



UWG Theatre Company

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UWG Theatre Company Presents: Our 2019-2020 Rise Above Season

Written by Saani Parham

We start with the foot stomping musical, *The Gospel at Colonus*, which tells the story of Oedipus and his rise above the status of a common beggar to a hero who is finally accepted by his community. Next, we have *Abigail/ 1702*, where we rejoin Abigail Williams 10 years after her cruel doings in the Salem witch trials. Will she be able to rise above the mistakes of her past and conquer her demons? Following that, in the spring, is *Blood at the Root*, a story based on the Jena Six case of 2006. A group of black students are charged with attempted murder for a school fight after being provoked with nooses hanging from a tree on their campus.

It is up to the students to rise above the complicated and destructive history of race and how it has made them perceive each other. After that, we have our annual company devised production, *Episodes in Sexuality 2020*, where we will find out how this generation rises above issues involving sex and sexuality. And last but not least, there will be the Shakespearean comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing*. William Shakespeare brings us a tale of a battle of the sexes, featuring Beatrice and Benedick and how these star-crossed lovers rise above their shenanigans and rejections of love. This season will feature stories of Transformation, Atonement, Race,

Sexuality, and Star-crossed love and all throughout the year, you are invited to witness how these issues are overcome. Join us for *The Gospel at Colonus* by Lee Breuer and Bob Telson, *Abigail/1702* by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, *Blood at the Root* by Dominique Morisseau, our Company devised production of *Episodes in Sexuality 2020*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare. Come and rise above with the University of West Georgia Theatre Company!

What Do You Do With a BA (or BFA) In Theatre?

Written by Trenton Spears

As a theatre major, one of the questions I get asked most often is, “What do you even do with a theatre degree? It’s just acting, right? Couldn’t you do that without going to college and getting a degree?” These people are severely misinformed. First of all, a degree in theatre is just as important to job security as, say, a degree in computer science. Sure, it’s *possible* to get a job without a degree, but without one, there’s no real guarantee that you know what the heck you’re doing. Just like chemistry isn’t just mixing chemicals together; theatre is also a lot more complex. Acting isn’t just about memorizing lines and pretending to be someone else; it’s about digging deep into yourself and the characters you play to create a visceral response from

both yourself and your audience. Designing is so much more than just building a set or hanging some lights; it’s about telling the story and emotions of the play through the environment of the show. Theatre requires an immense ability to read a text and understand what it’s trying to say and how to help say it, and you can’t just naturally have that. Trust me, applying and auditioning with a theatre degree under your belt not only makes you a much more attractive prospect to directors, but also is pretty much essential to your success and competence. Secondly, a theatre degree can help you get so many more jobs than acting, or even just working in a theater. Experience in set design translates very well into carpentry, woodworking, and even architecture. Lighting design can get you jobs in installation and concert effects. Acting gives you people skills, time management skills, and the ability to speak clearly and concisely. Our brand-new BFA program allows students to specialize their studies in order to hone their chosen craft to a razor’s edge, making them even more of an asset to any potential employers. And of course, there’s the ever-popular film path, which opens up even more possibilities in movies and television. So to those who ask, “What can you do with a theatre degree”, I propose responding with, “What *can’t* you do?”

Exceptional Alumni

Written by Saani Parham

Terrance Mann said, "Movies will make you famous; Television will make you rich; but theatre will make you good." Since it's beginning, the University of West Georgia Theatre Company has upheld the high standard of theatre excellence, by developing artists with a profound knowledge of their craft. Our theatre company has produced many artists who have been fortunate enough to share their talents across many platforms throughout the nation, including Broadway! Candy McLellan is one of many exceptional graduates of our BA Theatre program. Candy works as an actor in the Atlanta area. Her work has been seen at the Aurora Theatre in *In the Heights*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Mamma Mia*, and *Men With Money*. She played Minnie in *An Octoroon* at Actors Express, and can currently be seen Siobhan in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. Eric Graise, who graduated in 2015, can currently be seen in the YouTube Red series, "Step Up: High Water" as series regular King. He's also a company member of Full Radius Dance. After graduating, Eric jumped into a year-long Acting and Directing Internship at Actors' Express in Atlanta, where he performed in *Sweeney Todd*. In December 2015, he performed a stage reading at The Public Theatre in New

York City. He also got the opportunity to visit the White House and speak about Americans with Disabilities in the Arts.

Gabrielle Benson is another one of our excellent alumni! Gabby made her Broadway debut as L'il Eve and a Shirelle in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* on April 13, 2018! Before moving to New York, Gabby worked in Tennessee where she performed at Dollywood for nine months, then she moved to Florida where she performed in shows at Disney World and LegoLand. Jared LeClaire, another alumnus, recently worked as the lead Camera and Lighting Server Programmer on *First Man*, starring Ryan Gosling. Monica Mora, another alumnus, has created her own marketing firm using experience gained from her time as a Marketing Student Assistant. And Jeremiah Davison returned to UWG for a time as a hired artist to sound design our production of *The Gospel at Colonus*. There are so many other extremely talented artists who make this company proud to call them alum. We hope to say the same for you some day!

Why the Theatre is Important

Written by Trenton Spears

Imagine that one day, every form of entertainment vanished. No TV, no movies, no games, not even any books to read. People would go absolutely insane. The arts are such a

crucial part of humanity that taking them away would lead to mass chaos and despair. Theatre, as simultaneously one of the most personal and most inclusive art forms, is no exception. Good plays and musicals make you look deep inside yourself and help you to rationalize what you find. They give you an outlet for all the things that frustrate you, sadden you, and even the things that make you happy. Aristotle called this feeling catharsis; and it is essential to maintaining a balanced psyche. Here at the University of West Georgia, we create spectacular, thought provoking shows dedicated to providing that catharsis, a way for people to release their tension, or grapple with their inner demons. In fact, this year's Rise Above season is all about characters that rise above the trials and struggles of their situations. Oedipus leaves behind the sorrows and fears of this world and rises above to the next. Abigail Williams redeems herself in the eyes of those she wronged and rises above the sins of her past. The students in *Blood at the Root* and the characters in *Episodes in Sexuality* rise above the prejudices and labels of society to come together in peace and kindness. Even Benedick and Beatrice rise above their petty squabbles and anti-romantic natures to forge a beautiful relationship. These characters rise above their troubles while inspiring us, the audience, to rise above the troubles in our daily lives. Because ultimately,

that's what theatre is: a way to look at a performance and, at the same time, to look at ourselves.

UWG Theatre Presents: The Brand-New B.F.A.

Written by Trenton Spears

Starting just this past semester, the University of West Georgia now offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in the concentrations of Acting and Design/Technology. This new option provides students with the ability to focus their education into their specific skillset. Students join the B.F.A. program on a temporary basis during freshman and sophomore years. At the end of their sophomore year, prospective B.F.A. students give a presentation in the form of an audition or a tech portfolio in order to continue in the B.F.A. program. We here at UWG are excited to give students a brand-new way to succeed in the theatre, and hope you'll join us in making shows that are daring, defiant, and dynamic!

This article was edited by Shelly Elman, Saani Parham, and Trenton Spears.

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