

## *A Word From The Editor*

*“In the end, we only regret the chances we didn't take and the decisions we waited to make.”*

*~Anonymous*

The summer months are fast approaching. Preparations are well underway to provide each and every camper and staff member for the 9 weeks of total theatre immersion an experience unlike any other. Our commitment in providing the most educational - as well as professional - environment for all those involved is an immense undertaking. One that each of us within the Stagedoor Family strives to make the most of.

Sometimes, it's about the chances and decisions that we take. Whether this be from the shows that we choose to produce, the new classes that we offer, or even the special guest artists that join us throughout the summer. Theatre is all about taking chances. It's the way we learn, grow, develop, attain knowledge, mature and find ourselves. Can it be scary at times? Of course. Does it always succeed? Not necessarily. But with each chance we take, it lends itself to growing as performers, directors, musical directors, technical staff, counselors and in general, people.

Each time we make a decision, audition for a show, build that set, cast the performers, or meet with a production team, we take a chance that is perhaps outside our primary comfort zone and will lead us in a direction that might not be the one we thought it would necessarily be. THAT'S what makes the performing arts so magical - the chances and risk-taking. It helps us in the continued development of who we are and what we can accomplish. It's the one thing you hear so many industry professionals mention. They took a chance!

This month we look at chance in different ways. We've got a wonderful variety of material in this issue of *The Backstage Connection*. Hopefully, it will inspire you as well to perhaps take that chance and find something you didn't know was there before.

*~ R. S.*

## **How To Involve More Kids In Your High School Musical** **(No, not through a bigger cast!)**

**By Ken Davenport**

It's common knowledge that the plays and musicals that are produced most often in the high school markets are the ones with the biggest casts. Why? The educators want to involve as many students as possible. And what sets us apart from sports is that musicals and plays have more flexibility with the # of players. (You can't add a chorus to a basketball team, but boy oh boy can you rack 'em and stack 'em in the chorus of *Anything Goes*.)

In fact, large musicals get a check in the "Pro" column when considering a show for investment because of how often they are performed over other more intimate, shows.

The more students involved, the better the show, the more tickets you sell (more students = more parents), and the more those students have an experience that will, without a doubt, change their lives. Because whether a student decides to pursue a career in the theater or decides to be a lawyer, I firmly believe that there is no endeavor in the world that teaches collaboration better than putting up a musical.

So, what if we could get more students involved?

And what if we could get more students involved who wouldn't usually think about getting involved with a show? Maybe these folks aren't the extroverted type that want to step on a stage and perform. And they're not the tech type either.

They're probably the type that thinks putting on a musical is just a hobby. **Because no one has told them any different.** But you and I know it's a business . . . just like any other. And that businesses need all sorts of talents to make a show a success.

See, all high school musicals have performers and stage managers and orchestras and light board operators and costume designers and soon.

But you know what they don't have?

**Article concludes on following page**



Producers.....General Managers.....Press Agents.....Advertising & Marketing Directors.....Casting Directors.

That's right . . . I'm proposing that every high school musical out there have an administrative team, set up in the same structure as a Broadway show.

Teachers would get a chance to get more students involved. And we, as an industry, would get a new training ground for the Producers, General Managers, Advertising and Marketing Directors, and Casting Directors of tomorrow.

Think about it . . . the students would work underneath the teachers, of course, but . . .

The **Producer** would be in charge of overseeing the production, of course, as well as fundraising. Yep, give him or her a goal of raising \$X and let them find a way to do it (car washes, bake sales, Kickstarter and more).

The **General Manager** would learn how to put a budget together for the show and keep everyone on a budget.

The **Press Agent** would try to get articles written in the newspapers, online, and even invite people like me to come to see it.

The **Advertising and Marketing Director** would get the word out to sell tickets, get a logo designed, manage the social media, and more.

The **Casting Directors** would schedule the auditions, run them, put out the offers and maybe even convince the high school quarterback that he'd make a great Teyve.

And each position could have a team of people underneath him or her.

See, before I started working on Broadway, I never knew that any of these positions existed....because these positions didn't exist on any of the shows I worked on coming up! But if they had, I might have found out what I wanted to do faster . . . and might have even have been better at it when I got started.

More students involved. And a stronger administrative future for Broadway. It's a win-win.

If you like this idea, I wonder if you could do me a favor, send this blog to any high school drama teachers that you know. Because it's a very easily actionable idea. You just ask for volunteers, sign 'em up (and based on the # of students who email me saying they want to produce, etc., you'll get plenty) and give them a structure of things to do.

In fact, I'll raise my hand and say that if there is any high school drama teacher that needs some help in creating a

job description and a list of duties, I'll write it up for you so you don't have to. Consider it done.

And maybe, just maybe, I can even get some Broadway folks to mentor some of these student administrators . . . As you can tell, I want this to work. Why am I so passionate about it? Because there are over 30,000 public and private high schools in this country. If only 20,000 did shows, and we add just 5 administration positions to each one, that's 100,000 more kids who get to experience the magic of putting on a show with their peers. And, we'd without a doubt, kickstart a few careers of the future business leaders of Broadway. Send it, tweet it, insta-it or whatever, but please get this blog to a teacher you know.

\* Ken Davenport is a Tony Award-winning Broadway producer whose credits include *Once On This Island* (Tony Award), *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Groundhog Day* (Tony nomination), Deaf West Theatre's *Spring Awakening* (Tony nomination), *Allegiance*, *It's Only a Play*, *Macbeth* starring Alan Cumming, *Godspell*, *Kinky Boots* (Broadway – Tony Award, National Tour, Toronto and West End), *The Visit* (Tony nomination), *Mothers and Sons* (Tony nomination), *The Bridges of Madison County*, *Chinglish*, *Oleanna* starring Bill Pullman and Julia Stiles, *Speed-the-Plow*, Will Ferrell's *You're Welcome America*, *Blithe Spirit* starring Angela Lansbury (Broadway, West End and tour), and *13*, as well as *Daddy Long Legs*, *That Bachelorette Show* (Creator), *Altar Boyz* (Co-Conceiver), *My First Time* (Author), *The Awesome 80s Prom* (Creator), and *Miss Abigail's Guide to Dating, Mating, & Marriage* (Author) Off-Broadway. Ken's productions have been produced internationally in over 25 countries around the world. In addition to his own work, Ken was recently named the Executive Producer of North America for Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Group. His blog, [TheProducersPerspective.com](http://TheProducersPerspective.com), has been featured in *Vanity Fair*, *New York Magazine*, *The Gothamist* and more. He has written articles for *Forbes*, *Mashable*, and many others. Ken's unique production and marketing style has garnered him international attention, including two front page articles in the *NY Times* and features on MSNBC, Rock Center, Fox News, BBC, and his favorite, a mention in Jay Leno's monologue on "The Tonight Show."



# CURTAIN RISING



*Jamie Mablin will celebrate 20 years with Stagedoor Manor this summer - 11 of those as the Head of Music. This month we catch up with him about how he almost quit piano lessons, his love of Bon Jovi to Leonard Bernstein, the first professional gig he landed and some fantastic advice for those starting their music directing career.*

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

I grew up in North West London. I thought I grew up in a city until I moved to NYC as an adult and realized I had grown up in the suburbs! That was a culture shock! The school system is slightly different in the UK to the US. Up to 16 years old I went to a couple of small private schools (as in the entire school had about 150 students in it). At 16 I went to a sixth form college. I then went to Middlesex University to study Performing Arts majoring in music, with a focus on composition and orchestration. I then went to Mountview Theatre School to get my Post-Grad.

## **Growing up, was music something that played a big part in your childhood? Or was it something you eventually grew into enjoying?**

I started piano lessons at around five years old. At around fifteen I almost quit as I wasn't enjoying it anymore. That's when my parents got me a jazz piano teacher and it changed my life. He taught me the basics of jazz of course, but mostly I would ask him questions about anything I could think of musically and we would work through it: From writing arrangements, to improvising to playing show tunes. I think most people in this profession will tell you that they had a teacher in their life that did this for them and lit the fuse. As far as listening to music, I was a metal head! Bon Jovi, Guns n' Roses etc. Then I discovered musical theatre. And suddenly my playlists became Bon Jovi, Guns n' Roses, Phantom of the Opera and Jesus Christ Superstar! It explains why even today I am always drawn to rock musicals.



## **Who are some of your biggest influences or was there someone specific in the past that inspired you?**

Leonard Bernstein has been a big inspiration to me. I became slightly obsessed with *West Side Story* as a teenager, and it led to a fascination in Bernstein's life and career. There have not been that many true geniuses in this world, but he was one of them. From a practical standpoint, the head of Musical Theatre at Mountview Theatre school when I attended was an amazing man called Paul Sabey. He was terrifying, and encouraging and quite brilliant to be in a room with. I credit him as the reason I do what I do. Even though he was training me as a performer, he shaped the music director I am today.

*Interview continued on following page*



**Can you share with our readers what your first professional job was and how it affected your career path?**

When I came out of Mountview I got what turned out to be the perfect job for me. It was for a show called *Newsrevue* which is the longest running Satire Comedy show in the world (it's been running weekly since 1979). It performs in a theatre above a pub in London. There were four performers and me at the piano. The actors were all comedians and great at doing impressions. About 80% of the show was new each week to keep up to date with what was in the news. It had a writing team of around 20 people on the show constantly writing new material. So whenever we weren't performing we were in rehearsals for the following week. My job was to come up with and play transition music between sketches, and then play for the songs, of which there were five or six generally. That and I got to be involved in a few of the sketches. So I got to act and MD in my first professional job out of college. It was after doing that that I decided I enjoyed music directing more, and to make the switch. And I have never looked back. The thought now of performing as an actor terrifies me! For me I made the decision that if I was going to be a music director, then that is what I was going to do and only that.

**You've been at Stagedoor Manor for 20 years. What it is about Stagedoor that keeps bringing you back each year.**

The ciabatta. 🤪

**What advice would you give to someone just starting out in their career and hoping to make it as a music director?**

I am talking here about music directors who are also pianists, as most are. My best advice is to try and get involved with as many things as possible to get experience. Qualifications are great, but in our field, experience is the most important thing. Play constantly. Sight read constantly. Try and keep up to

date with new material. And I know it is a cliché, but it really is who you know. So, network. And what is mentioned a little less is it is who the people that you know, know! Which is why it is important to try and get on with everyone. It's a small industry! You may well get a call out the blue as well, but only if you buy a ticket to the lottery. My first big job actually came from exactly that. I'd sent my resume off to as many production companies as I could find, and got a call asking me to come in and sub a keyboard part on a large tour for a couple of performances. After that, I was offered my first tour.

**What's the most interesting thing about you that we wouldn't learn from your resume alone?**

I am a huge soccer fan. Grew up in a family of ardent Tottenham Hotspur fans so I never really had an option not to be! I was a season ticket holder before I moved to the States, and even though I now only get to go to games when I am visiting my family in the UK, I do get to watch them all on TV over here. Apparently I am very loud when I watch the games!



**Ten years ago, where did you see yourself now?**

The only thing I was sure of, was I would still be spending my summers at Stagedoor, if they still wanted me there! Stagedoor has been the one constant in my professional career. I have taken on more responsibility within the company over years, and I still look forward to arriving in Loch Sheldrake just as much today as I did my first year.

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

What I do now. Or a Scuba Diving Pizza Delivery Man.





Stagedoor Manor offers total theater immersion, plus all the fun of a great summer camp. It's the only performing arts program of its type in the world, with students from every state...and six continents!

## 2019 SESSIONS

### Session 1

June 17 - July 7, 2019

### Session 2

July 8 - July 28, 2019

### Session 3

July 29 - August 18, 2019

*Click the Stagedoor Manor Logo  
For More Info*



**STUDIOS  
HAPPENINGS!**

**WORKSHOP CORNER**



Stagedoor Manor Studios is thrilled to announce that we will be heading to the **Boston** area with 3 incredible Studio Workshops for the 2019-2020 season.

**We are currently in the final stages of solidifying all the important details and will be announcing which workshops, specific dates and locales in the upcoming month.**

**Keep an eye on our website as well as the May newsletter.**

**CLICK HERE FOR THE  
STUDIOS WEBSITE**



# STAGEDOOR MANOR HAPPENINGS!

As the summer draws even closer, the renovations on the costume shop and tech storage continue.

Check out some of the most recent pictures of the new building!





**Shaina Taub does it all!** Winner of the 2019 Kleban Prize, the Jonathan Larson Grant and the first female recipient of the ASCAP Foundation’s Lucille and Jack Yellen Award. Taub composed *and* starred in her musical adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* at the Public Theater’s Delacorte in Central Park, commissioned for their groundbreaking Public Works initiative. Taub starred in the West Coast premiere and New York re-mounting of hit production *Old Hats*, created by Bill Irwin and David Shiner and directed by fellow SDM alum Tina Landau. (Also featuring Taub’s original songs.) She earned a Lucille Lortel Award nomination for her portrayal of Princess Mary in the Kazino production of Dave Malloy’s *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812* directed by SDM alum Rachel Chavkin. Chavkin and Taub teamed up again for *Hadestown*. Taub’s work was featured in Lincoln Center’s American Songbook concert series and she made her Carnegie Hall debut performing *her* music with the New York Pops. *Just have to mention* also working on lyrics for the upcoming Broadway musical production of *The Devil Wears Prada* with composer Elton John. Her songs have been performed by Audra McDonald and Sutton Foster, she wrote the theme song for Julie Andrews’ Netflix series *Julie’s Greenroom*, performed by Sara Bareilles. She produces albums, performs regularly live as a singer, and even writes music for “Sesame Street.” Last year she co-wrote the opening number of the Tony Awards with Sara Bareilles and Josh Groban. AND this is just a taste! A *BUSY* girl!

During her leisure time, she spoke with us about her years at Stagedoor Manor.

**Stagedoor Manor years and favorite shows?**

**1998 to 2005.** Loved them all, but some favorites were *West Side Story* in the Elsie in '04 directed by Larry Nye and *Little Me* in the Playhouse in '02 directed by Michael Larsen (*Little Me* starred Erich Bergen)

**Your Stagedoor “Golden” moment?**

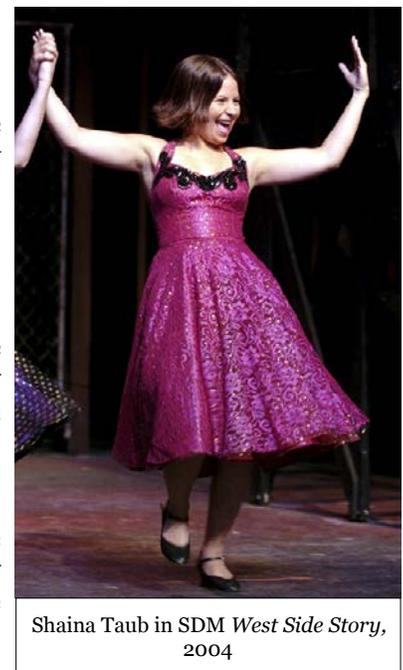
I’ll never forget my first session in *Our Time Cabaret*. I was nine years old. Standing by the piano, I was as tall as Michael Larsen was sitting at the bench. I just remember being in awe of his playing and so enthralled by learning all the harmonies and singing with the group. Looking back, that moment was really formative for me because basically all I’ve done in the twenty-one years since then is harmonize in large groups by the piano!

**Was doing Shakespeare in the Park like being in The Garden?**

I sadly never did a show in the Garden, but I always used to love that night where the whole camp watched the C show (do you still call it that?). And yes, it actually did feel like the Delacorte! Just that magical feeling of watching a play under the stars.

**What started you on adaptations?**

I was brought on to do musical Shakespeare adaptations by the Public Theater and now I’m working on the musical adaptation of *The Devil Wears Prada* film. It’s exciting to adapt something, because you’re able to have the existing bones of a strong story and then you can bring your own ideas and perspective to it. Especially with something as classic as Shakespeare, I was really inspired by being able to bring a contemporary female lens to those characters.



Shaina Taub in SDM *West Side Story*, 2004



### **Fame came early for you! Scariest collaboration or project?**

I wouldn't call it fame haha, but I have been really fortunate to make my living doing what I love so far, and that is a blessing beyond belief. In terms of scary, I can't deny I was intimidated at the prospect of writing songs with Elton John, one of my all time heroes, but as soon as I met him, he welcomed me so warmly and generously as a collaborator, that I forgot to be scared. I also remember being pretty scared when I was cast in my first Michael Larsen show at camp because he was such a legend there and that turned out pretty great too!

### **Performing or writing?**

I truly love them both and would never feel complete choosing just one. I love performing because it provides an opportunity to connect with a lot of people in real time, and I love the feeling of being part of an ensemble of musicians and actors. I love writing because it lets me create something that will hopefully live beyond me.

Shaina Taub in SDM *Jekyll and Hyde*, 2005

### **What Stagedoor lessons do you still carry with you?**

‘There are no small parts, only small actors’ never goes out of style. It’s true that keeping a positive attitude and being kind and generous to everyone you work with remains the most important thing in all of this. Learning to take ego out of the equation at such a young age has been a helpful reminder through the years. Also, I always think about how rigorous camp was - we were treated like real professionals by the staff and I’ve held on to that work ethic ever since. Also, I’ve always carried on my love of the obscure musicals Stagedoor loved to do - I think I was the only nine year old in Vermont wearing out my original cast albums of *Grand Hotel* and *Merrily We Roll Along* (And I still love it).

### **Shaina Taub sez:**

‘I’m a musician, I’m a songwriter, I’m a dramatist, so how can I use those tools to create something that hopefully provokes people into action but also provides an emotional catharsis?’

‘I’ve always been really loud, even before I had pitch or tone. I’ve always wanted to be heard.’

‘I believe everyone can sing. I believe in that school of thought that talent isn’t something that you have or have not...Music is something that everyone can own. I wanted to make melodies (for the show) that felt sing-able and felt accessible and melodic and without at all, in any way, being dumbed down or simplistic.’

‘I grew up as a great lover of musicals and coveted my cast albums and was that kind of person. Musical felt like this thing that just came fully formed from the North Pole. Like they were done. They were musicals with a capital M. The thought of process... I just couldn’t fathom it because I didn’t work on new works growing up. We just did *Pippin* and *West Side Story* and *Oklahoma* and *Annie*. I think when I realized that things were made, when I got to see the factory, when I came to New York, I was like, I want to be in the factory’.



## **Annette Bening, Bryan Cranston, Stephanie J. Block Among 2019 Drama League Award Nominees**

By Ryan McPhee  
April 17, 2019  
Original article on [playbill.com](http://playbill.com)

Winners will be announced at the 85th annual ceremony, set for May 17.

Annette Bening, Bryan Cranston, and Stephanie J. Block  
\* Image courtesy of and originally from [playbill.com](http://playbill.com)

**\*Click the picture to see the list of all nominees**

# GHOST LIGHT WRAP UP



## LOOKING AHEAD

IN OUR UPCOMING NEWSLETTERS

Summer 2019 is almost here

Alumni Updates

A New Star Spotlight

Costume Shop Progress

And more!!!

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## ALUMNI NEWS

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

Congratulations to Stagedoor Alum, Christian Frost, for his involvement in the education program, Shakespeare Live of The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey.

Congratulations to Stagedoor camper, Alex Katz, who will be performing in Improv Jam II at Newton North High School in Newton, MA.

Congratulations to Stagedoor camper, Brooke Radosevich, cast as Emily Webb in *Our Town*.

Congratulations to Stagedoor Alum, Kennedy Lucas, cast as Christine in the world premiere production of *Hidden Heroes: the Black Women of NASA* at Stages Theatre Company.

Congratulations to Stagedoor alum, Kate Coffelt, cast as Demeter in the U of TN Chattanooga production of *Cats*.

## HAVE EXCITING UPDATES?

Drop us an email at:

[sdmbackstageconnection@gmail.com](mailto:sdmbackstageconnection@gmail.com) and tell us what you're up to. Perhaps you may see your name in an issue of an upcoming Newsletter.



Is there something you'd like to read about in our upcoming issues of *The Backstage Connection*? Inspirational or arts related articles? Specific performing arts topics? Or just general feedback? We want to hear from you. Drop us an email and let us know. We're always looking for exciting topics to cover.

Email us at:

[sdmbackstageconnection@gmail.com](mailto:sdmbackstageconnection@gmail.com)

## THE BACKSTAGE CONNECTION

**Cindy Samuelson**  
Stagedoor Manor  
Camp Owner

**Maggie Samen**  
Stagedoor Manor Studios  
Program Manager/Owner

**Rob Scharlow**  
Newsletter Layout & Design  
Editor

**Konnie Kittrell**  
Alumni Communications  
Contributing Writer  
Consultant

Stagedoor Manor ~ [www.stagedoormanor.com](http://www.stagedoormanor.com) ~ [info2019@stagedoormanor.com](mailto:info2019@stagedoormanor.com)  
15 Stagedoor Drive, Loch Sheldrake, NY 12759 ~ 845-434-4290

Stagedoor Manor Studios ~ [www.stagedoormanorstudios.com](http://www.stagedoormanorstudios.com) ~  
[info@stagedoormanorstudios.com](mailto:info@stagedoormanorstudios.com) ~ 845-434-4290 (Summer) ~ 781-863-5335 (Winter)