



A Word From The Editor

Try new things, meet new people, and look beyond what's right in front of you. Those are the things to understanding this amazing world we live in."

~ Andrew Zimmern

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2020 and the adventures that lie ahead for each and every one of you.

We can never be sure where the path ahead of us will lead as we begin a brand new year. What will these upcoming months bring in terms of personal growth and discovery? What prospects will come our way? Who will we meet, and how will they impact our lives? What resolutions do we hope to

achieve and what new things do we hope to try?

For all of us at the Stagedoor Manor Family, our new year is already in full swing. We began 2020 with a very successful second Stagedoor Manor Studios weekend workshop (which is recapped in this issue of *The Backstage Connection*). Our staffing interviews have already begun taking place to find some remarkable people to help create another magical 9 weeks over the summer. Our staffing team has already journeyed to London and New York and will continue meeting people when they head to the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. They will finish off at the United States Institute for Theatre Technology conference in Houston.

It's always amazing how many talented individuals our staffing team gets to interact with over the next few months. Industry professionals that are eager to share their drive, talents and passion for the arts with all those who attend Stagedoor during the summer.

In the upcoming months, as we countdown to Session 1, we'll share with our readers updates and exciting news regarding the preparation for what is sure to be another exceptional summer.

For those of you that are perhaps new to Stagedoor or are reading this newsletter for the very first time, we welcome you. Wishing you all a spectacular 2020!!

~ R.S.

PLAYWRIGHTS & MASTER ACTING WORKSHOP CONCLUDES STUDIO SEASON

It was 48 hours of non-stop writing and acting as Stagedoor Manor Studios concluded their season at the Boston Center for the Arts from January 10 - 12, 2020 for the 3rd Annual Playwrights and Master Acting Workshop.

The weekend brought the return of Dramaturg, Eric Nightengale, to help students find their voices and get the words to translate as powerfully on the page as possible.

Jen Curfman - who's been part of the Studios staff prior to this as well - took the lead as the Master Acting Intensive Instructor. Offering students an immersive experience in self discovery and character development. With these two industry professionals at the helm, students were challenged and offered remarkable insight into the world of the playwright



Staff & Students at Stagedoor Manor Studios Playwrights & Master Acting Workshop in Boston.

process and the overall technique that actors explore when being presented with brand new pieces of work.

This year, the Playwrights Workshop offered a slightly different structure to the weekend. This time around, the Playwrights Workshop would give each student the opportunity to be involved in more than just one specific script as well as learning the

methodology and performance style of a theatrical staged reading. Not only did this offer more realization and discovery of character work, but it gave our students guidance in how different writers present their works in different manners and formats.

Article concludes on following page

By the time Sunday evening rolled around, actors and writers alike offered their family and friends a look into the new works. What began as an introduction to the weekend and a get-to-know-you session on Friday night, soon became 3 days of brainstorming, writing, character exploration, rewrites, minimal staging and an overwhelming passion for learning.



Our 5 writers did an amazing job with their new works, and the actors for the weekend truly stepped up and brought life to characters who were created in such a short amount of time. The works presented over the weekend were: *Sweat, Blood, and Tears* by Stephanie Groves; *The Milkshakes* by Brigid Arturi; *And Send* by Marlie J. Kass; *Forever Free* by Asha Body; *Backstage* by Ben Berman.

A huge 'thank you' to all of our fantastic students that brought such an energy, life and excitement to the weekend. A big round of applause to the dedicated Studios staff that made the weekend such a success; Eric Nightengale, Jen Curfman, Maggie Samen, Hayley Samen and Sarah Heidrick.

We can't wait to see what our next season of Stagedoor Manor Studios brings! Until then, thanks for another great year of workshops!



CURTAIN RISING



You can call him the "jack" of all trades. This month, Stagedoor Manor stage manager/counselor, Jack Tidball joins us to talk about his journey in the numerous areas of theatre; from set designing and building, stage managing, scenic carpentry, working at the Royal Opera House to his Grandad being a big influence in his life.

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

Well, I grew up in a town called Twickenham, in South West London, England. I live with my Mum who works in finance at a Primary school. My little brother, Max, (who is irritatingly taller than me) lives in another part of London with his partner. He works in a photography studio near where they now live. The three of us moved around a lot when I was growing up but always within the same area of London.

When I was younger I went to Teddington Secondary School where I got my GCSE's. My main focuses, other than the main subjects, were Drama, Media, ICT and Design & Technology. I didn't know I'd end up working in theaters but they all gave me skills I'd later use. When I left school I went to Richmond upon Thames College where I studied Media (Film And TV) for 2 years. After that I tried university but traditional education has never been the best way for me to learn things so I went into work and learned that way.

When did you first discover that the arts were something that you wanted to be part of and why?

I don't know exactly when I first decided I wanted to work in the performing arts industry. I've loved drama for as long as I can remember, it was always my favorite subject at school. I studied drama in school as far as my GCSE's.

When I was 16, I joined a drama group called YAT (Youth Action Theatre) as an actor. They put on 4 or 5 shows a year. It was a volunteer run youth group and my time there was some of the best of my life. I stayed there as an actor for 8 years, acting in almost every show they did in that time. With all



of the shows they produce, the cast and other young people wanting to get involved are encouraged to help with the get in, set build and crew the shows. As my Grandad had taught me carpentry (being a carpenter all his life), I started to learn how to apply these skills to a set build. I learned a lot of new skills and new ways of doing things and after 2 years I began designing my own sets and running builds. I wanted to expand my skillset and was loving the backstage side of things, so I started to work as an Assistant Stage Manager on shows, then moved up to Stage Manager. I still go back as a Stage Manager, Set Designer and Scenic Carpenter to work on their shows.

Since there, I've moved onto working as a Casual Theatre Technician in several theaters across London as well as the Royal Opera House working mainly for Stage or Lighting. This has allowed me to be flexible about working around shows where I'm working for the show as the Stage Manager rather than the theatre. For the past couple of months I've been working as a Lighting Board Operator and Follow Spot Operator for Theatre Royal, Haymarket in the West End. Each new place I've worked has offered me new challenges and new opportunities to learn and develop skills.

Interview continues on following page

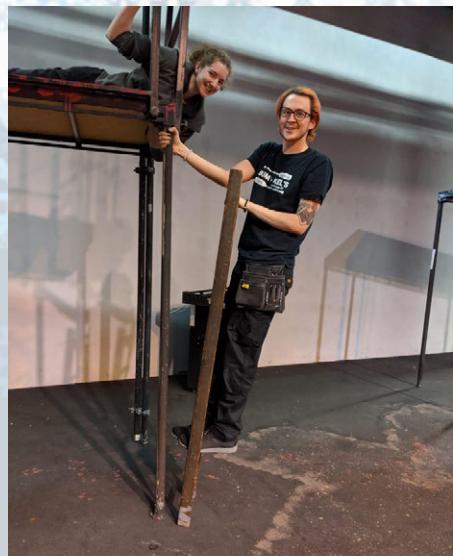
Who are some of your biggest influences, or was there someone specific in the past that inspired you?

My main influences are the people who have trained me in one way or another. In Stage Management it would be Jenna Powell, one of my stage managers at YAT. She first took me on as an Assistant Stage Manager, taught me what I needed to know but let me learn the rest as I went along, supporting me as I did. She's fantastic at what she does. I'm immensely grateful for all her help and guidance she's offered me through the years.

My other big influence is my Grandad. He taught me carpentry as I grew up, as that was the trade he had worked in. He encouraged me to keep those skills and I went and transferred them to set design and construction. I think of him whenever I do.

You've worked (and continue to work) as a Stage Manager. Can you tell our readers what the biggest challenge is that you've come across in that role.

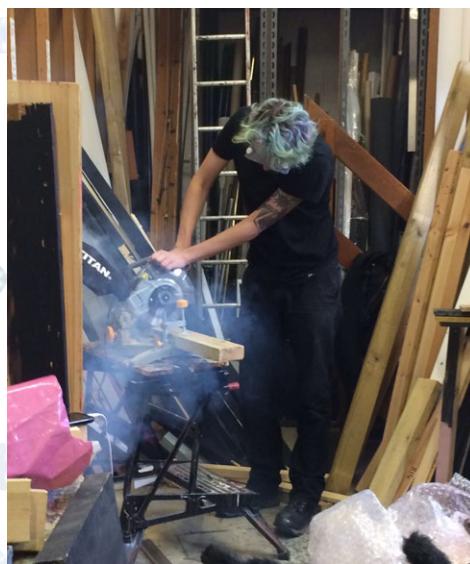
One of the biggest challenges I've faced in the past is a show I worked on about a year ago. I was working for someone who was producing a show she'd written herself but hired a Director to direct the actors and



bring form to the play. As we went along, they both wanted creative control but they had different visions on how things should be done. I wanted to make sure the writer's vision was respected but still allowing the director to do her job and shape the show into her interpretation of it. All this while keeping things within the budget and what was physically possible. It was a lot of things to juggle. It's always difficult, especially when working with multiple departments, to make sure that everyone is on the same page to put together something that works and all lines up. In the end it resulted in a very good show but it was a lot of work to get it to that place.

You've been involved in numerous facets of the performing arts (i.e.: stage managing, lighting, set construction, stage crew, etc.). Do you find your passion is reflected in one area more than another?

If I had to pick one area then it would always be Stage Management. I really love watching the show grow from beginning to end. The Director giving their direction but also the Actors making the roles their own. I enjoy the organization and problem-solving aspects of stage management. I've worked in most areas of theatre (and dabbled with acting in my younger days) and I think it's given me an appreciation and understanding of what each department requires and what they are and aren't able



to do. I know what should take priority and who the person to go to in order to fix a problem is. I just seem to get how things need to work and how to make it happen. Also, it really is the best job in the world for anyone that loves a good spreadsheet.

With all the different aspects of the arts you've been involved with, what is your favorite part of the rehearsal process?

I think it has to be tech/dress week. It's mad and crazy and busy but it's the point of the process where you can watch everything come together. All the different departments bringing everything that has only been seen as designs up to this point. Everyone working with each other and around each other, last minute finding of props, actors learning that there are actually stairs there now. It feels like its constantly moving but everything's taking shape.

You'll be returning again this summer to Stagedoor Manor as a Stage Manager & Counselor. What do you find is the most rewarding aspect of being a counselor during the summer?

Always watching my camper's shows at the end of a session. It's wonderful watching them grow and seeing their shows develop through the weeks and seeing everything that they've worked so hard for. I take the chance to see as many performances as I'm able across show weekend (when not working on my own). It always shows on their faces at the curtain call that they enjoy what they do. I'm a very proud counselor of all the campers I've had under my care and I can't wait to see what they still have to come, at Stagedoor and beyond!

Interview concludes on following page

What are some key pieces of advice you would offer to those wanting to pursue a career in the arts?

Learning doesn't just happen at school and you're never too old to learn new things. Take chances to learn new skills. Ask people to show you and ask questions about how things work. Especially working backstage, asking to shadow someone in their role can teach you so much. It's always useful to have an understanding about different areas of theatre, even if you might not be working there.

Do what you love. It's very easy to just do a job day after day but you need to care about what you're doing. I love producing shows and helping them come together. Even on stress filled days where so much is going on, I love what I do and the industry I'm working in.



It's not always going to be easy to find work, but working hard and going in with a good attitude when you find the work is recognized and will pay off. There may be times where it's tough to find jobs but don't give up. Keep putting your all into every show.

Finally, look after yourself. This is something I have to keep reminding myself to do. It's so easy to throw yourself into a show, especially towards the end when you've already put so much into it already, but make sure you eat and drink and rest properly.

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

I'm not really sure. I can't really picture myself working anywhere else than I am right now. I guess if I had to pick something I'd like to take my carpentry further. I've always enjoyed making things and have become adept at working with wood. Outside of set building, I do small detailed things. I'd love to learn to do something bigger. My Grandad fitted out shops and banks and made rocking horses, my Uncle followed in his footsteps and built boats. I'd really like to build something to that sort of scale.





STUDIOS HAPPENINGS

WORKSHOP CORNER



A Super Thank You to all our students and staff who made the 2019-2020 Stagedoor Manor Studios Workshop weekends such an awesome success!

We look forward to announcing the 2020-2021 Workshop lineup in the upcoming months.

Be sure to check out our website and *The Backstage Connection* for the announcement.

**CLICK HERE FOR THE
STUDIOS WEBSITE**



2020 SESSIONS

Session 1

June 15 - July 5, 2020

Session 2

July 6 - July 26, 2020

Session 3

July 27 - August 16, 2020

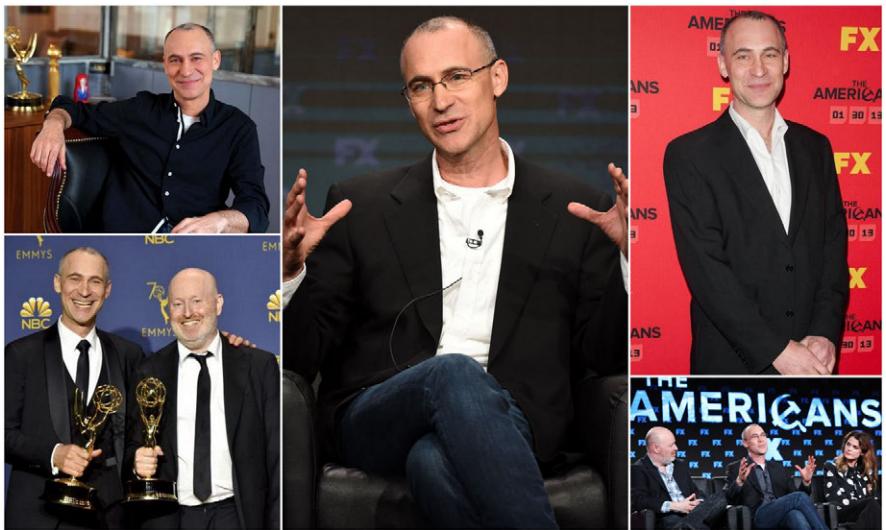
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STAR SPOTLIGHT

Joel Fields



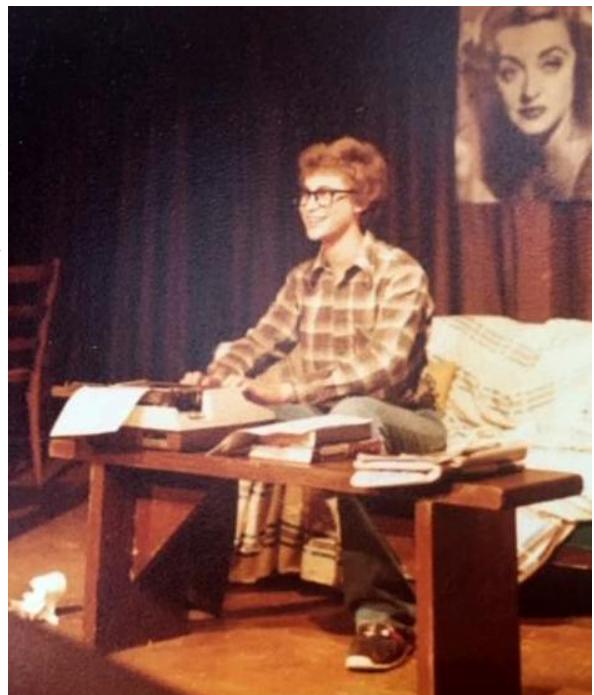
JOEL FIELDS. A writer and executive producer whose work on FX's critically acclaimed series *The Americans* earned him an Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series, a PGA Award for Outstanding Producer of Episodic TV, and a WGA Award for Best Dramatic Series. *The Americans* has also been honored with a Golden Globe Award, a Critics' Choice Award, two Peabody Awards, and numerous AFI Awards, TCA Awards, and Emmy nominations.

Most recently, he wrote and executive produced FX's limited series *Fosse/Verdon*, for which he received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Writing for a Limited Series. *Fosse/Verdon* also earned an AFI Award for TV Program of the Year, as well as Emmy, Golden Globe, and Critics' Choice nominations for Best Limited Series, a PGA nomination for Outstanding Producer of a Limited Series, and a WGA nomination for Long Form Adapted Series.

Joel previously served as a writer/executive producer on *Rizzoli & Isles*, *Ugly Betty*, and *Dirt*. Other credits include Steven Bochco's *Raising the Bar*, *Commander in Chief* and *Over There*. Plays include *How I Fell in Love* (Williamstown Theatre Festival, Abingdon Theater Company) and a new book for Cole Porter's *Can-Can*, co-written with director David Lee (Paper Mill Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse).

Joel attended Pitzer College in Claremont, California — where he first became acquainted with his future boss, FX's John Landgraf, who gave him his campus tour — but spent semesters at Oxford and Harvard, studying literature, theater and philosophy. Before that, he came to Stagedoor Manor to study...what else?...MAGIC!

What years were you at Stagedoor and what shows did you do?



I was there '78 and '79... Jon Cryer was there as was Mary Stuart Masterson and Amalia Moutoussi and Mark Saks and David Quinn...

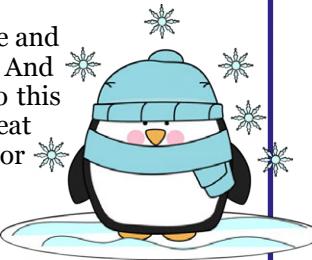
Sam "Zovello" Wishner was teaching magic, the first year I was there for sure. Fred Melamed was there. Michael Larson was lifting us up with his spirit and Jack Romano was inspiring and transforming us all. Truly, I can't imagine I'd be where I am today, doing what I'm doing, if it wasn't for Jack Romano telling me that I could make a life sharing stories. Some stage production highlights for me were *Story Theater*, *Babes in Arms* (as Valentine White, opposite Mary Stuart Masterson). *Tonight We Improvise* (as The Director) *Hello Dolly!* (a dancing waiter, I believe... there are no small parts — only small actors!). *Cabaret* (as Ernst Ludwig) and *Play It Again, Sam* (as Allan Felix).

Favorites?

Tonight We Improvise. Because, really, every teen-actor should do full-on Pirandello.

Babes In Arms. Because it was about US, the theater kids. Because I had never sung on stage before and Michael Larsen told me I could do it even though I cried during rehearsals and then I DID IT. And because... Mary Stuart Masterson, who was amazing then, is amazing still, and remains a friend to this day. Years later was the star of the first television series on which I was show-runner and it was great to be working with a Stagedoor friend. It's always special to work with members of the Stagedoor community, but especially the ones you know from way back when!

Star Spotlight concludes on following page





The FX "Fosse/Verdon" company: Sam Rockwell, Joel Fields, Thomas Kail, Steven Levenson, Nicole Fosse and Michelle Williams.

Oh, and also *Hello, Dolly!*. Because I was a chorus dancer and I can't dance and I danced with a tray and didn't trip and fall!

What brought you to Stagedoor Manor?

When I was 12, my parents had an idea that the family should read plays aloud together, and – because I love to write — once we started reading plays, I naturally started writing plays. I didn't share them with anyone (except my dad) and I had no idea that writing plays meant that I loved theater or even that "theater" was a thing out there to love. I was a kid. What I knew was that I loved magic. I performed a lot and wrote all of the "patter," the stories that comprised my act. Then, at 13 or 14, I was flipping through the back of the New York Times Sunday Magazine and saw an advertisement for a place called Stagedoor Manor: the ad featured the tragedy and comedy masks, a chance to spend the summer learning about acting and theater and musicals and — magic. A summer camp that offers a focus on magic? This is for me, I thought. I wasn't a "summer camp kid," but I don't recall much of a discussion with my parents. Mom and Dad were unquestioning supporters of their kids' passions, and they just said yes.

In addition to deep appreciation for that "yes," I have to give a special shout-out to my mother who went into her basement and dug around to find some of the old Stagedoor photos. When she sent them along, she wrote, "I remember the day clearly - the drive there, the pleasure and pride sharing your passion and seeing you enjoying what you were doing." I have a sense that a lot of Stagedoor parents felt the same way...

You went for magic? And ended up on stage?

Yes... I came to Stagedoor Manor for the magic. Sam "Zovello" Wishner welcomed me warmly to his little class. But, more importantly, the moment I arrived Jack Romano took me aside and told me that I would also be auditioning for the plays and that I would be taking acting class and movement class and... well, all the rest of the classes. I did the general audition and immediately found myself in rehearsals for "Story Theatre" in The Barn.

Before I knew it, I was part of a community of young players, learning how to access our emotions and harness them for drama. By the end of the summer Jack was

telling me, as he told all of us, that – if we worked hard and were committed – we could make a life as storytellers.

Last time you had that "Magic" zing?

I did *Cabaret* at Stagedoor (Jack Romano directing, Jeremy Halpern in the lead, I played the Nazi Ernst Ludwig). A highlight of making *Fosse/Verdon* was walking downstairs from our production office onto the stages and seeing the Kit Kat Klub perfectly recreated and then seeing Kelli Barrett's brilliant rendition of "Mein Heir." Magic.

What Stagedoor voices do you hear in your ear, even today?

My fellow campers taught me the value of openness and trust in friendship, they showed by example that one can find joy in the process and that a respectful family of collaborators makes for artists who feel safe and *that* leads to the best creative work. Fred Melamed taught me to relax and just breathe and be... and that if I could find a still place inside myself, I could find truth — and that truth is pretty darn important, in art and in life. From Michael Larsen I learned to sing with joy and not be self-conscious and to be proud of who I am and find my best way to share it openly, shoulders back, full-out. And from Jack Romano I learned about super-objectives and deep character needs, about finding the essential dramatic focus of a story and scene, and that the most important thing is to LISTEN, on stage and off.



On set at "The Americans" with Joel Fields.

Would I have found theater without Stagedoor Manor? Would I have become a writer and producer? Would I have made a life telling dramatic stories? Maybe it was all meant to be... but it's hard to imagine that any of it would have been the same without Jack Romano and Michael Larsen and my Stagedoor friends and the community we had together. And, most of all, being told at that delicate age that what I did mattered, that art mattered, that if I took myself seriously others would take me seriously.

Final words:

What does it say about the power of Stagedoor that being in this newsletter feels as exciting to me as any piece of press I've done? **STAGEDOOR FOREVER!**

HOST LIGHT WRAP UP

ALUMNI, STAFF, & CAMPER NEWS

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

Congratulations to Stagedoor Manor camper, Zelda Kosofsky, cast as Wednesday in the Rhinebeck High School production of *The Addams Family* in Rhinebeck, NY.



Congratulations to Stagedoor Manor camper, Lili Tarnopol, cast as Rosie in the Farmington Hills Youth production of *Mamma Mia* in Farmington Hills, MI.

Congratulations to Stagedoor Manor Alum, Kent Overshown, who is joining the Jumamosi National Tour of *Book of Mormon*.

Congratulations to Stagedoor Manor camper, Krithi Sundar, who performed as Jovie in Starting Arts' Dream Team 2 production of *Elf* this holiday season.



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STAGEDOOR MANOR

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Congratulations to Stagedoor Manor camper, Rachel Redleaf, who appears as Mama Cass in Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (nominated for 10 Academy Awards). Photo: Rachel (rt.) next to Margo Robbie (ctr.). Rachel also appears as Kelli Fain in Miranda July's *Kajillionaire* which premiered at Sundance.

Congratulations to Stagedoor Manor camper, Jayden Krouse, cast as Matron Mama Morton in *Chicago* at Class Act, NY.



HAVE EXCITING UPDATES?

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

Drop us an email if you have ideas or thoughts for things you'd like to see in future issues of the newsletter.

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