

WEST COAST DRAMA ALUMNI CLAN APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What do you feel are your most significant achievements as a student of the School of Drama?

I came to graduate school at Carnegie Mellon for two reasons: I needed to learn the technical side of lighting design, and I want to teach in the future.

I began lighting for a student organization in undergrad at Tufts University, and really discovered that lighting design is what I love to do. I created the first technical theatre major, focusing on the non-acting side of performance. As I neared the end of my time at Tufts, I realized that starting so late meant I would have to work very hard to get up to speed with my fellow designers. I moved back home to Seattle and contacted Rico Chiarelli at the Pacific Northwest Ballet. I asked if I could do an internship with him, and he agreed. My year in a professional setting solidified my feeling that I needed a more focused education to work on my weaknesses: gear and technology.

With this focus, I found the most technically advanced theatrical program in the country: Carnegie Mellon. My first year was frustrating and I struggled very hard to catch up to my fellow students who seemed to know everything, as if it were their native language. With the help of Cindy Limauro and Todd Brown, and their infinite patience with all my questions, I gradually learned the drafting software, lighting consoles, equipment, and technical skills I was missing. A few weeks ago I was lighting a dance piece and talking to the crew during a break. We started discussing the upgrades they were hoping for the building and what equipment they wanted to bring in, then the benefits of different lighting consoles, and it was a perfectly natural conversation for me. I was finally one of the team, not just the girl sitting on the side nodding. Being able to join conversations and truly know the tools I am using for my art form is my proudest accomplishment from the School of Drama.

The other achievement I am proud of is discovering what kind of professor and mentor I hope to be in the future. Working with the professors at Carnegie Mellon allowed me to observe their teaching techniques and approaches to learning a creative medium. I was given the honor of teaching the freshmen Stagecraft class with Todd Brown, and I have learned so much about my own strengths as a teacher. Watching him interact with the students and seeing how much he truly cares about each individual's educational process is inspiring and enforces my desire to become a professor. I also had the pleasure of taking classes with Abigail Rosen Holmes. She was able to break the boundaries of a conventional professor attitude, and demonstrated the importance of teaching the realities of professional work, not just the ideals of academia. Every professor I have had the pleasure of working with has added to my teaching strengths, and I feel like I could some day live up to the high bar they have put before me.

2. What are your plans for the future?

My ultimate goal is to end up working on the west coast. I would like to work up and down the whole coast, not just California, in as many lighting areas as possible. I would like to explore L.A. and light for television, preferably televised performances. I would like to light plays at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Portland Center Stage, and the Intiman Theatre. I would like to be a part of the amazing west coast opera scene at the San Francisco Opera, Seattle Opera, and Portland Opera. I would also like to design musicals and small experimental theatre pieces in California, Oregon, and Washington.

I am especially interested in working with the numerous dance companies up and down the coast. I worked with the Pacific Northwest Ballet for a year, and it was an amazing experience. The lighting designer I worked with, Rico Chiarelli, also worked with the San Francisco Ballet. Hearing stories about the company and the similarities and differences to PNB made me decide that I would work with them some day. In May, I will be working with a dance company from Wisconsin performing in San Francisco, so I am on my way to lighting shows in California.

After I gain valuable design experience and make as many connections and friendships as possible, I will pursue a teaching career. My undergraduate and graduate schools were both on the east coast, but I would like to teach on the west coast. I believe there are many talented theatre students waiting for a program as prestigious as Carnegie Mellon in the northwest, and I would like to try to develop a program that produces as high a caliber student. I value the education I got at Carnegie Mellon, and the professors I worked with taught me not only about lighting, but about the person I really want to be, and I would like to be that kind of mentor to young designers in the future.

3. How do you envision this award as a stepping-stone towards your future achievements?

I foresee this award connecting me to many of my future collaborators on the west coast. Even submitting the application allows me to show my work to a group of talented designers, directors, managers, and theatre artists in the area I hope to be working in the future. This exposure will be a stepping-stone to future conversations and interviews, and will hopefully peak some interest among the West Coast Drama Alums.

4. *What is your interest in the disciplines of film or television?*

Ultimately, I want to be lighting anything and everything I can get my hands on. Whether it is television, film, theatre, opera, dance, architecture, or some new form of expression that involves light, I would like to work in it. I studied and majored in psychology at Tufts University for my undergraduate degree, and I really see lighting as the psychology of the performance. Working with the psychology of a television series has to be much more subtle than a Broadway musical, but the subtlety and delicateness really intrigues and fascinates me.

I also have had the pleasure of working on several shows with live and prerecorded media, and it is becoming much more common to use cameras as part of live performance. Because of this, it is even more critical that lighting designers are able to work with a camera and adjust to the delicate balance between lighting for the lens and for the eye. This is very challenging, and it makes the trajectory of lighting design an exciting road to travel down.