

Stop Waiting, Start Doing

As dramaturgs we look for connections: connections between the past and future, connections between plays about real life and living real life, connections between what's happening now and where it will lead us. Right now a lot is happening and not a lot at all. It has been seven months since the world changed and life as we knew it in our industry closed indefinitely. I feel like a lot of what I've heard about in the last seven months is that we are waiting for COVID to pass. We are waiting for theatres to open back up. Many of us have been waiting for any jobs to open up that are remotely related to theatre and dramaturgy since we know that we could be waiting a long time for actual dramaturgy jobs to become available. At some point I decided that waiting wasn't doing anything except strengthening my anxiety and teaching me how little patience I truly have. It was time to do. I had to do something, even if I didn't know what at first, I had to do something. In May of this year I decided what I would do. I would apply to go to graduate school.

I graduated with my undergraduate degree in 2019 and proceeded to have my first child, a daughter, a few months later. Summer and fall 2019 we were living in a very different world. I spent a lot of my time at home with my baby adjusting to be a mom and my husband went to school and work everyday anticipating his graduation in April 2020. During my first few months as a mom I was able to dramaturg one production and sign contracts for two more that would be in the spring. I am also a director-dramaturg hyphenate and was able to direct two short plays at a local festival. I was getting into the swing of this new life. I was doing. I felt comfortable being a stay-at-home mom by day and working mom by night. Then COVID hit and I realized I had no idea what I was doing. I had to adjust to my husband being home and doing school from home while I was dealing with two cancelled shows and suddenly no work on the horizon. I began waiting: waiting to learn more about this novel virus, waiting for theatres to open up, waiting for something to make sense. I was just waiting.

What do we do when we feel like all we can do is wait? There has to be something we can do. We are dramaturgs. We don't just wait. We make things happen. We don't wait, we create. So I began creating. If I couldn't be a production dramaturg then I would find other ways to use my skills. I began writing. I outlined and began drafting three short plays. I even finished one. I began creating my business. I do freelance. Freelance is never easy. I began branding myself, boosting my website and social media, and as Lin-Manuel Miranda would put it, I wrote

like I was running out of time. But it didn't feel like enough. I was still waiting. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was still waiting. So, what next?

Like I said at the beginning we are dramaturgs and one thing we do is make connections between what's happening now and where it will lead us. I decided what I needed to do was learn. I have always loved learning and I don't know why this hadn't occurred to me yet. I would learn anything and everything that could advance my career. I took a virtual class from a previous professor about combating white supremacy. I researched and registered for a class on Harvard online via edX. I applied for graduate school. Somewhere in the back of my mind graduate school had always been there and I don't know why, but I had just kept pushing it back and kept it in the back of my mind. It wasn't allowed to make an appearance. I wouldn't let it. I had a baby. I had my degree. I didn't need another degree. I didn't even know what I would do with a graduate degree in theatre. I've always had a dream, again something that I kept pushing to the back of my mind and I wouldn't let it come forward. For almost a decade I have wanted to open a non-profit school of the performing arts for underprivileged children because I believe that all children deserve the chance to learn about and create art. I was doing. No more pushing these ideas to the back of my mind. Whether I was ready or not they had made their appearance and they were there to stay.

I write this now, a month into my graduate program at Southern Utah University seeking my master's degree in Arts Administration. I am doing. I have hired consultants and writers to help me grow my business. I am doing. I am reading scripts regularly (on my own and on a festival literary team) and constantly thinking about the plays that I am writing and where to go next with them. I am doing. It took seven months of a pandemic but my life isn't about waiting anymore. I am doing. My question now is, are you still waiting or are you doing?

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