

Performing Like the Whole World's a Stage

Grace Garrigan

Senior actress Grace Garrigan always commits fully to the characters she plays.

"I threw my body into a trash can (during that show)," she said regarding her favorite role. She was playing Mae Peterson in the Chanticleer Community Theatre's production of *Bye Bye Birdie!* in the fall of her sophomore year.

"I could do anything with that role," she said. "I was in a horrible wig, I had old-people make-up on, I had the most grotesque grandma jewelry that would just randomly fall off and go into the audience sometimes... I even got a minor concussion during the run of that show, and I said that it added to the character."

While Garrigan reflects on this as her favorite role, it was not her first. She got her first taste of performing at Catholic Youth Camp, "telling really bad knock-knock jokes in the talent show," and at Saint Peter's CYO showcase where she played a flower girl in a wedding murder mystery.

"I really enjoyed making people laugh..., interacting with [them], and bringing them joy."

Ever since that moment that inspired her to test the waters of performing arts, Garrigan has flourished.

"It's my creative outlet to the world," she said.

Garrigan has been involved in school theater productions since middle school in shows like *Cinderella*, *Brigadoon*, *The Bold, the Young, and The Murdered*, and many others. She has performed at the Chanticleer Community Theater in *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Elf: The Musical*, *Bye Bye Birdie!*, and, again, *Cinderella*. At the Rose, she has understudied for all youth roles in *It's a Wonderful Life* as well as performed in the Young Playwright's Festival and Playscapes. She has also been involved with Speech for four years of high school, and she earned performances at the State Speech competition in the categories of Group Improv, Individual Improv, Storytelling, After Dinner Speaking and Literary Program; she worked on the short film, *The Initiation*, which earned recognition at All-State. In her senior year, her two individual events also earned All-State recognition.

"[In school productions], you know [the people you're working with] really intensely," she said. "But at the Chanticleer or the Rose, these are people who you may have never met before and in two seconds you have to act like their best friend and like you have known each other your whole lives." She calls it both a wonderful experience and a fun challenge to create this onstage chemistry.

There are other perks to getting involved in the numerous theater opportunities in the community.

"There's a level of experience that comes with the Chanticleer and the Rose that school theater just can't have because of time and budget," she said. She also appreciates being able to work under a professional director. "I love learning from [them] because these

people have been doing this their entire lives and this is the craft they've honed."

Even the costumes are exceptional. "One of my favorite things about the Rose is whenever I get to go backstage and visit their costume shop... It is filled."

After participating in the Young Playwright's Festival at the Rose her freshman year as an actress performing in shows written by other teenagers, it took a little push to get Grace to try her hand at playwriting as well.

"I didn't think I was smart or creative enough." But with some encouragement from her mom, she joined the year-long playwriting class her sophomore year and loved the experience. She has now had two shows performed in the Young Playwrights Festival: *Acne*, *Anxiety*, and *Angels* in 2019 and *Be Positive!* in 2020. She is spending her senior year working on a show called *Plot Twisters*, a 60-minute play for 8- to 12-year-olds that she hopes will be chosen to be produced by the Rose's Hitchcock Theater as one of their summer camps.

"I kind of feel like Gusteau from *Ratatouille* because I think everyone can write," she said, and she realized this because of Young Playwrights. "You just have to find what you want to write about."

Now, she helps other people discover the joy of writing and of theater as a teen intern at the Rose, and she has had the opportunity to teach a class in the Young Playwrights Festival.

"I taught a class over conflict. We went over the types of conflict, examples of conflict, and we did this thing called the Conflicted Conflict Generator, [which] I created [to get us] talking about how setting can affect the conflict."

She added: "[It's] so wonderful... to see other people with the same mentality [that I had] get to see a 10-15 minute show that they worked on for a year be performed."

She has learned many things by becoming a writer. "No work of art is ever original," Garrigan said. Everyone, she believes, is constantly inspired by the art and the people around them. "Whenever I write, I take that to heart. All of my pieces are love letters to my favorite pieces of art."

This means her inspiration comes from the insane amount of books she reads, the TV shows and movies she sees, the music she listens to, the people she meets, and the conversations she has.

"[My writing] is such a culmination of the world that I'm living, the people I get to be around, and the art that I consume."

While finding inspiration may be easy, the act of writing - creating something - can be difficult and sometimes tedious. "My writing process is a lot of not writing... It's a lot of sitting and staring at a Google Doc." She said that she feels inspiration for different scenes in her pieces at



TRIM LINE TRIM LINE

different and often random times. "I jump around all the time; I won't go in chronological order ... And whenever I'm writing a scene and it's not working, I always go to pen and paper."

She said it is extremely helpful to force herself to get something on the page without the pressure of having to be perfect the first time.

While being a student at the Rose, Garrigan also began volunteering there as a teaching assistant when she was a freshman. She has worked with many interesting classes, including one for 3- to 5-year-olds about *Curious George* and one for 8 to 11-year-olds about *Descendents*.

"Spending that much time with kids that are so unabashedly excited about art and theater and expressing themselves really made me think that this level of joy is what I want to surround myself with for the rest of my life," she said.

Garrigan will be attending Northwest Missouri State University to study speech and theater education, her choices largely influenced by the opportunities she has taken advantage of during her high school years, particularly her volunteering at the Rose.

"As kids age," she said, "the world expects them to be less joyful, less imaginative, less creative, and become more rational and reasonable. So I want to get the opportunity to tell kids, 'No, you don't need to stop exploring your imagination or stop creating. You can do all of those things and still be a perfectly wonderful human being.'"

She plans to continue seeking performance opportunities no matter where her career takes her, and she may consider working at a teaching theater like the Rose, where she could both teach and perform. "I always want to keep that muscle alive... and I think I'll always keep writing."

"The most important thing that my experiences in the performing arts have taught me is that... [everyone] has a story to tell, [everyone] is deserving of the time and attention that that story needs. There is something for everyone in the performing arts."

Story and page by Anna Schewe.
Photos from Yearbook Archives and Grace Garrigan.



Customer is allowed to have objects outside of the margin.

TRIM LINE TRIM LINE

TRIM LINE

TRIM LINE TRIM LINE