

Renee Schwarz

Independent Study Application Essay

April 13, 2017

Committing to Theatre

Theatre and Dance have been my passions ever since I could remember, so when I was introduced to the miraculous world of physical theatre—which combines acting and movement as a method of storytelling; I found myself aspiring to learn and get involved in whatever I could. Physical theatre changed my perception of what I thought theatre was. Before, I thought that going through the motions of creating a show was what theatre was all about. I had forgotten that theatre is not so black and white and that my career as an artist is nowhere near finished. In just the few months of being at Homestead I discovered that there are many more different aspects of theatre that I never even considered before I transferred schools. I would like to continue my search of the deeper layers of theatre through an Independent Study in acting and physical theatre. Doing so will help me develop the self-sufficient and creative skills needed for adulthood and working as an actor and dancer.

This year is my first year at Homestead High School, and my first year being involved in the Homestead Drama Club. Before moving last summer, I lived in Manhattan Beach, California for sixteen years. I was a hesitant about moving 2,000 miles across country, as any high schooler would be, but when I realized that Homestead is known for its excellence in the Fine Arts, I found that my decision to move was much easier. My intuition was correct, as I have been involved with Drama Club ever since first stepping on campus for the first day of school. Before I moved, my high school theatre resume included: Crew for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *The*

Addams Family, a featured tapper in *42nd Street*, and being a finalist for several events in both DTASC (Drama Teachers Association of Southern California) Fall and Shakespeare festivals in which I would compete against other individuals from 50 other schools with a rehearsed scene in a specified category. Since the beginning of this year, I have been involved in both mainstage and non-mainstage productions put on stage this year. Some of my roles consist of: Phyllis in *Sylvia*, our fall play, a featured dancer in *Fiddler on the Roof*, the winter musical, Sebastian in our spring play, *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, Goddess Hecate and Ensemble in One Act's State-Winning devised production of *The Fall of Orpheus*, and several different characters in *Kikuyat*, written by Homestead High School's Emma Zander for the Theatre Production Seminar class. Many of the classes that I took this year, like AP Language and Composition will also help me in my artistic path of study for next year. Furthermore, acting has been extremely influential in my life as it has taught me that I can be anyone that I want to be. It has taught me to expect the unexpected, to explore outside of my comfort zone, and to become versatile in many different skills. Acting has made me more comfortable with myself and has never failed to amaze me and teach me that my boundaries for artistic creation have no bounds.

After graduating from Homestead High School I plan to earn a B.F.A. in Acting, a B.S. in Environmental Science and a Minor in Dance. My hope with these two majors is to help people understand the issues we are having environmentally by connecting it to the arts. I intend to use my abilities as an actor and convincer to sway individuals to become more aware of the degrading state of our environment. Another career option that I am pondering at the moment is becoming a theatre teacher. I love working with children and considering the fact that I can not imagine myself *not* doing theatre, I think this is another great career choice for me where an

Independent Study would be beneficial and help me prepare for my future. An Independent Study in physical theatre will be a unique opportunity that only a few students at Homestead will get the pleasure to partake in, which will be recognized by colleges I will be applying to during my senior year. Some of these schools include: University of Minnesota—Twin Cities, New York University—Tisch School of the Arts, Loyola University, Muhlenberg University, and The New School. All of these schools offer both a B.F.A. in Acting, a B.S. in Environmental Science and a Dance Minor. Homestead's mission statement prides itself on "inspiring a passion for learning". Therefore, I hope Homestead will allow me the opportunity to pursue my passion and will help me bridge the gap between an ambitious dream and a legitimate career.

For my Independent Study, I propose a one trimester curriculum which will take place during the third trimester of my senior year. During this time, I will write two of my own devised monologues that will hopefully span the length of five to seven minutes long, when spoken. After having them fully written and memorized, the challenging process of trial and error will start as I try to create choreography that matches the intention of my words. Throughout this time, I have assigned days in which I will submit or perform either my draft or final piece to Ms. Figg-Franzoi, as a type of guideline to keep me motivated and on-track. My hopes for adding movement to the monologues is to effectively convey my message to the audience, make them visually stimulating and therefore, interesting, as it will be difficult to hold an audience's attention for that span of time, especially when I will be the only one on stage. After polishing both of these monologues, I plan to throw myself into the magical world of aerial dance by utilizing Ms. Figg-Franzoi's silks and lyra, as I choreograph a third piece for my physical theatre portfolio. Instead of this being a third devised piece of writing, I have decided to arrange my own

original choreography to the song “For Forever” from the *Dear Evan Hanson* soundtrack.

Though this Broadway musical is portrayed under the encompassing theme of depression after a high school student’s death, there are certain moments within that convey a flicker of hope and happiness. This flicker is shown in my song choice, “For Forever”, as the main character, Evan Hansen describes a perfect day with his best friend in which any desolate feelings are nonexistent. By scheduling this dance for the end of the trimester, it will force me to be productive as I will only have about seven days to completely choreograph a five minute dance. The timing may seem like a bit of a stretch, but I am willing to work long and hard to make all three pieces happen. My purpose for doing all three projects is to learn to challenge myself in which no other Acting class has done before. The rigorous experience will be physically and creatively rewarding and will be advantageous to me as a senior and as an incoming college freshmen. By the end of the trimester I hope to push my acting and artistic abilities, testing if I am actually capable of “making it” in the world of theatre.

A quote from Konstantin Stanislavski perfectly describes my reasoning for pursuing a career in theatre. It reads, “Love the art in yourself, not yourself in the art”. To me, acting is not about constantly being in the spotlight and getting lead roles, because that would be selfish and disrespectful towards the craft and the principles that theatre was founded upon. It is about producing art that brings joy to you, your scene partner(s), and the audience. It is about finding the beauty in the small things that is fabricated in the sanctum that many refer to as “the stage”. I want to take an Independent Study to play with those little things. By taking an Independent Study I hope not just to succeed but to fail, as well. Because with failure comes progress, and learning from those failures is what leads someone to succeed in the long run. In conclusion, I

would like to thank the selection committee for their time and for taking my application into consideration. For any further explanation on how I plan on structuring my course of study, I have attached a detailed proposal below.

Renee Schwarz

One Trimester

0.5 credits

Spring 2018

Theatre Independent Study Proposal: Physical Theatre and Acting

Independent Study Mentor:

Ms. Figg-Franzoi

Abstract:

Throughout my independent study time I will discover and explore the different aspects of acting and movement. This may include the use of aerial silks, and the lyra (with the permission of Ms. Figg-Franzoi), in which I will tell a story through movement and dance. I would also like to combine the art of physical theatre and dialogue by writing my own 5-7 minute monologues which I will perform at the end of the trimester. I will incorporate dance into the portrayal of the monologue to effectively connect to the audience, encompassing the aspects of dialogue, emotion and physical movement, creating a visually stimulating piece.

With the remaining time in the trimester, I would like to test my abilities as a dancer by stepping into the role of a choreographer as I wish to block an aerial dance piece to the song “For Forever” from the *Dear Evan Hanson* soundtrack.

Project Description (Why):

At the beginning of junior year, I moved to Mequon from Manhattan Beach, California. I was thrown head-first into a brand new theatre department, unlike any other that I had known before. I learned to adapt quickly and to be open to the new teaching styles that Homestead, and more specifically, Ms. Figg-Franzoi has to offer. Throughout the entirety of last year, I was fully immersed into the art of physical theatre. My love for physical theatre blossomed last fall during the One Act Competition class where I was challenged in new ways and pushed out of my comfort zone by using movement as a medium of storytelling. We wrote and directed our own one-act play, called “The Fall of Orpheus” which we competed with at State, at UW Steven’s

Point. Our show was unlike any show that performed that weekend and ended up winning 10 awards—the most out of any school that competed, which was a very humbling experience. I am retaking One Act this year, and we are competing with another physical theatre piece called *The Light Burns Blue*. With the mounting of this show, we have been given creative freedom to choreograph and block our own scenes. Being involved in this class for the past two years has given me the prerequisites and preparation that I need to be successful in my independent study. I would like to recreate this challenging, yet rewarding process, individually, by writing and directing my own monologues and dance.

During my senior year, I would like to continue my growth in acting and physical theatre. I feel as though I can best develop my different theatrical skills through a close one-on-one training with Ms. Figg-Franzoi. Even after high school, I wish to continue studying theatre by double majoring in Acting (B.F.A) and Environmental Science (B.S.) and minoring in Dance. By taking an independent study with Ms. Figg-Franzoi, I believe she can challenge me in discovering what I can do not just as a performer, but as an overall creative mind as well. I also strongly believe that with her guidance and the self-driven nature of an independent study, I will be prepared for a life in theatre in college and beyond.

Dear Evan Hanson, which is currently on Broadway, depicts the highs and lows that high schoolers face today. Ever since I first heard the soundtrack, I have had a strong connection to the characters' emotions and the difficulties they face throughout the plot of the story. Whenever I listen to the musical numbers, I find myself choreographing dances in my head—something that all dancers are guilty of. Therefore, I would like to fulfill my vision by choreographing an original dance to “For Forever”, one of my favorite songs on the album. I believe I would greatly benefit from this opportunity as I want to mirror the same sentiments I feel while listening to the song, but convey it through dance instead. I think it would also be helpful because of the fact that I am planning to minor in Dance.

Research Questions:

The purpose of these pieces are to discover the connection between words and actions and how they can impact an audience.

- Why are words and movement important in the world of theatre and storytelling?
- Does creating movement require the same creative process as creating one's own monologues?
- How do the two processes compare?

Project Timeline:

MARCH				
Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
12 First Day of Trimester Brainstorm ideas for monologues	13 Begin first draft of first monologue	14 Write first monologue	15 Write first monologue	16 Write first monologue
19 Write first monologue	20 Write first monologue	21 Write first monologue	22 Write first monologue	23 Submit first draft to Ms. Figg
26 Memorize/start brainstorming choreography	27 Memorize/start brainstorming choreography	28 Memorize/start brainstorming choreography	29 Choreograph movement sequences	30 NO SCHOOL

APRIL				
Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
9 Choreograph movement sequences	10 Choreograph movement sequences	11 Choreograph movement sequences	12 Choreograph movement sequences	13 Choreograph movement sequences
16 Finish choreography Figure out	17 Finish choreography Figure out	18 Finish choreography Figure out	19 Finish choreography Figure out	20 Finish choreography Figure out

costumes and lighting*	costumes and lighting*	costumes and lighting*	costumes and lighting*	costumes and lighting* Perform completed piece for Ms. Figg and get feedback
23 Begin first draft of second monologue	24 Write second monologue	25 Write second monologue	26 Write second monologue	27 Write second monologue
30 Write second monologue				

MAY				
Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
	1 Write second monologue	2 Write second monologue	3 Write second monologue	4 Submit first draft to Ms. Figg
7 Memorize/start brainstorming choreography	8 Memorize/start brainstorming choreography	9 Memorize/start brainstorming choreography	10 Choreograph movement sequences	11 Choreograph movement sequences
14 Choreograph movement sequences	15 Choreograph movement sequences	16 Choreograph movement sequences	17 Choreograph movement sequences	18 Choreograph movement sequences
21 Finish	22 Finish	23 Finish	24 Choreograph	25 Choreograph

choreography Figure out costumes and lighting*	choreography Figure out costumes and lighting*	choreography Figure out costumes and lighting* Perform completed piece for Ms. Figg and get feedback	“For Forever”	“For Forever”
28 NO SCHOOL	29 Choreograph “For Forever”	30 Choreograph “For Forever”	31 Choreograph “For Forever”	

JUNE				
Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
				1 Choreograph “For Forever”
4 Choreograph “For Forever”	5 Choreograph “For Forever” Perform completed piece for Ms. Figg and get feedback Prepare for performing pieces	6 Final Exams Perform all three pieces	7 Final Exams Perform all three pieces	

* Only if it is possible to perform a showcase for friends and family

Submissions/Performances:

March 23rd- Submit first draft of first monologue to Ms. Figg-Franzoi

April 20th- Perform first monologue with choreography for Ms. Figg-Franzoi

May 4th- Submit first draft of second monologue to Ms. Figg-Franzoi

May 23rd- Perform second monologue with choreography for Ms. Figg-Franzoi

June 5th- Perform choreography for “For Forever” for Ms. Figg-Franzoi

June 6th and 7th (Finals)- Perform all three pieces for Ms. Figg-Franzoi and possibly friends and family