

2025 ARTS INTERNSHIP FELLOWSHIP

THEATER ADMINISTRATION INTERNSHIP AT WILSON ARTS

ASHLEY BEAMAN



The fellowship supported me through my internship as a theater administration intern at Wilson Arts in Wilson, NC: a non-profit organization that seeks to enrich and educate the community through artistic experience.



I spent most of my time in the Edna Boykin Cultural Center, or, as locals call it, "The Boykin". This is where all of the camps and performances I helped with took place.

Through my internship, I sought to educate about theater, learn backstage processes (lighting, sound, and set), and take an administrative role in the structure and execution of the performing arts camps that Wilson Arts offers.



MISSION 1: MUSICAL REVUE

The first group I had to tackle was the 5-6 year olds. This meant lots of breaks, games, vocabulary learning, and, for many of them, performing on stage for the first time.



The games I played with them helped them imagine and portray characters, find the strength in their voices, and communicate with each other.



For their performance, they learned choreography, three songs, and made animal masks that they wore for the first number. Some even performed solos! I liked working with a small group because I really got to give them individualized attention. They were also so eager to learn and I ended up working with a few of these kids again later in the summer.

MISSION 2: THE BIG ONE-OH

I had the opportunity to direct the elementary/early middle school group, who was doing an entire musical about a ten year old's birthday party.



These kids did similar games to the younger age group, but had to actually memorize lines, music, and create characters along the way.



As director, I had to have a vision, execute it, and supervise everything I didn't have time to lead myself. I auditioned and casted the whole show then choreographed and blocked it, all in a 5 day time limit. These processes are always stressful, but the kids were wonderful and I had a lot of help.



I also got to design lights and help build the set pieces, which is something I hadn't done before. My boss taught me how to skirt platforms, some carpentry tips, and painting methods.

MISSION 3: DROWSY CHAPERONE

In a drastic shift in age group, the next camp was for highschoolers. These guys were doing a full-blown musical, and I had worked with many of them before. Most of them were experienced with theater and could be challenged more.



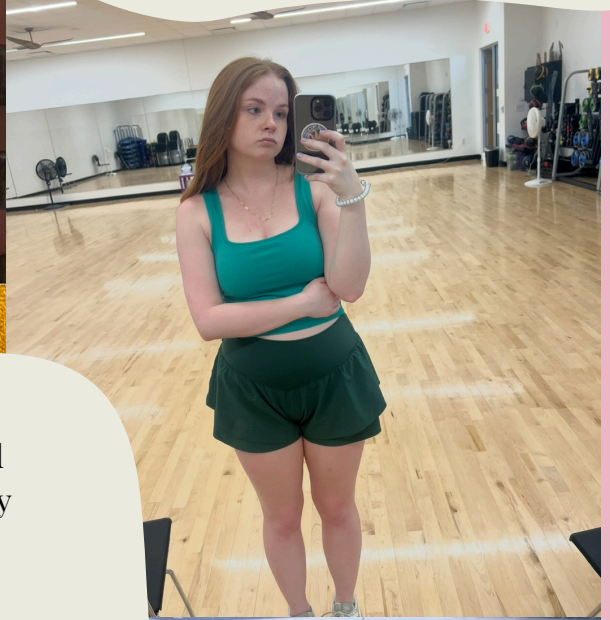
I was mostly a choreographer for this process; however, I did go through more advanced theater games with them throughout the week that focused on improv, working with a scene partner, and receiving/reacting to given circumstances.

One of my favorite parts of this week is that I took photos during their final dress rehearsal (I included some below). Putting a show together in a week is always challenging, but these kids were very dedicated and eager to learn.



MISSION 4: FREAKY FRIDAY

Lots and lots of choreography.



This was my longest-term project of the summer. While the camps were shortened (junior) versions of musicals, Freaky Friday was a full-fledged two hour production. I choreographed the whole thing, which meant lots of hours in the gym and calling my friends to help me do partner work. I didn't do much else outside dance for this production since every position is formally hired, but I did help around with costumes occasionally. The summer musical is open to all ages, but this cast was mostly high-schoolers and adults. It's a wonderful opportunity for the surrounding community to audition and perform in a musical that isn't offered in the public schools or other organizations, so I was so grateful to be a part of it.



I also got to take pictures for this show!



FREAKY FRIDAY PHOTOS



MISSION 5: AESOP'S FABLES

This camp was something unique I had never participated in before. My boss decided we needed a camp that was a straight play. This play and camp catered the middle through high school and was super funny and sweet. With no music and dance, however, I had to teach different things.



During this camp, the director of Freaky Friday came to help me. I ended up leading acting-based games, some of which I learned in my acting class at Chapel Hill. The Freaky Friday director also helped me come up with character-driven activities to do.



I think this process made me feel the most out of my element. I handled acting notes, games, and some logistical stage magic issues, but my boss handled most of the blocking. Even so, I think I had the most fun during this camp, which was so strange because I'd always taught dance or music. I ended up learning something new about myself!.

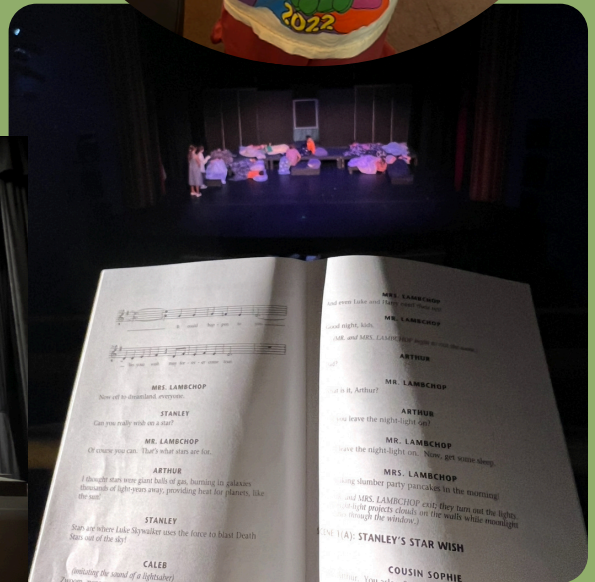
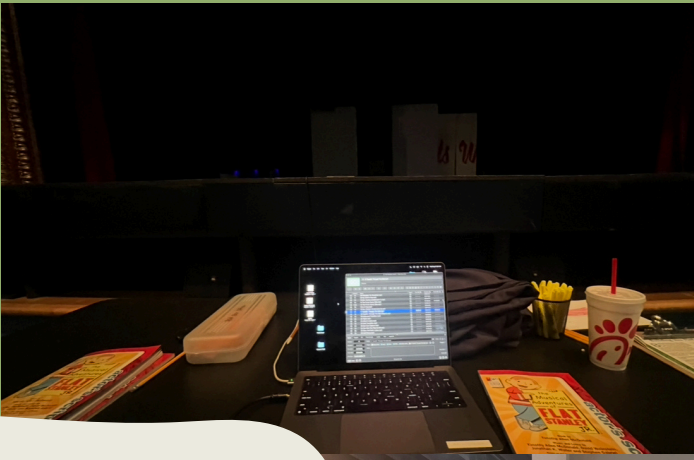


MISSION 6: FLAT STANLEY

The last camp I had to work on was Flat Stanley. This was very difficult not only because of burn out but also because of the age group. We had to put together an entire production in a week with just elementary schoolers. The kids don't get very stressed out at least, but my crew and I sure did. We had to do a mix of learning games and breaks to make sure the kids had all the support they needed

For this camp, we really had to learn everything (choreo, lines, blocking) quickly so we had as much time as possible to do repetition. I had to make the choreo fairly simple and we also cut a lot of really long scenes because we found the kids lost focus about halfway through them.

This camp taught my boss and I that these types of productions are too elaborate for this age group- they need something more introductory. The kids can do scenes, choreo, and music, but the concept of doing them all together with a plot attached is a bit too ambitious.



ACCOMPLISHED



Interning at a place I grew up working at meant I had to reimagine my role at Wilson Arts. Through my internship, I expanded beyond my typical choreographer role.

I learned skills in...

- Technical Theater

Through set-building, running the light and sound boards, and helping design costumes and makeup, I extended from onstage to backstage. I learned how to create safe sets, light cues, and sound cues to create a cohesive performance.

- Teaching in acting and music

Teaching acting and music in comparison to dance takes an entirely different skillset. I learned methods and games to help kids understand their voices and their bodies that then translated into their performances in scenes and musical numbers.

- Directing

Being the person who people go to about questions pertaining to any part of the production is no joke. Through directing, I learned how to create a theatrical vision as well as quick decision making.

- Event Coordination

Every mission involved the event at the end of the week, which involved people herding, adequate communication to kids and their families, and setting up throughout the camp in preparation.

- And most importantly, leadership!

All the skills I learned throughout my internship involved me stepping into the role of a leader, where I created and executed performing arts productions for my community.

Mission Accomplished!

