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## My Final Scene

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# My final scene



I have been acting since I was a little girl when I forced my younger brother to wear leggings on his head while we sang to “Little Bunny Foo-Foo.” I participated in theatre camps every summer and jumped right into the school plays as soon as possible. I loved being on stage and I loved making people smile.

In high school, I landed roles in all the plays. My favorite was *Crimes of the Heart*, when I played Meg Magrath. My director turned our show into a one-act and we traveled around competing against other high schools. I was vocally trained to have a southern accent and I truly feel it was when I grew the most as an actor.

I was excited to jump into the theatre department when I arrived at Linfield. I considered a theatre minor and even competed in the theatre audition for Competitive Scholarship Day. Unfortunately, I realized that theatre was not going to fit into my schedule. Until now.

As a senior with most of my academic requirements completed, I was finally able to rediscover my love of theatre during January Term when I took Beginning Acting with adjunct Professor Katherine Bennett. We started with acting games, exercises and readings, and learned theatre terms such as the fourth wall, striking an object or the set, downstage, upstage, apron, rake, sight lines and the magic “if,” a technique used to situate yourself in a scene in the given circumstances.

Walking into the theatre that first day of class was surreal. It took me back to when I performed a monologue for Competitive Scholarship Day at Linfield. It also reminded me of all the plays I had watched from the audience, longing to be on stage. But most of all, I was just excited to act again.

You could tell who in the class had acting experience, and who had never stepped onto a stage. Even though I had been acting for a long time, I had never taken a class that explored the theory of acting. I. Was. Excited.

Each class started with a game or activity. We played name games and games that brought out our inner clown. Bennett encouraged us to get out of our skin and learn how to be comfortable on stage and with our classmates. She didn’t want us to worry about what our peers might be thinking, but to just live in the present moment and connect with the other person on stage. Over and over she encouraged us to just “get up there and don’t be afraid to be good!”

We had three exams during that first week and used the techniques that Bennett taught to force us out of our shells. For example, one activity included running through an entire scene as fast as we could. Other examples included hiding and peeking out from behind the curtains before introducing ourselves as clowns or touching our scene partner in a new place for every line spoken. Bennett explained how we would be able to feel the difference in the connection of the scene and how each activity helped us reach a specific goal in the scene.

During week two, we were required to memorize a monologue, selected from the play *Kennedy’s Children* by Robert Patrick. Besides the tests, this was our first graded assignment. We performed our monologue twice – once with no direction, and a second time after Bennett provided feedback and tips. I played Rona, a sloppy, washed up ex-activist turned lawyer with a drug-using husband.

Bennett spent at least 15 minutes discussing each student’s monologue. She wrote suggestions to improve the scene and helped each of us accomplish them with tips and more activities. It was amazing to see the transformation in everyone’s monologues.

One evening, we left Marshall Theatre and attended *Driving Miss Daisy*, produced by the Gallery Theatre in McMinnville. The production featured a three-person cast. Our whole class enjoyed the play and fell in love with the characters and how the actors created meaningful connections on stage.

Shortly after, Bennett gave us our final scenes from *The Shape of Things* by Neil LaBute and *Beyond Therapy* by Christopher Durang. We were assigned scene partners and had to be ready to present on the final day of class.

I partnered with Zach Brehmeyer ’19 to perform a scene from *Beyond Therapy*. I played a crazy therapist and Zach played a homosexual man who is seeking advice from me regarding a peculiar situation with his partner. The comedic scene involves me yelling out profanities at Zach, stuffing my face with a cookie while rolling on the ground, and being shot with a fake gun. My roommates loved helping me memorize my lines for this scene and thought it was hilarious.

It was incredible to see how much my classmates and I grew as actors. Some of the most reserved students in the class completely came out of their shells and grew tremendously. As for me, I found a part of myself that had been missing for the past four years. Thanks to this January Term class, I was finally able to return to my roots as the curtains close on my Linfield experience.

– Morgan Gerke ’16

Morgan Gerke ’16, playing the part of a wacky therapist, advises client Zach Brehmeyer ’19 during a scene from *Beyond Therapy* during the final performance for the January Term class *Beginning Acting*.