetown (Lt) and Little Old Lady in 2008's The Producers (Rt) at Stagedoor Manor.



Beanie Feldstein and Tyler Wiseman in the 2010 Dramafest production of Awkward, written by Charlotte Maltby.

Best and Worst Stagedoor Moments?

My best Stagedoor moment every year that I was in *Our Time Cabaret* (which, by the way, took me five years to get into... so if you're feeling down on yourself for not getting into something, please know you are not alone!) was always singing, "You There in the Back Row." I don't know why that song always guts me. Makes me so emotional!

My worst Stagedoor moment was that I broke my ankle in jazz class on the 2nd week of camp my very first summer and Cindy had to take me to the hospital! I did the whole rest of the session (and my first weeks of middle school) on crutches!

Star Spotlight concludes on following page

Which gets your blood going, the zany comedies or the dramatic roles?

For me it is all about the space between comedy and drama... that's life! I feel like every human has some sort of brilliant mix of the two inside of them. And I feel like every story should hold both within it. For example, I think one of the most emotional scenes I've ever been in was the fight between Molly and Amy in *Booksmart*, but obviously most would see that movie as a comedy. So, I believe it is the push and pull of them both that makes storytelling (and life!) interesting!

Was there a moment, amid all the glamour and magazine covers, that made you pause and say "wow"?

Are you KIDDING?! I've had that moment 1000 times! Working with Lisa Kudrow would definitely be one of them! Another one that is coming to mind right now would be one Sunday in the fall of 2017. I did the Sunday matinee of *Hello, Dolly!* alongside my heroes, and then I ran into my dressing room where I had to quickly change and get ready because *Lady Bird* was premiering at the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center. So I wiped the Minnie Fay pink eyeshadow off, ran uptown and found myself on stage with Greta, our magical director. It was one of the most surreal days of my life.

Stage or Film?

Not to be dramatic... haha... but this is truly one of the hardest questions in the world for me. Theater feels like my lifelong love, my home. But, film feels like my new love, this new discovery that is so, so beyond fulfilling. So, I'll never choose! I hope, if I am the luckiest girl in the world, I can continue to do both for the rest of my life.

Stagedoor pals...do they "keep it real"?

OF COURSE. My Stagedoor friends are still some of my closest and best friends in the world. The bond you create with people at Stagedoor, both with your fellow campers, but also counselors, directors, etc., is lifelong. I don't know where I'd be without them. UGH! Why am I so old...I want to go back to camp!

What's on the horizon?

Next up, I am playing Monica Lewinsky on FX's *American Crime Story: Impeachment*. I also will be the voice of Harriet in Apple's upcoming animated series of *Harriet the Spy!*

Beanie Bits:

Born Elizabeth Greer Feldstein, a childhood nickname "Elizabeanie" was adopted by her family and stuck forever. Often refers to herself as The Bean.

Yep, actor Jonah Hill is her brother.

She's featured in the Maroon Five video "Girls Like You"



Visiting Loch Sheldrake, the ultimate Stagedoor selfie with pal Ben Platt (Center) and alum Adam Quinn (Left).

Beanie is on the 2019 TIME MAGAZINE 100 NEXT list as one of the "World's Most Influential People"

Did "*Into the Woods*" playing Little Red, High School 10th grade, with bestie Ben Platt as the Baker.

Will co-star with Ben again in the film adaptation of "*Merrily We Roll Along*" slated to be shot over the course of 20 years.

2021 SESSIONS

Session 1
June 14 - July 4, 2021

Session 2
July 5 - July 25, 2021

Session 3
July 26 - August 14, 2021

A TOTAL THEATRE IMMERSION!

Click the Stagedoor Manor Logo
For More Info or email:

INFO2021@STAGEDOORMANOR.COM

ALL FUN AND GAMES

TEST YOUR THEATRE KNOWLEDGE

1) In *Les Miserables*, how many of the main characters are still alive in the end?

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

2) In *Phantom of the Opera*, what was the name of the diva that was terrorized by the Phantom?

- Carlotta
- Christine
- Meg
- Madame Giry

3) Who played the original Kim in *Miss Saigon*?

- Sarah Brighten
- Lea Salonga
- Veerle Castelyn
- Kaho Shimalda

4) In *Cats*, who was the Jellicle choice?

- Demeter
- Jemmima
- Grizabella
- Jellylorum

5) True or False - In *Follies*, all four main characters ended up staying with the person to whom they were married?

- True
- False

6) What is the full name of the title character in *Annie Get Your Gun*?

Answer: _____

7) Is there an actual plot in the shows *Fosse* and *Smokey Joe's Cafe*?

- Yes
- No

8) 17 dancers were auditioning for a forthcoming Broadway show in *A Chorus Line*. Of the 17, how many of them make the final cut?

- 5
- 8
- 13
- 15

9) Which musical holds the record for the longest running Broadway show?

- Cats
- Les Miserables
- A Chorus Line
- Phantom of the Opera

10) What famous actor was originally cast as George in the production of *Aspects of Love*, but dropped out?

- Tim Curry
- Roger Moore
- Hugh Jackman
- Burt Reynolds

11) In which musical will you find the characters; The Man, Swallow, Amos, Candy and Boone?

- Starlight Express
- Whistle Down the Wind
- Blood Brothers
- Priscilla Queen of the Desert

Last question...

12) Who has won the most Tony Awards... ever? *Bonus points if you know how many they have won.*

- Tommy Tune
- Stephen Sondheim
- Hal Prince
- Andrew Lloyd Weber

How many awards: _____

GHOST LIGHT WRAP UP



ALUMNI, STAFF, & CAMPER NEWS

See what some of our amazing Alumni, Staff & Campers are up to!

We know that many schools and current/upcoming productions have either been canceled, postponed or have moved online. With that in mind, we will continue to bring you any exciting updates that we receive. Please share with us what you've been up to.

Congratulations to alum Samantha Hahn on the release of her backstage book, "On the Roof: A look inside Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish."

Congratulations to Stagedoor Alums, Skylar Astin & Austin Winsberg! *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist* was a 2020 juried award winner.

A big congrats to alum Michael Ian Black on his newest book, "A Better Man!" Be sure to check it out.

A big shout out and congrats to Orson Hong, who had a prominent role and singing solo in the Netflix special, *John Mulaney & the Sack Lunch Bunch*. Orson was also a featured role on stage in *Medea* alongside Rose Byrne, Bobby Cannavale and Dylan Baker during its run this winter at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

A big congrats to Rachel Redleaf who plays Kelli in Miranda July's new film *Kajillionaire*.

HAVE EXCITING UPDATES?

Drop us an email at: sdmbackstageconnection@gmail.com and tell us what you're up to. Perhaps you may see your name in an issue of an upcoming Newsletter.

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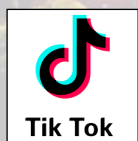
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