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WORKING FOR YOURSELF:
A GUIDE FOR PERFORMERS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCE

By

Sa'id "Nxttime" Kelly
B.A., Miles College, 2020
M.F.A. University of Louisville, 2023

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts

Department of Theatre Arts
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2023

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A Thesis Approved on

March 21, 2023

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my cohort; Latrice Richardson, Alicia Fireel, and Sarah Elston, as well as any person out there struggling to understand. It's probably not you, just keep working.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am thankful for all people involved in this thesis and graduate school as a whole.

I would not have made it this far without all your support. I am grateful to have such a supportive team. I love you all and Thank you.

ABSTRACT

WORKING FOR YOURSELF:

A GUIDE FOR PERFORMER WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Sa'id "Nxttime" Kelly

March 21, 2023

Working For Yourself: A Guide For Performers with Learning Differences is a combination of advice and tips that are intended to help performers especially living with learning difference. The thesis helps performers find ways to work with their true selves on stage as well as in preparation for a role. There is no final result to this process, just multiple ways to be more confident with the choice you'll make while performing and preparing for a role.

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INTRODUCTION

I am Sa'id "Nxttime" Kelly. If it were not for the love of my parents, I would not be equipped with the tools to accomplish anything I set my mind to. This is true and possible because I am willing to learn and adapt to what will make me the most efficient actor and performer. No matter if it is life's easiest or most difficult performing situation.

I am constantly creating and developing a personal process. My process was put to the test with my thesis role at the University of

Louisville. I played William Barfée in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*.

William is a naturally gifted speller who uses a unique method of learning to retain and spell the words used throughout the spelling bee. William is one of the many spellers within the play who uses a different method than what some would consider normal to elaborate on the information learned. With so many characters having their own unique style I wanted to make this character as original and fun as possible.

To accomplish this goal, I used the tools and techniques that I have learned throughout my years as an actor and some I have adapted which you will read about in

the following pages. These same tools and techniques are common practice and have been taught for years. Yet, I have made personal adjustments to make the tools and techniques benefit me the most. The process of adjusting what you know, and what you learn to benefit you as the performer, is the goal of this thesis. I chose to write about this subject because of how difficult it was, (and still is) at times to learn and fully understand the content I perform when acting in live theatre.

At times I struggle with understanding the text, how to memorize the text or the author's

meaning behind specific lines. The issue of not being able to fully understand or read a text hindered my ability to make further discoveries. Discoveries such as if the writer is speaking from the voice of the character/people they are writing about or what the writer believes those characters/people sound like. Whether or not an author has the right to write about something that they may not necessarily have lived or understood is not the basis of this thesis. Yet, understanding who the author is and why they write the way they write is a part of finding a deeper context within a script, which is the necessary next step after basic reading and comprehension of the script. For

instance, a white male author, Dennis McIntyre, wrote a black male character, Rusty, in his 1984 play *Split Second*. When playing "Rusty" in the University of Louisville's Fall 2021 production of *Split Second*, I never considered the words spoken to Rusty's African American son from Pittsburgh came from the perspective of a white man who lived in Detroit. The question of whether McIntyre should be writing on this topic is not the scope of my thesis, but it is important to keep in mind that text can easily be falsely voiced or misinformed by the author. Yet, discovering this information is

something a performer should be able to do but can be difficult if the performer struggles with reading and comprehension. In this thesis, I am primarily concerned with the basic work of reading and comprehending the foundation of a text or script.

The focus of being able to read what is on the paper is the first step to making these discoveries. Our society functions off the principle that we support the masses while leaving those we consider outliers to fall by the wayside. For example, I do not know many schools with accessibility to left-handed desks for left-handed people. A quick survey of one of the classrooms of the University of

Louisville's Davidson Hall revealed zero left-adequate desks in the entire room, showing a clear bias for right-handed learners. M.K. Holder, Ph.D., a writer for the Handedness Research Institute, supports this theory in *What's Wrong with This Desk*. Holder states, "for many left-handers, trying to work on a right-biased desk is difficult, uncomfortable, frustrating, and distracting - not very conducive to learning. And when a left-handed is faced with a room full of right-biased desks the school system's message is loud and clear: we only care about the others, you don't

count" (Holder). Aside from that, all performers should have a process to accomplish the task assigned to them. Creating and maintaining this process on a day-to-day basis is not easy. This is because there is never an endpoint to improving oneself. It is more about the journey than the results. The things you want in life should not come easy but should come with a joyful journey. A performer should want to keep themselves from feeling left behind during their journey because they do not retain information in the same way as the majority.

This thesis will guide actors and theatre practitioners on ways to create a

process that leads them to become a more aware version of themselves. Aware in the sense that you can understand what preparations you might need in order to successfully develop a theatrical role, especially if you have a learning difference. This thesis will provide tools and advice for how to retain information when preparing for a role or live performance. To be more specific, this will guide practitioners of theater/performance who specifically live with learning differences to find a method that is best suited for the performer to be the most efficient version of themselves.

Before diving into this guide, it is important to clarify the similarities and differences between learning disabilities, differences, and styles. Although similar, learning disabilities and learning differences are not the same. Learning disability refers to medical diagnoses such as, but not limited to, dyslexia, ADHD, and ASD. People with learning disabilities have conditions severe enough to interfere with tasks society may consider "normal functioning." Learning difference is the acknowledgment that said disabilities result in the need for various approaches to learning that differ from the norm. Rather than stating that someone is disabled or unable to learn,

the term recognizes the ability to learn but to learn in a different way. Lastly, learning style refers to the specific approaches needed for an individual learner to digest new information.

Rupen Fofaria, a journalism graduate from the University of Maryland and reporter for EducationNC, elaborates on the topic in his article, *Learning Difference: More than a politically correct term for learning disabilities*. In it, he states that the term learning difference, "encompasses specifically-diagnosed learning disabilities and attention disorders,

but also includes areas of executive functioning, like task initiation and working memory to help the wider population of students who can succeed if only they are reached in a manner that is compatible with the way their brains work." The "manner that is compatible with the way their brains work" is their specific learning style.

The way we develop and get familiar with our learning difference is by considering and finding the best ways for us to learn and retain information. During this process, you may have to investigate your learning style. Harold Pashler, a Psychology professor at the University of

California San Diego, defines learning styles as:

"the concept that individuals differ in regard to what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them... Assessment of learning style typically asks people to evaluate what sort of information presentation they prefer and or what kind of mental activity they find most engaging or congenial, although assessment instructions are extremely diverse" (Pashler 105).

Learning styles are not within the scope of this thesis because we will not be taking an assessment test, nor do learning styles factor in the unique skill set you function with daily.

There is a common misperception that people who do not do things in a traditional way are unable or not as

valuable as those who do. I argue that their value cannot be measured on the same scale and it is a matter of if the task gets completed with "good" quality.

This document was created to provide tips, guidance, and tools to accomplish memorization and comprehension of text for performances. Also, the aim is to help remove the fear of reading, and comprehension of the written words in play scripts during role preparation. There should not be a fear of reading or writing, especially when it comes to this document. The font and layout of this thesis are meant to help a performer with or without a learning difference process information more efficiently. You should

consider not just going with the largest font size or the one that looks the coolest.

In *Annals of Dyslexia* written and edited by numerous college professors they state, "Note, however, that extremely large or extremely small x-heights might have a negative impact on reading performances." (27). X-height is the size vertically of a font. Also, they say "Historically, serif fonts are considered to be more legible than sans serif fonts, since serifs make letters more distinguishable" (27). Serifs fonts have been known to add more markings to show their distinction. The font

chosen here is Courier which is a Serifs font to help people read the content within this thesis more efficiently.

This book is also in horizontal orientation with columns to make things more inviting for the reader. I am trying to not scare the readers who may be intimidated by large documents or text. I do not think the more traditional way of writing a thesis or its style is useful. I have made slight changes such as altering the orientation of the text, so it is more spread out to make the thesis more accessible for all types of learners and readers.

There are moments when I look at something I must read and only see what I

cannot do. Yet, I have learned thinking like this will leave me defeated before I even start. I want you as the performer to immediately pull out your tools and specific skills to divide the work into comprehensible chunks like the layout and organization of this document. Consequently, this will make the large piece of work not seem like too much to manage.

If you need to go word by word or page by page there is nothing wrong with that either. Finding a process and way these tools will most benefit you is the goal. Even if that means taking each section and finding out

what and why it is written. Asking questions like, "How does this text contribute to the story?" And, "How does it relate to me and my process?" Figuring out the function of your process is important when accomplishing a performance task.

Whether you already excel at processing and retaining information, or you can never remember anything, this text will highlight the ability of a text to show more context, along with tips on how to discover that information.

In this thesis we will cover the following: *Identifying Your Learning Difference, Where Does Your Learning Difference Appear, Reading What's ON The*

Page, Understanding/Context, Using the Learning Difference-Not Letting the Learning Difference Use You, When Should I Start the Work?, Trial and Error, Speaking About Your Learning Difference, and Preparing for the Role. In Identifying Your Learning Difference, we will discuss understanding your relationship with your learning difference. In Where Does Your Learning Difference Appear, we will identify performers and their relationship with their learning differences. Reading What's ON the Page, is where we will explore helpful tips on how we receive information from the script. In

Understanding/Context, we will discuss how to approach subtext and given circumstances. Using the Learning Difference-Not Letting the Learning Difference Use You, is about owning your unique skill sets. In When Should I Start Work?, you will be guided on the right time to start a process. Trial & Error will discuss failing and succeeding. Additionally, Speaking About Your Learning Difference will tell you how to communicate with your production team. Improving Your Learning Difference is where we will show strategies and techniques to improve your unique skill set. We will wrap up with Preparing for a Role, we will apply our tools to develop a

character. The body of this thesis will provide evidence for the need for a guide for people who live with learning differences.

IDENTIFYING YOUR LEARNING DIFFERENCE

Learning difference is what a person experiences when trying to retain and process information. Previously this term may have been referred to as a learning "disability".

Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines disability as "a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily

activities and interactions" (Merriam-Webster).

Using the word disability infers the learner is not capable of processing the information, or there is something hindering them from doing so. This is likely not the case; the learner just needs more or different tactics to get the work done. Not all individuals are the same, so if one is not retaining information to the "standards" or in the same way as most of society, it does not mean they are not capable. They are just different. There is nothing wrong with being different.

It can feel more difficult to accomplish tasks if one is not aware of

their differences. It is important to know how you learn so you can walk into a performance space as prepared as possible to handle any work given.

Look at the strategies you currently use to understand your work. Ask yourself if this process is efficient, or the best use of your skill set. What do you find difficult in your work? Is it memorization, vocabulary, or quick processing? What about that aspect makes things difficult?

Discovering the nuances and details of your own processes will lead to better management and how you function with your learning

difference. Asking yourself questions like these allows room for new discoveries that will advance your process. No matter where you stand you should be able to find new ways to improve and advance your learning difference.

One may not be aware they are living with a learning difference right away. Discovering your current learning difference is the first step in creating and establishing new and efficient processes. What does one currently do to process performance work? In this thesis, I use the term work to refer to processes of preparation for performance and auditions, whether it is quick preparation for cold reading, memorizing lines,

researching the play text, or character building before the performance.

Personally, I was not aware of what my learning difference was. I assumed everyone had the same learning difference or habits as me. Therefore causing me to not speak up about what I was experiencing while trying to do work. I also did not want to be treated any differently than my peers because of how I handled my work.

After communicating with my peers, I realized we had to use totally different methods to accomplish the same tasks. One method

was not better than the other. They just happen to be different. This may not be possible when handling something or a process but when it comes to developing a character for the stage, it can be totally different for each person.

I understand now that I don't learn the same way as my peers. Learning into how I learn differently is a good thing because it makes me a truer version of myself. At first, I had a habit of thinking it was me versus everyone else. Now, I understand the only person I am battling in life is myself. I am not trying to be overly critical of myself, but I endeavor to find my most efficient and truest form. This does not have to be

accomplished alone. We are allowed to help each other become better.

Had I spoken sooner, I may have received the proper help from mental health professionals who are well-versed in all types of learning differences. Therefore, giving me the proper diagnosis for my specific learning difference.

One such health professional whose research I discovered is G. Reid Lyon, Ph.D., who specializes in learning disorders and reading comprehension, has published over 135 articles, books, and book chapters addressing dyslexia, disability classification, and defining

learning disabilities. He received awards for "Scientific Leadership in Neuroscience and Learning Disabilities from the National Institutes of Health and the highest recognition possible from the International Dyslexia Association." (Lyon Guilford Press) He defines learning disabilities using the Code of Federal Regulations or CFR.

The CFR is a record book of the rules published in the federal register, a system for publishing and giving the public access to government information. The U.S. government defines "learning disability" as, "...a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using

languages, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia" (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Subtitle B, Chapter III, Section 300). This is broad, and yet very specific.

The code relays there are multiple types of learning disabilities, but it does not specify when or how these learning

disabilities appear or manifest in your daily lives. Finally, calling learning difference a disability implies a negative connotation to your learning difference.

There is nothing negative about learning or retaining information differently. It's just a matter of knowing what your process is and how to apply that process to all your performance situations. But it is on you as the performer to adjust and adapt the tools on a case-by-case basis.

WHERE DOES LEARNING DIFFERENCE
APPEAR?

In performance, one can be asked to take the path least traveled. An instruction I have often received from directors is "find something new and make discoveries." This can be hard with no point of reference. Yet, it seems that some people with learning differences excel at this objective.

For instance, there are working professional actors such as Octavia Spencer, who has the learning

difference of dyslexia but she is also the author of a children's novel, *Randi Rhodes: ninja detective*. The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity defines dyslexia as:

"... an unexpected difficulty in learning to read. Dyslexia takes away an individual's ability to read quickly and automatically and to retrieve spoken words easily, but it does not dampen their creativity and ingenuity (Shaywitz 143-24)."

Her book is an example of using her creative brain to manipulate or advance her learning difference and making something from nothing. This is not to say that other authors do not do this as well, it is just to point out that Spencer

accomplished this with her learning difference as opposed to ignoring it.

Broadway actress Audra McDonald describes her learning difference by identifying as a "Hyperactive girl" (ADHD) in her speech accepting her sixth Tony award (Psychology Today). ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. She uses the energy from her learning difference to find and make discoveries in her craft of theatre. Even film directors, such as Steven Spielberg, have learning differences.

Spielberg found out he was living with a learning difference long after he had established a

blockbuster movie career (Bradlee 1:22). Spielberg shows you can function and accomplish tasks without trying to improve or without even being aware of your learning difference. Proving that because you are not aware of your learning difference does not mean that you do not have one. Spencer and McDonald learned to use their learning differences to their advantage. Spielberg learned how to be successful while not knowing about his learning differences (Bradlee 1:22). They all wanted to accomplish goals in performance for themselves, and their personal motivation is why they are an inspiration to me and others. It is possible to already be living with or

functioning with your learning difference. One can be a more efficient version of themselves if they are aware of how one processes information.

I also had to become aware of ways to function with my learning difference. In the Spring 2023 UofL production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, I played the role of William Barfée. Barfée is a wizard with words and uses an unorthodox method of spelling words. Barfée uses what he calls his "magic foot" to write a letter on the ground with his foot before he spells it into the microphone. This is an

example of having a method that can possibly be taught, then conveniently be adopted for your own benefit. No other speller is seen using this method, yet it does not stop Barfée from successfully using this method.

I faced a lot of difficulty with the words Barfée speaks and the vocabulary assigned to his character within the script. I personally struggled with the written vocabulary more than the context behind the words. This context includes a character's personality and what they have done and/or done within the play. One word that Barfee was asked to spell was *lugubrious*, which means extremely sad or droopy (Finn 18). Barfée states he is very

familiar with this word. Telling me that may be how Barfée feels sometimes. These words were not common in my vocabulary. This caused me to do more reading and contextualizing so I could be confident in the words and letters used on stage.

It is easier for me to see a character through what they do as opposed to just reading what they say. I had a much easier time coming up with the delivery of the lines and presentation of the character. There will be work in the performance field that everyone struggles with at some point. Yet, having the right tools to

manage current struggles with work will make the performer more confident in their next opportunity, be it an audition, rehearsal, or performance.

READING WHAT'S ON THE PAGE

The first step to becoming familiar with any text is reading the text. This is easier said than done. One wants to read, comprehend, and define what is written on the paper first. In approaching this research, I have referred to the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and the co-editor of *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*.

Dr. Janette K. Klingner earned her doctoral degree in reading and learning disabilities from the University of

Miami (Klingner et al. V). Sharon Vaughn, Ph.D., has served as the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and the co-editor of *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*. Alison Boardman, Ph.D., works with school districts and state departments across the United States to plan and implement effective professional development in reading (Klingner et al. VI). These three women came together to write

Teaching Reading Comprehension to Students with Learning Difficulties.

In this book, they discuss the difference between good readers and poor readers, vocabulary instruction, as well as engaging activities and practices that promote reading comprehension. All these strategies and processes can be easily applied to theatre because we must look at and read our text before we do any character development.

They state, "Knowing how to read words has ultimately little value if the student is unable to construct meaning from text" (Klingner et al. 2). If you take this quote and replace the

word "student" with performer, actor, actress, or actor (a term I created for nonbinary actors), it still applies to what we must do when it comes to work. There must be meaning behind what we say, see, and do on stage and all this must start with knowing and familiarizing oneself with the text.

Being able to identify if you are a good or poor reader is important, but it's not the end of the process. No

matter your reading level, it is important to find ways of improving. You must identify which category you fall under first to understand where to start your process.

In the authors' view, "...poor readers use few effective strategies for understanding and remembering what they read" (Klingner et al. 4). Good readers do the opposite and can visualize simultaneously while reading the content. This is not to say poor readers are not doing this as well but there may be delays or a lack of details in this visualization. By focusing on what strategies the poor readers do not use, the authors forget

to mention what poor readers do well and how to transform their poor reading into satisfactory reading comprehension.

The authors also speak on learning differences and how to spot and recognize what kind of reader a person is and what the reader may be experiencing. The solutions they provide are catered toward teachers who are trying to help their students. As a stage performer, there are few times someone is helping you and/or watching you read the play for the first time. It is on you as the performer to apply your reading skills when working and preparing for a role. In *Teaching*

Reading Comprehension to Students with Learning Difficulties, authors Janette Klilngner, Sharon Vaughn, and Alison Boardman discuss the skills for reading comprehension. Below I list some helpful tips the authors mention, then translate ways we can apply these skills as performers in bold text after the quoted example:

- **"Practice decoding with very complicated, multisyllabic words. Break these words into syllables and then treat each syllable as a separate word type for decoding (Vaughn 6)."**

This practice is somewhat self-explanatory, but breaking words up into different sections to find the root will allow for a better understanding of what the word is and its meaning. Also

rewriting the words in a script into your own words. This is especially common in Shakespeare.

- **"Ask students to locate words that they cannot read. Keep these words in a word bank or on a word wall and use them for activities on teaching decoding (Vaughn 6)."**

For all the words you don't understand, write them in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper to later define. This will allow you to have a better understanding of the script.

I have to do this step a lot while doing work, especially when playing the role of William Barfée. His vocabulary is so extensive and the words he spells seem to be more difficult than the rest of the characters. I had a list of words I would write on a separate sheet

of paper and spell them out. Also, I found the definition and origin of the word to become an expert in the vocabulary, so I can display the same level of confidence as the character when delivering these words.

- **Monitor students' progress and make adjustments accordingly (Vaughn 4)."**

You must make sure you're making progress with the work you're doing. Look back at old work you have done with characters to see if you can make new discoveries. Are there things you may have missed the first time? What makes you see those things now that you could not see before? Doing the same thing repeatedly without seeing any improvement with in your performance (in regards to your learning difference), means you are potentially wasting your time by reinforcing the same negative habits you have built up.

This process is a guide to building and tracking new ways for one to read and retain information. This should make your reading more efficient and more effective as well. After you have a better understanding of how to read exactly what is written, it is time to advance and go deeper into the text. it also helps to find opportunities outside of what you are getting paid for or required to do, to practice reading text and to develop a character's story. While doing this outside work make sure the skills you are trying to develop are improving and

can be applied to work outside of the
current job.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

After one can read and understand what exactly is written on the paper it is time to advance into understanding what is understood or applied, yet not directly stated. This is called context, which is the circumstances of a given situation or the formed conclusion that may not be directly spoken. Context can be difficult for some people to discover or conclude especially if the original text is difficult to understand. This can also be a great

opportunity to create and form some original context for a character or their background story. The stronger the performer is at understanding the text the more they can inform their creation.

There can be many hidden details in the text. These details can be found in your specific character's lines or things that other characters say about your character. In *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* there is a moment the characters Olive and Barfée are alone. Olive tells Barfée if you were to rearrange the letters of her name you could write "I love" (Finn 45). At first, Barfée does not find this amusing, but later in the play when Olive and Barefée are the last two spellers he

calls back to this moment by saying "Zoonosis. Yes, of course. Does that happen to be the longest word that can be turned upside down and still the same word?" (Finn 69). This was Barfée signaling to Olive, 'Can we play the game you tried to play earlier?' Barfée gets it now. This additional layer of understanding better informs my delivery and makes me think of new ways to build and connect the delivery choices and energy I give to what is written in the script. This is why reading the text in its entirety is so important. You want to understand what your

character and the other characters are saying to each other.

When discovering a text there are different things actors immediately look for and want to discover, character, setting, plot, along with a number of other things, but I also believe there is an "ultimate goal" in reading. We may define and say it differently, but the basis is the same. Paul Van Den Broek, a professor of Educational Sciences at Leiden University and professor of Cognitive Sciences at the University of Minnesota defines this goal effortlessly. "The ultimate goal of successful reading, however, is for readers to *learn* from the text: to recognize the depicted facts or

events, to connect them to each other and to background knowledge, and to memorize the result so that they can be used later (Taylor 1)."

This is a quote from the book *Reading for Meaning Fostering Comprehension in the Middle Grades* where Van Der Broek and two other colleagues (Barbara M. Taylor and Michael F. Graves) edited a collection of chapters on how to break down what it means to comprehend as much information as possible from what you are reading. The information you learn from reading the text is just as if not more valuable than the information

researched outside the text. The details in the text will lead to understanding and developments that have, will, and can influence the performer and their decision-making while doing work.

For example, in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling* the announcer Rona Lisa Peretti explains Barfée's circumstance by letting the audience know that this is not his first spelling bee and in fact the year before he may have won if he had not become physically ill. "Mr. Barfée made it to the finals last year but had to be eliminated for health-related reasons." (Finn 33) These given circumstances gained through another

character's text influenced how I chose to perform Barfée.

I made choices to indicate Barfée as a veteran that has been there before, which would look different on stage as opposed to a rookie speller's first time. The details of how I see a veteran speller carry themselves is completely up to me as a creative, yet I have to read and do work so I can make calculated decisions about how to portray this character and make the character as the performer, script, and production team seem fit.

There can be details within the text you may not catch if you apply

prior knowledge. For example, word pronouncer vice principal Douglas Panch asks William Barfée to spell the word "halitosis" and immediately afterward Barfée says "damn life bites" (Finn 23). I knew that the word halitosis means bad breath. This makes Barfée's following line a pun or maybe a witty retort. One cannot determine the playwright's true intentions without hearing it directly from the playwright. It is the actor who must find ways to make sense of the text. The actor must understand that the playwright's choice of words are not coincidental; there is intentionality in the specificity of the text. How we interpret the specificity of the text and the motivation

behind it gets finalized between the performer and the director.

As a performer there is a duty I owe to the production team, showing what discoveries I have made while doing work with the text. Everything will not be obvious when looking for details. That does not mean they are not hidden within the text. One will have to look at things such as the time of year/season, period, and setting in which the play has been set to discover and identify these details.

This type of work will lead you to more research on certain subject matters. This is not a bad thing at

all. One should look at it as an opportunity to apply more of the reading and comprehension skills. Making you a stronger performer overall.

USING THE DIFFERENCE, NOT LETTING
THE DIFFERENCE USE YOU

When doing work there are several tools taught to actors, actresses, and actors that can be useful. The challenge is figuring out what tools work best for you the performer and then using these tools to the best of your ability.

However, the tools received thus far in one's career may have been modified instructions for someone else's learning difference. The tools

received should be catered to you specifically.

For example, something as simple as highlighting lines in a script can be reduced to highlighting your character's name. This may not help one comprehend as much as highlighting the lines with one color, the stage directions with a different color, and the character names with another color. Adding multiple colors will help you identify that there is something different going on within this text. With that information, you as the performer will have the option to make different choices and execute them. On the other hand, this many colors on paper can

over-stimulate some people, causing them to not comprehend what is in the script.

Over many years, tools and techniques for becoming the most efficient performer have been and are still being passed down. It is possible that some of the details or nuances have been lost. This means that some steps of a particular exercise may not be there, or they may have been forgotten. Therefore, the goal is to find the best use of a particular tool for you, the performer.

When preparing to work with a lot of text at one time there must be

a process that one goes through to break down the work that needs to be done. There can be a lot of information that is important to a script's storyline or details on your character's personality and lifestyle. Discovering this information is the process that you must build for yourself using the tools you are equipped with or still learning.

H. D. Albright (Cornell University), William P. Haistead (University of Michigan), and Lee Mitchell (Northwestern University), professors of theatre at their respective universities came together to develop *Principles of Theatre Art* to explain their beliefs on the foundation of basic rules of theatre. They

understood that their readers will be at different levels and want different things from their text.

They state:

"The book assumes that some of its readers are interested principally in developing appreciation and rational enjoyment of the dramatic art; others, a background for detailed and specialized study of one of its facet; and still others, the basis for professional training as a teacher, director, or other artist of the theatre" (Albright et al. iii).

In *Principles of Theatre Art*, they speak about breaking up the text into sections. "... it is best to memorize 'by wholes', or certainly by large units (88)."

It helps if one looks at the work that needs to be memorized as a

plate of food. Some people can scarf down the entire plate in a matter of moments using their hands, with no utensils and maybe not even taking bites, but do they know what they just ate, and can they explain what exactly it tasted like? Other people need utensils to slice everything up into sections and eat the food one bite at a time, but when will they finish the food at this rate? In the end, you only want to take in as much as you can digest and at a rate that is efficient enough to comfortably reach your deadline/due date.

Being efficient with how much and what information you take in is important while doing work. This thought process is the same for your performance. If you can

take in all the information in one big bite and still process it, then there is nothing wrong with that. This may not be the case for other people. Finding what size and portion of work you can digest at a time is very important. It will dictate how soon you need to start preparing to do work as well as figuring out what specific tools you will need to take for each situation.

Tools such as "prop reading" will work to an extent. Prop reading is when you use something to follow along word by word or line by line with what you are reading. This is a common practice that I used in

elementary school. This can be done with just a finger. I have seen it go as far as using scrap paper for the reader to go line by line while using this same paper to take notes on the things the person has noticed while reading. This can get the performer started, but it may need to be adapted or advanced depending on the performer. Prop reading gives a double stimulant; first, you can only focus on one thing at a time. Second, it gives the performer an opportunity to reflect on what they read so there is an accompanying corresponding thought.

A device that I created to make reading more enjoyable is what I like to call a "spectacle stick". This is

something that brings me joy to hold while I am doing work, or specifically reading a script. This can be a laser pointer, a bookmark with a beloved quote, or even one of those giant pointer fingers from elementary school. A spectacle stick should be something to stimulate your mind and make the work you are doing more enjoyable. All these options are here for you to explore what will make you, the performer, more prepared for the work you have to accomplish. The goal is to keep your focus on the text while reading.

Also, reading the material out loud is better than just reading it

in your head. A connection is reinforced when the words have an audio stimulant attached to them. Whereas traditional learning assumes all practitioners to learn best by a cookie-cutter approach of simply reading and memorizing, I have found hands-on learning where the subject matter can be seen and/or heard to be most effective. Highlighting the lines is a form of visual stimulation. The prop reading is an example of a physical stimulant. There is power in touching the material you are working with.

Now, I will talk about audio methods. Recording one's lines also helps with memorization as well as tone and context exploration. Audio stimulants can

reinforce what the character says, and how it sounds when said. "If initial presentations are made by auditory methods and varied associative abilities developed by coincidence with the teaching of skills, auditory learners can reach a high level of thoughtful, silent reading." was the conclusion that Bernardine G. Schmidt, a former teacher from Chicago with a focus in atypical students came up with after running a number of tests to find and create better readers(Schmidt 7). Audio stimulants are things that you hear and will trigger you to remember or do something specific.

If one is watching other people perform a finished product of the same work which they must do later or are currently working on, it can lead to new discoveries. Stage readings of a script can help you find the nuance and tone of lines, based on how others say the lines, comparing them with how you might say them or discover the things you do not want to do. This may be more difficult when just reading in your head alone.

Recording the lines in your own voice gives you practice as well as an opportunity to play back to what you just did. Another way is to find someone to say your lines and record them for you to listen back to. Someone else's voice will

give a different type of stimulus and you will be able to hear how they understand the text and what they gathered from the reading. Different people notice different aspects of a text so another perspective will open one's view or understanding of the possibilities in the text.

The aim is not for you to just do what they did, but to learn from their discoveries. If you, the performer, do not trust or have faith in your discoveries then discuss them with the director to make sure your discoveries are on track with the larger vision. Learn to trust

yourself more, your gut instincts are right more often than not.

WHEN SHOULD YOU START THE WORK?

Deciding when to start working and preparing for a role is very important. Starting too late is never good and starting too soon can be dangerous if you are not willing or able to adapt what you have retained in the process. I agree with the authors of *Principles of Theatre Art* when they explain "Indeed, it is often as dangerous to memorize one's lines too early in the rehearsal period as it is to memorize them too late" (Albright et al. 89). Come to

rehearsal with as much context and discoveries as possible, but do not be so stuck on these choices that you are unable to make new ones or adapt to the notes, space, and director.

Also, if you are processing information inefficiently there is a higher chance of the director not receiving your artistic decisions well. Or your artistic decisions are not backed by context from the script and director. For example, I received the note that I was making Barfée too old in *Putnam*, so I had to do more digging and figure out the moments I felt answered the director's request of making Barfée carry himself younger on stage. At first, a lot of my

acting choices appeared as attitude while delivering my lines and I made choices based on how I thought Barée was feeling and I considered how he might respond to hearing the dialogue in the space as opposed to tuning in and out of conversation. When I received the note from my director, I went back to my script to find moments of childishness and youthful energy from Barfée. That way, when I returned to the stage, my acting choices had specific motivation from the script. You can create more work trying to relearn or transition into new discoveries if you are too stuck in your ways. The script is your

foundation, if you find yourself getting off track of the work you are doing, going back to the text will help you reestablish yourself.

Waiting until the last minute will do the same and can lead to a lack of trust with your fellow actors and the production team. They will be nervous during performances because they are not sure whether you will be consistent during a performance. Finding the best time for you the performer to start memorizing will come with trial and error. There is no perfect person and no perfect process.

I had a problem understanding when I needed to start memorizing lines. Twyla Tharp, a performer and one of America's

greatest choreographers since 1965, speaks on memory and how the strength of your memory will not make you the most creative person. Tharp states:

"... thinking of memory only as a tool for recitation is simplistic. It shrinks our minds down to the size and sophistication of a personal computer—a machine defined and priced by how much it can remember and how quickly it can retrieve information. Creativity has little to do with this kind of memory. If it did, the most creative people would have hair-trigger memories of photographic proportions, and our artists would all be found slaughtering the competition on Jeopardy" (Tharp 60).

In this quote, there is a failure to say one cannot or does not do both.

It is possible for creative people to

have hair-trigger memories. The person dealing with learning differences must find ways to adapt whatever they do so they can perform the work to the best of their capabilities.

TRIAL AND ERROR

Not everything you do will show results immediately. There will be an area of discovery and failure that you must function through. Tharp has a chapter titled "An "A" in failure" (Tharp 210). in her New York Times bestselling book *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*. In it, she states, "Every creative person has to learn to deal with failure, because failure, like death and taxes, is inescapable. ... Believe me, success is preferable to failure.

But there is a therapeutic power to failure. It cleanses. It helps you put aside who you aren't and reminds you who you are. Failure humbles." (Tharp 213) Being unafraid to try new things and make discoveries is part of learning and building the work.

In theatre, the choices one makes with their character should be shown in the beginning and during the process to your fellow performers and crew. This way, in an actual performance, they understand what decisions and tactics may come from you while you're onstage. The rehearsal process is the time and place for effort, stumbles, and discoveries. Being afraid and waiting too long to show the work you

have been doing can not only lead to a "bad" performance, but more importantly, it can be dangerous for the people working with you. The cast and crew will not know what to expect from you on a night-to-night basis.

During my second year of graduate school, I was working on at least two productions at a time. Repertory shows for young audiences, which I rehearsed every morning five days a week, and another production that I rehearsed during the evenings five days a week. I did this process for six consecutive months, working on a total of three productions that semester. I was not aware going into

the process how much material I would have to retain and be able to reiterate with meaning during this time. This caused me to constantly be ill-prepared for rehearsal. This led my directors and my fellow performers to overcompensate or worry about the things I lacked, failed to do, and did not retain during the process.

I could not make new discoveries or understand my work until it was almost too late in the process. I lacked the proper use of the tools it takes to prepare and contribute to the process. I was not aware of the space required between productions to let go of one set of information and start taking in the next set of information. Things such as proper

highlighting as well as taking more of my personal time to do more developing and building of a character.

I was using the skills I was taught but not to the best of their or my own ability. After doing them for so long I learned I had to make new tools to work for me. I learned to not just follow the steps but cater them to what I needed to make myself feel more comfortable in my work. Along with understanding all of the aspects of the production so it runs smoothly and the team is comfortable.

SPEAKING ABOUT YOUR LEARNING
DIFFERENCE

Making people aware of your learning difference can be very hard for any person, let alone a performer who may already be worried about getting a job because of their height, look, etc. It is important the performer communicates their situation so the people around them have a better understanding of their process.

Knowing your learning differences does not mean you get to

use it as a crutch to not do or finish the work you have been assigned or hired to complete. It is vital to properly communicate your process and why you may not be doing things in a traditional manner. Knowing when and how to communicate your process is very important. You may want to tell people before you go into an audition, so they are prepared. You can tell them after they offer you a position to join their team. It is not safe to communicate too late into the process, preventing the production team from being able to provide assistance.

It is always okay to verbally communicate what you are going through

within a process but for safety and security purposes, I recommend putting something in writing. An email or signed note will work. Making sure you elaborate on what your learning difference looks like in person so the company is properly prepared. Withholding information on what you are going through will hurt the production team.

It is important who you tell about your learning difference, whether it be the director or stage manager of a production, a professor, or a medical professional. You want to make these people aware of what your process is (and will be) while

working with them on any given production. This gives them the opportunity to help you get along more efficiently throughout the performance. This will also relieve some potential stresses you experience while trying to keep your learning difference hidden.

Speaking about what I find difficult used to be a huge "no" for me because I did not want to be treated differently than my peers. I was worried that if I made people aware of what I was going through they would think I am not as capable as they are. Truthfully, I am not as capable as them in some areas and they are not as capable as me in others. This does not make them any better than me nor

am I better than them. We are all different and have our own strengths and weaknesses.

I was aware that I was dealing with some type of issue when doing my work, but I was not sure how I should elaborate so I stayed prideful and just kept it hidden. It was not until it was almost too late into a production that I realized I had to say something to someone about why I was struggling through this process. Fortunately, my director knew what I was talking about and was able to help me get further along with the production.

I did not have as much success when I was trying to get clinically diagnosed with my learning difference. The process was so difficult it overwhelmed me, and I did not finish. This made me feel incompetent or "slow".

Due to new challenges in life, specifically in the medical field regarding Covid-19, a lot of the paperwork was either virtual or seemed irrelevant to what I was experiencing. It appeared that the University of Louisville Disability Resource Center wanted to treat all learning differences the same and put them under just one giant umbrella. I understand that the world was in unforeseen times so I do not want to hold

the University to this singular experience, but it is what I felt during the process.

A part of me still wished I finished the process so I can know what exactly I am dealing with. I also understand that it is not too late. There is still an opportunity for more discovery and trying other resources that better serve me.

A person living with their learning difference must understand there is more than one way to accomplish a goal and that goes for diagnosis as well. There are other medical facilities that specifically deal with learning differences.

Websites like mentalup.com, an Educate Award-winning platform, and ldaamerica.org whose mission "is to create opportunities for success for all individuals affected by learning disabilities through support, education, and advocacy." Both websites have online learning disability tests. These tests are real but may not be the most accurate, so I still suggest going to a medical professional. This will not solve all your problems, but it is somewhere to start.

Not everyone will understand what you are going through with your learning difference. There can be an attitude of "Figure it out" or "If I can do it, then you can do it" from people who do not

embrace learning differences or may not know what it is. Their ignorance is not a knock on you or your capabilities. It is possible they are living with their own learning differences and are choosing not to accept it. An example of this in *Putnam* could be Chip Tolentino or Marcy Park not using any special skill to spell their words, yet they have some of the same complaints as the other spellers in the song "*Pandemonium*". Chip won the spelling Bee the year before and lost early during the play. Showing that everyone has good days and bad days is a matter of how you handle your

learning difference for each specific situation.

My father was a huge proponent of this way of thinking in my younger years. I understood that my father's thinking was coming from a place of love. He did not want me to fall behind my classmates or in life. It had a negative impact on me when doing homework and caused me to be afraid of asking questions. I would second guess if what I was not understanding was my fault or a common misunderstanding others also had with the work I was doing.

Later, my father had more kids and my little brother seemed like he was having the same issues I was having when I was younger. Because of what I know now and

better communication with my father,
we were able to get my little
brother's help sooner. This allowed
him to get the proper help and learn
how to work more efficiently with his
learning difference at a younger age
than myself. This prevented my little
brother from having to understand his
learning difference alone.

There will be moments while
doing this work you will find things
difficult. It is not supposed to be
easy, and it will not be fair, but
you must use these tools to balance
the playing field when performing and
working in spaces.

IMPROVING YOUR LEARNING DIFFERENCE

Whether you like it or hate it, your learning difference will be a part of your life. It is up to you to decide if you will lean into the difference or just try to maneuver around it. Your learning difference is what makes you unique and it can be something you are or are not proud of (yet). You possess a number of other skills that make you more than competent to understand and do the work.

RAND Reading Study Group is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decision-making through research and analysis. This organization has a book titled *Reading for Understanding*. In it, they state:

“To comprehend a reader must have a wide range of capabilities and abilities. These include cognitive capabilities, motivation, and various types of knowledge. Of course, the special cognitive, motivational, and linguistic capabilities and the knowledge base called on in any act of reading comprehension depends on the text in use and this specific activity in which one is engaged”
(Snow 13).

This quote urges you to figure out or ask yourself some questions. Can you pay attention to detail? Do you have a purpose to advance yourself and learn more? Do you

have any knowledge of the subject at hand? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you are more than capable of working with your learning difference and discovering multiple ways for you to not just do work and accomplish tasks but advance the work, and/or manipulate it so it advances you in the field. If you answered "no" to some of these questions that does not mean you are incapable or there is no hope, it means you must find what will motivate you to want more out of yourself and the work you are doing.

The things that motivate you will not necessarily motivate the person

next to you. But that doesn't make their motivation or your motivation any less valid. If you have no personal reason for growth, then this process can be more difficult.

While preparing to play William Barfée in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, I found myself lacking motivation when studying lines and trying to figure out how to pronounce and spell the words in the script. I was under the impression that because it was a musical, I would not need to work as hard on the spoken text. I felt this way because I am more musically inclined, putting me in the false reality that I would not need as much preparation. This play and text deserved all my

attention and comprehension as anything else that I do.

In theatre, you need a "why". This "why" refers to a through line, an overall motivation for your character and their story. In life, you will need this same "why" for yourself. What is the reason for wanting to grow yourself with your learning difference? This reason cannot be given to you. You may have to dig deep and decide if it is worth it for you to strengthen your habits with your learning difference and become a performer that can handle any type of work no matter how difficult. The play script needs to be read,

comprehended, and defined just as much as any other text.

PREPARING FOR THE ROLE

There are a lot of elements that go into a great theatre performance. Things such as voice, movement, creativity, as well as being in the moment. All these things can be achieved without a proper understanding of the text. Because of this, there will be someone who appreciates the work you have done on stage. For one to achieve mastery, or to deliver a true performance, one must fully understand the content they are performing as fully as

possible, within the given amount of time.

There is a misconception that the more time you spend on something the more you will become familiar with it. This is not always the case, especially if you live with a learning difference. Things happen in life, and there are some people that are blessed (if you're spiritual) and/or those who display socially approved genetic attributes (if you are more science-based) than their peers. Everyone's processing system is not the same. Therefore, what one performer can do with twenty minutes is different from another.

It is on the performer to decide what to focus on for the best presentation of

themselves. This must be done before the performance, rehearsal, callback, and audition. No matter which phase of the performance you are in, the content you have will need to be presented.

Being comfortable with handling the content is going to improve how one carries themselves in these fields. Telling a person to immediately start with highlighting lines may not be the best first step if you only have five minutes in a cold read audition. However, if that strategy has proven most successful for you then pull up with every color possible and get to work.

Do not be afraid of your process and do not just change it without doing research and practice in what you believe will advance you as a performer. Doing too many things to prepare for a role can be just as dangerous as not doing enough, dangerous in the sense of not being able to show your best self as a performer.

Also, the process that you do may not be the same for every role. Being able to notice that one needs to adjust and accommodate their process will make you a better performer. There will be moments on stage and during the process when you will have to adjust.

CONCLUSION

The process of accomplishing a goal will have its highs and lows, you must not get too caught up in either. You should enjoy the process and take in the growth that you develop with time. This work will not solve all your problems overnight, and you may not see the changes taking place in your process immediately. The tools provided are some of many that can help you grow as a performer. No matter which tool you use, it will not matter if you do

not take the time to apply and adjust the tools to your specific learning style.

I want to encourage performers not to be afraid of themselves or the things they have to do to feel prepared for any performance situation. I spent a lot of time trying to be a certain type of performer that I am not. Because I thought that was what I had to do to accomplish a goal. Now I realize that I need to be the best version of myself and to let this version not only shine, but grow, make mistakes, and learn. Therefore, when it is time for a performance, rehearsal, or show, I know who I am and what I will do to best prepare for these situations.

I understand I cannot possibly think of everything that could ever happen during a show, yet I want to be so prepared, with a strong understanding of myself and trust in my processing system so I can naturally react, and successfully handle any unforeseen circumstances that may arise.

I want you to find a connection to yourself using the tools and any others you find conducive to your own development as a performer. There are always opportunities for growth; I hope you use these tools to seize these opportunities and make the most of them.

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CURRICULUM VITA

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Education:

Miles College, Spring 2020 Graduation (Bachelor of Art in Theatre);

Goose Creek High School, Spring 2016 Graduation; 3.8 on 4.0 GPA scale

Berkley County Center for the Arts (BCA), Spring 2016 Graduation

Academic Honors:

Miles College, Magna Cum Laude Graduate

Leadership:

University of Louisville Graduate Student Council Theatre Arts Representative
(2022-2023)

Goose Creek High School Student Body Class President (2015-2016)

Goose Creek High School Student Body Vice President (2014-2015)

Work Experience:

University of Louisville- Graduate Teaching Assistant (2021-present)

- Created weekly lesson plans, adapting my teaching styles to meet the needs of undergraduate students of various age groups, abilities, and college majors.
- Continued self-reflective work to constantly improve personal skillsets that would benefit both his students and himself.
- Encouraged a safe learning and workspace where students felt, not only, safe to absorb knowledge, but also safe to activate what they learned.

University of Louisville - Buyer for Department of Theatre Arts

- Given access to the U of L theatre department's credit card, assuming responsibility for buying properties/set pieces requested from the production manager.

2 Goats Cleaning LLC- Custodian (August 2020-February 2021)

- Traveled locally to clean and maintain the appearances of multiple business offices.
- Kept restrooms and common areas stocked and ready for use.

**Charleston International Airport- G2 Secure Wheelchair Agent/Aircraft Cleaner
(June 2018-July 2020)**

- Demonstrated the safe use of cleaning chemicals to properly clean and sanitize planes before and after flights.
- Received certification to seal planes after cleaning.
- Safely assisted with the prompt transportation of wheelchair-bound flyers throughout the airport facility.

Papa Johns- Pizza Maker (May-June 2018)

- Demonstrated the ability to be a team player by communicating with cashiers, managers, and delivery drivers in order to complete an order most accurately and efficiently.

Planet Fitness- Front Desk Representative (June 2017-March 2018)

- Greeted gym members as they entered the facility and ensured any visitors/nonmembers were accounted for.
- Aided potential customers seeking membership by providing a knowledgeable overview of membership options.

Kentucky Christian University- Custodian (August 2016-May 2017)

- Helped maintain cleanliness of buildings, facilities, and equipment throughout the college campus.

Oasis Unlimited- Sales Representative (seasonal; January 2014-present)

- Provided information to customers on what products would best suit their needs based on their concerns/problem areas, ensuring positive customer experiences.
- Managed transactions and inventory of product.

Technical Skills:

Lighting equipment

Sound equipment

Set construction

Leadership Skills

Power tools

Football

Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)

Zoom

Microsoft Teams

Volunteer Experience:

Chanson Calhoun's Young Stars Performance Camp (Summer 2021)

- Increased the confidence of young performers (age 6-13) by leading a variety of age-appropriate vocal, physical, and mental warmups.
- Assisted with the production of a final recital for camp goers to showcase skills gained from the camp.

Special Olympics Volunteer (2012-2016)

- Assisted special needs students navigate different athletic events
- Adapted communication styles to fit the needs of athletes of differently abled bodies

Theatre- Performance:

The 25 th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee	William Barf ée	University of Louisville	Ari Calvano
Twelfth Night	Orsino	University of Louisville	Jennifer Pennington
Split Second	Rusty	University of Louisville	Sidney Edwards
#Hashtag	Ensemble	University of Louisville	Sidney Edwards
Re-Fashion	Colonel Howard	University of Louisville	Ari Calvano
Happy Ending	Junie	Miles College	Cynthia Williams
A Raisin in the Sun	Walter Younger	Berkley Center for the Arts	Dorothy Smith

The Tempest	Caliban	Berkley Center for the Arts	Dorothy Smith
Our Town	Howie Newsom	Berkley Center for the Arts	Dorothy Smith

Repertory Performance:

Code Switch	Ensemble	University of Louisville	Sidney Monroe
The Ann Frank House	Tour Guide	Goose Creek High School	Jay Watterworth

Theatre- Technical Production:

Set Construction	Falling Into Place	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Set Construction	Diary of Anne Frank	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Set Construction	Falling into Place	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Set Construction	Gaslight	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Sets construction	Crimes of the Heart	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Set Construction	Emotional Creatures	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Light Design	Night at the Movies Light	Krysten Busch	BCA
Light & Sound Design	Alice in the wonderland	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Light & Sound Design	Seven Deadly Sins	Dorothy Smith	BCA
Writer & Director	That's my dream, Girl!	Ruth Randall	Milles College

Nxttime- Musician

- Released original music across multiple streaming platforms including Tidal, Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, YouTube, and SoundCloud
- Wrote, directed, and starred in 20+ music videos released on YouTube (200,000+)
- Performed at various venues including fashion shows, birthday parties, poetry slams, Fringe Festivals
- Travelled the country doing rap showcases in Georgia, Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Alabama, South Carolina and New York
- Wrote 'Just a Hashtag,' an original sing inspired by the UofL student-written production of #Hashtag

Nxttime- Stand Up Comedy

- Performed 10-minute sets at multiple comedy clubs, opening up for headlining comedians.

Nxttime- Playwright

- Honorable Mention in Original One Act Play at the Palmetto Dramatics Association Festival; Lost Ones by Nxttime
- #Hashtag: When Social Media and Social Justice Collide; University of Louisville; co-writer

Hosting Experience

- ALI Ent Artist Showcase (Bi-Monthly, April 2021-present)
- OBI Productions Live Podcast (YouTube Live)
- The Podcast Creator/Co-host (YouTube)
- The Vibe Open Mic Night

Athletics

2015 Offense of Lineman of the Year

2015 All-region Football Player