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## BEYOND THE LAW: JORDAN PAYNE HAY



Noting that the ancient Greek roots of the word “theater” means “seeing place,” Stella Adler, the great acting teacher, described the theater as an important place where individuals can obtain a glimpse of life’s truths and an understanding about the social situation. The theater indeed not only provides a reflection of life for its audience, but also creates a sort of temporary family for the performers and crew members as they bring theatrical works to life. Jordan Payne Hay has a foot planted in both camps, maintaining a long-standing love of musical theater as a spectator and a more active role acting in local theatrical productions. She recently met with the *Maine Bar Journal* to discuss her interests.

**Please tell our readers about your interest in community theater.**

I have always enjoyed singing and performing! My interest in community theater began when I started going to shows and singing in children’s choirs in Kansas City, where I’m from. Now, I am proud to call L/A’s Community Little Theater in Auburn my community theater “home.” I love how community theater brings people together from all walks of life who love singing, dancing or the theater generally and put on a show for the love of performing.



**Are the productions staffed by volunteers?**

I think every theater is a little bit different. At the Community Little Theater, I believe there is a small stipend for a director and choreographer, the folks who do a ton of work and essentially have a second job. But for the actors and people who do lighting and stage work, it is all volunteer. It is all for the love of the theater.

**What are the roots of your interest in theater?**

I can't really recall when I first began singing and performing, but my parents would probably say it started early! I have an early memory of singing in synagogue in choir. I must have loved it, and the rest is history!

**So, did you appear in many high school productions?**

I did. I did shows all throughout high school. They were a truly fun experience and gave me so much joy. I did sports in high school and theater got me involved with a different group of people, which I really loved as well. I carried that joy and passion through to college, at Bowdoin. My best friend and I started a musical theater club at Bowdoin. We put on three musicals while we were in college, including *Hair* and the *25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, which, to this day, is one of my favorite musicals. Also, my best friend and I directed and starred in the musicals because we were (are) both divas and gluttons for punishment.

**How was the reaction to the shows?**

We were pleasantly surprised that our fledgling musical theater club's shows were very well received! I recall one of the coolest things that happened when we ran the group was that some guys who only did sports tried out for the shows and ended up being incredibly talented. One guy was a football player, and he had the support of the whole team, who came out to the shows. He had great comedic timing, and he was the lead in one of our shows! That was such a fun (and exhausting) time in my life.

**How did you first become involved with the Community Little Theater in Auburn?**

I think I just Googled it and reached out to someone to see if I could audition for productions. I am so glad I did, because I love the CLT community in L/A.

**I imagine that with COVID, there was a break in productions. Have they started up again?**

Yes, but things are getting back to normal slowly! There is a Beatles show coming up called, *Let It Be*, in January, which is going to be so great. I can't wait to go. I also can't wait to audition for another show, and maybe even convince my son (who is 2) to come out, as well!



**What is it about community theater that gives you joy?**

I love that it is such a departure from what I am doing in my normal life. It's not like you can break into song and dance in the middle of a normal legal conversation – most of the time, anyway! But that is what musicals are. That is why they are so magical. I also get to meet cool new people that I typically would not have met before. It is a bit cliché, but community theater really “fills my cup.” I love the singing, the dancing, the acting, and the expression of the arts. I have been attracted to it my whole life. It’s “me!”

**One thing that's striking about community theater is that it truly is a shared enterprise. All of these individuals with different backgrounds and interests come together and create a unified work. It is quite remarkable.**

It is! It is a 100-percent group effort. You get really close to the entire cast and crew because you know you are relying on them, and they are relying on you. It is almost like summer camp.

**Have you encountered any challenges in community theater?**

Certainly, the time commitment can be a challenge. While a production is going, it is not a typical nine-to-five lifestyle. However, because it is different from my regular schedule, it is almost like my brain taps into a different place. I am not as tired as if I had put in a regular 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. day.

However, during a production, I definitely am stretching my time as much as it can be stretched.

**Why does community theater matter in our society?**

I think community theater matters for people who see the show and those who put it on. The audience can escape to a new place, take a vacation, learn something new; they can come in from the cold and find themselves on *Avenue Q*, or on a Greek island in *Mamma Mia*. Community theater is such a source of unfettered joy that is otherwise hard to come by in this day and age. As a performer, the shows provide an amazing sense of community, and of being involved in something bigger than yourself. I would like to think that participating makes me a better person to be around in my regular life; a better person to work with, a better person to be married to, and a better person in general.

**What is the best advice you've ever received?**

The one piece of advice that sticks out is something that my mom always says, and up until five or so years ago, I'd roll my eyes. But, of course, she's right. She always says, “SPIN IT,” which is basically her way of saying “when one door closes, another door opens.” If you have a failure, spin it around and turn it into a blessing. I try to use that advice in my life to move on from negativity or try to see the silver lining. To me, “spin it,” also means that if negative things are coming at you, you just spin them away.

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**BEYOND THE LAW** features conversations with Maine lawyers who pursue unique interests or pastimes. Readers are invited to suggest candidates for Beyond The Law by contacting Dan Murphy at [dmurphy@bernsteinshur.com](mailto:dmurphy@bernsteinshur.com).