

An Exploration of Theatre and Film in Washington, D.C.

This summer and throughout my fourth year I would like to further explore my crafts in theatre and film, primarily acting and cinematography. I am applying for funding in order to accomplish two things this summer while living in the Washington, D.C. area: I hope to take two 8-week acting classes at the Studio Theatre and make several short 16mm films. The Studio Theatre is a professional theatre that produces a lot of fresh, contemporary plays, and it also has an acting conservatory for adults. Both of my parents took classes at the Studio when they were not much older than I, and my mother now teaches there. The introductory acting class for all students is called Principles of Realism. In my acting classes at UVa I have grown tremendously in using my mind, body and voice; however, I have worked mostly from a top-down approach, beginning with a scene, analyzing the text and moving inward to find the character. In this class I would learn exercises in stimulus-response, motivation, and characterization that would help me to develop my own personal process for creating a character before tackling a scene or play.

My improvisation class this semester has helped me grow as a performer exponentially, and I would really like to continue my study with Improvisation 1 at the Studio Theatre. The ability to improvise is necessary for daily life, and I also think it is essential for any artist to be able to improvise in their craft. In my current class, I have learned is how to “find the game” in a scene and genuinely enjoy playing it, and this ability has become invaluable to me in any kind of performance. Colette Yglesias Silver, the instructor of improvisation at the Studio, is also a Juilliard-trained dancer, so movement is a large part of her teaching. I think that I am a

strong mover and improviser, and in my career I hope to concentrate further in these areas. This award would help me pay tuition to take Principles of Realism and Improvisation 1.

This year in Cinematography I have learned to work with 16mm film, and I have fallen in love with it. Film picks up so many more gradients in light and color than does HD filmmaking, and I find it extremely rewarding to view the results with a projector after the film has been developed. Shooting with 16mm generally requires a more conscientious and frugal method, and I appreciate that it has a sculptural, tangible quality to it. This medium, however, is extremely difficult for me to afford. With the Arts Scholars grant I would like to purchase a used Paillard Bolex Camera and up to 30 rolls of Kodak 16mm color film, including different film stocks for daylight and tungsten light. I have a TASCAM audio recorder that I will use to record sound while filming and a light meter to correctly measure which F-stop to use on the camera. Costs of development vary widely based on how I want it processed. It is especially costly to have the film professionally transferred to digital with a Telecine machine, so I will only have this done for 1-2 rolls that I think require it. The University's Digital Media Lab owns a Telecine as well. The quality is much lower, but it will save a great deal of money to transfer most of my film rolls to digital copies with this machine. Finally, I will edit my films with Final Cut Pro at UVa, so this will not cost any money.

I would create at least 4 short films in the style of cinema vérité ("film truth"), also known sometimes as observational cinema. My films will not have a script or production schedule, but I assure that each one will have a cohesive

aesthetic and intention. One of my major inspirations is a film that I saw last year at the Virginia Film Festival, *Le Joli Mai* by Chris Marker and Pierre Lhomme.

Composed of many interviews and handheld 'b-roll' footage, *Le Joli Mai* is a portrait of Paris in May 1962, just after the ceasefire with Algeria and the first time in 23 years that France was not involved in a war. In a similar manner, I would like my short films to capture a portrait of Washington, D.C., 'the capital of the free world', in the summer of 2014.

It is difficult to predetermine my subject matter, because much of it will come from exploration of the city and taking out my camera when I find something interesting. I have many ideas in mind for places and events to shoot, however. I would like to take my camera to Arlington National Cemetery, the cherry blossoms along the Tidal basin, and the American Indian museum. There are several large summer events that I would like to document including the annual Tour de Cure bicycle race for the American Diabetes Association, the Capital Pride Parade, the Barbecue Battle on Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. More generally, I would try to capture the various architecture in the city and all of the different kinds of people. I would conduct interviews with friends and willing strangers, because I'm interested in exploring the way people talk and what they talk about. Depending on their circumstances, I will ask interviewees about their daily activities, their views of the United States' place in the world, and about the places they've lived.

While my interests are clearly still split between theatre and film, there are a few motifs that continue coming back to my mind over and over. First of all, I am

fascinated by body language and the many ways that people present their bodies based on their power, socioeconomic status, and personalities. Secondly, I'm very interested in the varying degrees of separation of human society from nature. In both films and theatre, I like to think about how nature is depicted and how people interact with it. As an example of how I will apply this in my films: in a city like Washington D.C., food comes moves from all over into the city, and I'd like to explore what people know and think about their food.

Acting classes in Realism and Improvisation will greatly influence my filmmaking and vice versa. Cinema verité is founded on illuminating life exactly as it is, and to create these films I will need to be constantly improvising based on the subject matter I discover. On the other hand, making observational cinema will help me understand people and my culture more intimately, so that I will be a better actor. Ultimately, my chief interest in these endeavors is to improve my ability to tell compelling and revealing stories.

Budget

1. Principles of Realism (Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory) = \$525
(<http://www.studiotheatre.org/acting-conservatory>)
2. Improvisation (Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory): \$475
3. Paillard Bolex 16mm Film Camera w/ lens and case: \$395
(<http://www.ebay.com/itm/PAILLARD-BOLEX-H16-16MM-MOVICAMERA-w-SOM-BERTHIOT-CINOR-1-2-17-85mm-LENS-/201058283705>)
4. KODAK VISION3 250 Daylight Color Negative Film 7207, 10 rolls @ \$30 each = \$300
(http://motion.kodak.com/motion/Products/Product_Information/Ordering_Info/index.htm-us)
5. KODAK VISION3 500 Tungsten Color Negative Film 7219, 10 rolls @ \$30 each = \$300
(http://motion.kodak.com/motion/Products/Product_Information/Ordering_Info/index.htm-us)
6. Developing costs at CineLab (<http://cinelab.com/PDFS/Cinelab-StudentRateCard2011.pdf>)
 - a. total cost processing and standard definition telecine at \$104 per roll
 - b. cost of just processing at about \$25 per roll
=about \$500
7. Shipping costs: estimated \$100

Total Budget: \$2,600

My Participation in the Arts

In my time at UVa, I have continued to pursue my love for acting and discovered a passion for filmmaking. In the drama department, I have taken Acting I, Acting II, Auditioning, Musical Theatre Performance, Script Analysis, Improvisation, and Film Acting. To complete my drama minor, I plan to take Image to Form, Lighting Technology, and Theatre History next semester. I've been involved in several student theatre groups—First Year Players, Shakespeare on the Lawn, and the Reckless Theatre Company. With the department, I have performed in *The Forgetting River*, *Museum*, *Rhinoceros*, and a devised work entitled *Empty Cups*. I was in the costume crew for *Romeo and Juliet* as well.

I am currently enrolled in Kevin Everson's Cinematography II class in which we have begun to explore the use of color and sound. Affectionately known as "the gutter," cinematography class has become one of my most important communities at UVa. I have also taken Cinema as an Art Form, and I hope I can take more film theory courses. The Filmmakers Society has also been a large part of my experience thus far, and this is how I've learned most of what I know about digital filmmaking. We make a short film every semester as a club, put on the Virginia Student Film Festival in the spring, conduct filmmaking workshops and help each other with our own side projects. This is my second year serving as an executive member, first as Social Media Chair and now, Vice President. Last semester, with the help of the Arts Scholars Award, I wrote, directed and acted in a short horror film with fellow members of the Filmmakers' Society. Currently, I am finishing up editing and working with our sound designer to compose the score.

With Art Scholars, I was in the seminar every semester of my first two years, and I still attend as often as possible. For the first annuals showcase, I performed a scene from *Lungs* with fellow Art Scholar, Christian Selassie. Arts Scholars has provided incredible opportunities for me to connect with UVa professors and staff. In February 2013, I ended up interning for Claude Wampler and traveled to New York to help put up her performance art piece. I've also been consistently in touch with April Ballard, a representative from the Center for Global Health who is looking for students to help with an art and health-related project in Kigali, Rwanda via funds from the Clinton Global Initiative. After graduation I'm hoping to pursue my idea to make a documentary about the extraordinary progress in Rwandan healthcare.