

LIVING AND ACTING IN KANSAS CITY VERSUS  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A THESIS IN  
Theatre

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of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of  
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MASTER OF ARTS

by  
ERIN KIMBERLY DESEURE

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Erin Kimberly DeSeure, Candidate for the Master of Arts

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2011

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to compare theatre students' and recent theatre student alumni's descriptions of acting opportunities in Kansas City versus Southern California. Students from Southern California and Kansas City including, but not limited to, undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Missouri –Kansas City and Chapman University, completed a survey that has been summarized in my findings. Conclusions are made based on the surveys, interviews and research conducted about student opinions of both geographical locations.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled “Living and Acting in Kansas City Versus Southern California,” presented by Erin Kimberly DeSeure, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worth of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Felicia Londré, Ph.D., Committee Chair  
Department of Theatre

Jennifer Martin, Ph.D.  
Department of Theatre

Tom Mardikes, Chair of UMKC Theatre and Professor of Sound Design  
Department of Theatre

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## INTRODUCTION

From Stanislavsky's acting theories to modern-day teachers of technique, there are countless methods and dozens of training schools that actors have at their disposal to inspire success, but researchers and theorists have trouble pinpointing the reason/s actors succeed. Was it their education, their connections, or just plain good luck? In a somewhat elusive and individually-directed art form, it's surprising that any one actor or actress ever makes a career for him or herself.

Many factors and components go into an actor's decision about what city to move to after deciding to pursue the theatre. Most go to Los Angeles, New York or Chicago and join the thousands pursuing the same dream. Do those who stay closer to home or choose a regional theatre city have a better shot at success? When beginning research on the topic, I found that most sources were how-to books rather than evidence-based or helpful examples of which city to go to and why. Most books assume that a serious actor travels to one of the big three cities in the United States for theatre. In fact, one book titled *The Actor's City Sourcebook. A Comparative Guide to America's Best Places to Work and Live as a Performing Artist*, by Andrea Wolper, listed 5-10 regional theatre cities as the best places to work and live as a performing artist (Kansas City was not one of them). Wolper fails to provide sound rationale behind her decisions; though she does argue why some cities make the list, she does not describe how she chose only the cities that she wrote about. There is a clear need to tackle the question of living and working in cities through a more research-centered view, rather than an aesthetic one. An actor making a decision to move to a city will find countless books about "the business" in L.A. or "how to get an agent" in New York City, or which city is best, and it's generally

understood that “breaking in” is a long and difficult process in those cities, but they all fall short for the same reason: none provide research and study, instead they fall into an all too familiar anecdotal pattern.

One of the most popular trends in the various “how-to” books that I read while researching this topic was self-management. So much of an actor’s success depends on his or her ability to market him or herself much as a businessman would market his leading products. According to Bonnie Gillespie’s book about the working actor in Los Angeles, “marketing is a major part of an actor’s success.”<sup>1</sup> And the way actors market themselves is constantly changing. Personal headshot and resume “drop-off” routines used to be popular and acceptable forms of marketing for the actor, but now if an actor walked into an agency or a casting director’s office, he or she would be met with much-less acceptance of such a practice. Mass mailings have instead taken over the submission process with email and electronic submissions not far behind. The future of casting submissions rests in technology. Digital reels, websites, email attachments of JPEG headshots and PDF resumes will all soon replace completely the “old” mass mailings. Actors have always given gifts and sentiments to instill a director’s memory of them, but that has evolved into using (more regularly) business cards and postcard mailings to wish holiday greetings or announce performance gigs. This is especially present in working environments like L.A. (which will be discussed more thoroughly in a later chapter). The point of all this dialogue is not to discourage the trends that have started in the world of professional acting, but instead to describe and inform the way we look at the acting profession. There are many aspects beyond simply the craft of acting that determine success, particularly in a large and ever-growing market like L.A..

Of course it costs money to print resumes and headshots and to hire someone to put together a digital reel or portfolio; however, marketing is one facet that actors have control over. In any city auditioning and booking jobs can be an exhaustive task, and in most cases, it is like running a marathon race. The runner prepares for months, sometimes even years, to successfully complete her race. She must be disciplined; she takes care of her body and trains it for the upcoming race with training runs at short and long distances, much like an actor who trains, auditions and trains some more for the one big break he may get. The marathon can also be a mind game, challenging the human brain and forcing it to face its darkest places of doubt and self-consciousness. Runners talk about “hitting a wall” during longer races and it happens at different points for every runner. Usually, if a runner has trained well and disciplined himself well enough the wall is largely a mental game. It is the same for the actor. She may become discouraged by receiving too many negative responses at auditions, despite her extensive training and discipline, and like the marathon runner, her wall can be a reality, but it can also be a mental trick that unfortunately comes with the trade.

Sometimes an actor may immediately find success due to sheer ability. However, for the most part, this is rare for actors who are extremely talented. For example, Tom Hanks was told by his high school drama teacher that he’d never have a future as an actor. It obviously took him a bit more time to establish himself as a talent in the theatrical community. There are countless anecdotes about actors working for years and years before being discovered or placed in a major role. Despite the hardship associated with an actor’s early years, these are the years I am most interested in for this thesis.

How often do actors get cast? How long does it take for them to get cast, to “break in?” Does living in a particular city help or hinder this process? Are part-time jobs available in particular cities? Are directors looking for new faces? These questions and more were posed to a number of student and recent graduated actors living in Southern California and the Kansas City area. Students and recent graduates stand at the precipice of new theatrical experience and can offer insightful opinions about the variety of different factors that go into beginning a successful acting career. This study may offer a unique opportunity to be involved in research that describes budding actors’ opportunities across the country. To date, I have not found any data or research that gauges student opinions about acting opportunities in particular cities. Answering this question could inform actors who have considered both locations. It could also pose further study beyond this thesis and provide a springboard for future research about other regional theatre cities in comparison to larger markets like L.A., Chicago and New York City. Regional theatre cities have gotten little attention when it comes to discussing professional actors’ working environments. Students’ observations on this matter have been obtained through surveys.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Previous Study and Scholarship Focused on Actor Success**

There is an abundance of qualitative actor studies in the field of theatre; in fact, after a short trip to the library one might realize quickly how many autobiographies and interviews have been published over the years about actors and actresses. Most of them focus on famous actors in Hollywood or revered stage actors from the past. To a budding professional actor, these autobiographies and interviews serve as inspirational words of wisdom based on years of experience, and they offer anecdotal stories that can help build

the actor's community. There are a handful of important works and studies conducted about actor proficiency and success.

Academics and professionals have written countless "how-to" books and practical handbooks about success and acting technique in an attempt to answer the question: how does one succeed as an actor? These books are not inadequate; however, they do leave a gap in research and in the attempt to pin point what helps an actor succeed in theatre. On the more academic side of "how-to" books are the handbooks or technique books for acting. See the appendix for a full list of books.

In fact, Helga and Tony Noice surveyed thirty-five colleges and universities in the United States about acting textbooks used in the classroom, and the most "popular" authors were Robert Cohen and Uta Hagen (Cohen receiving ten mentions and Hagen receiving seven).<sup>2</sup> They also concluded that most acting textbooks refer to an actor's "imaginative resources" and treating the training of the actor as an "instrument."<sup>3</sup> The textbooks include little to no mention of how to sell the student as an actor.

Another study conducted by Pattie P. Gillespie and Kenneth M. Cameron described the evolution of the types of textbooks used in theatre academia from their first appearance in the United States to the 1960s. Gillespie and Cameron trace actor training from apprentice-style, to expressionistic technique of the thirties and forties, to the emergence of Stanislavsky techniques in the late thirties through the dominance of the fifties and sixties.<sup>4</sup>

In the same volume of essays about American theatre education, Nathan Stucky and Jessica Tomell-Presto write about their study of a few present-day theatre training programs: Yale University, Illinois State University, Southwest Texas University, Florida

State University, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the University of Colorado, Ohio State University, and the University of California San Diego. The study researched the similarities and differences in voice and movement curriculum, observing pedagogy and textbook usage. Just as Noice and Noice reported in their studies, Stucky and Tomell-Presto observed that schools focus on training the actor as an instrument. Stucky and Tomell-Presto also observed that academic programs attempt to separate, or “isolate,” skills in movement and voice in order to “reunite” those skills at the end of an actor’s training.<sup>5</sup>

### The Other “How-To” Books

Instead of listing the less-academic “how-to” books in my content, a full list of the consulted works can be found at the end of this document in the appendix and within the full bibliography. The substance of these books relies on anecdotes and personal experience. Authors range from former and current casting directors, artistic directors, general theatre practitioners, to former actors. They all share similar qualities, but most importantly, they strive to answer the question: how can I become a good actor? Some pertain to specific geographical areas and others to the field in general. Some even become more specific with focus on a genre. For example, David Craig’s book focuses on musical theatre.

After reading the “how-to” books I was left with the following question: what can an actor actually control? Can she pave a road to success willfully with good technique or strong auditioning, or is she instead at the mercy of an arbitrary casting world based primarily on luck? Many authors, particularly acting technique theorists, had disparate opinions, and thus I began to consider the dilemma that many actors must face upon



reading these books: what kind of training does an actor need? Scholars' and practitioners' opinions attempt to explain the audition and casting process in relation to career success; however, actor training and audition training are different than marketing and real-world business preparation. Theatre teachers advocate actor-training programs for the beginning practitioner. The theatre departments of schools, colleges and universities stress the importance of a rigorous actor-training regimen.

Despite countless books published on “making it” in Los Angeles, it seems that none provides research from the *peer* actor community; instead, like the other studies and interviews or autobiographies they focus on giving advice from the seasoned and professional. Furthermore, research suggests that Kansas City lacks any publication helping an actor get started. However, this study does not seek to instruct the actor or actress on how to become a professional in either Los Angeles or Kansas City. This research and study attempt to paint a geographical environment of the beginning student or recent alumni theatre professional. Understanding the type of education students are receiving helps put into perspective their concepts of the craft of acting in relationship to the business side of pursuing a career in acting.

Two of the four schools surveyed for this study refer to their curriculum/program as “rigorous,” and all claim to prepare students for a professional career in theatre. M.F.A. programs, in particular, train an actor in every way imaginable: voice, body, scene study, historical methods of performance, clowning, etc. Student opinions on the matter have been gathered and will be discussed later.

Practitioners, both scholarly and practical, have disparate views on pursuing training. There are two schools of thought, basically: school or no school. Theatre

scholars and professionals like David Mamet advocate practical, non-academic education of the actor. Mamet believes the collegiate level of theatre training to be largely fraudulent, even calling theatre teachers themselves “frauds.”<sup>6</sup> This school of thought places emphasis on doing, rather than being or becoming a character, opposing the school of thought associated with Stanislavsky or the Method. Stanislavsky himself, however, admitted that he did not create a method, and to his death he viewed his research and findings as incomplete. Stanislavsky constantly revised and edited his teachings on acting, particularly that of emotional recall (which Mamet has serious concerns about).

Noice and Noice observed that unlike other fields, acting is not, necessarily, the type of field that with applied practice, the practitioner achieves excellence.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not one school of thought is correct, the question remains, does practice benefit the student?

Many theatre scholars and practitioners continue to advocate for an actor’s formal academic training. Michel Saint-Denis states “Students often feel that technique hampers spontaneity, that it kills creativity. But if one has learned and absorbed technique it becomes second nature.”<sup>8</sup> Saint-Denis advocates a four-year actor training program, the first year dedicated to physical, vocal and imagination discovery, the second year to transformation and acquiring expression, the third year to application and interpretation, and the final year to performing.<sup>9</sup>

Most theatre professionals can agree that the audition and casting process is daunting. Mamet writes how the actor has no control over success: “It is not under your control whether your career will be brilliant—all that is under your control is intention.”<sup>10</sup> This coming from the same man who tells actors not to have a back-up plan—try living

in Los Angeles, auditioning, paying rent, paying the bills, without having a back-up plan. David Craig writes, “much of the audition process is puzzlement and both sides [auditioning actor and audition auditor] know it.”<sup>11</sup> All of the theory and handbook guides to acting have the same problem: none of these books addresses the status quo facts about an actor’s life. They stick to the concept of auditioning, the concept of becoming an actor, or living in L.A.; but they neglect the reality of doing so in terms of gathering information from the people, the actors, themselves on the journey.

Those actors are on the front lines, digging trenches in a battle towards professionalism that may take a lifetime. But rather than being consulted and conversed with, they are being talked at by those who are already successful, accomplished and midway through their careers. And that certainly has its place in an actor’s training and helps build a basis for knowledge in the field, however, much value can be found in peer opinion in describing the reality of a particular environment. A point of clarification: I do not mean to dethrone acting theorists; instead, I hope to extend their research to a greater degree. Actors should be studied in-progress, coupled with already existing study of successful actors. For example, as they are auditioning and attempting to begin careers, instead relying solely on “how-to’s,” giving actors a sense of the reality of circumstance relevant and pertaining to their geographical area.

## Actor Studies

### *Helga and Tony Noice*

Noice and Noice have engaged in a decade of research about actor memorization and technique that has resulted in important findings that have multi-disciplinary results. The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting: A Cognitive View focuses on the

cognitive properties involved in professional acting, most specifically, memorization. The Noices' in-depth study analyzes different methods of memorization, one study in particular, comparing rote memorization to other less-rigid forms of memorization. Noice and Noice discovered that "rote memorization is a very inefficient strategy for both groups, even for material that must be learned verbatim."<sup>12</sup> In the process of their study, interesting observations are made about actors, including student actors and professional actors who attended college theatre training programs. Noice and Noice discovered that "pessimistic predictions" about the number of actors who make a full-time living in theatre "concern only acting *skill*. When one includes such important factors as appearance, personality, and self-marketing ability, the percentage of college-trained actors who actually make a full-time living in theatre is far lower."<sup>13</sup> They based these conclusions on statistics obtained from Equity Tables released in 1994. At that time, according to Noice and Noice, only 1,000 out of every 30,000 actors made \$25,000 per year. They concluded that "fewer than 1% of trained actors make a living in theatre."<sup>14</sup>

*Eric T. Hetzler*

A study conducted by Hetzler concerning actors' emotion serves as an example of a study conducted with several hundred actors; the survey was distributed to over one hundred and fifty theatres, universities and individuals. He asked questions directly related to experiencing emotion on stage, addressing the common assumption that a good actor must feel what he or she is portraying. The study determined that "actors do not necessarily view acting as a question of emotion at all. The actors in this study generally see emotions a by-product of the reaction of their character's circumstances"<sup>15</sup> This study

takes a step in asking for actor's opinions about the process of acting and sets a precedent for future studies, like this one, to do the same.

### *Thalia Goldstein*

Goldstein's study selected eleven professional actors who have been working on Broadway, off-Broadway and regional theatre for at least ten years. They ranged in age from 42 to 85 and were compared with a control group of ten lawyers. The non-litigation lawyers were selected as a control due to the law's requirement for strong verbal skills, much like actors. The study asked questions about childhoods to indicate early predictors of acting talent. The study actually discovered no difference between the two groups in having imaginary friends and an attunement to others' emotions as children. Where the study found differences revealed much about the actor's childhood. Goldstein discovered that actors were drawn to reading fiction more than lawyers, reported mimicry and impromptu production of plays for parents, and identifying themselves differently from other children. Goldstein describes this difference as "early interest in alternative and inner worlds..." and asserts that these qualities are "...predictive of early and steady involvement in theatre."<sup>16</sup> Goldstein's work makes important steps towards quantitative research in the field of acting and success later in life. He makes the connection between inner or alternative worlds and a long career in theatre based on childhood experiences and qualities.

### **Areas for Future Research**

All of these studies prove to be beneficial to the acting community in providing anecdotal and practical advice for new actors, but they leave generous holes for future research. Researchers can occupy themselves with what makes an actor tick; to feel an

emotion or appear to onstage, memorize lines, create interesting characters, ultimately, to become a talented and well-trained actor, but actual success depends on a combination of factors. The literature available and the research conducted suggests that there are few studies conducted about students' or recent alumnus' of theatre training programs opinions about the geographical professional theatre communities they are attempting to work in. In fact, many of the researchers' work consulted stated the need for more scholarly research in the field of performance.

Furthermore, most research focuses on actors who have established professional careers, and while this is greatly beneficial, the research misses an important step in the actor's development: the environment in which the aspiring young actor works.

This study shows ways in which his or her peers are succeeding. This research may also benefit a student or alumni considering one or the other as a location to live and work as an actor or actress. It discusses the attributes of collegiate actor training programs in relation to geographical location. Altogether, this research could begin reflection on what attributes factor into success of the professional actor by describing the experience of starting a career basically from scratch. Ultimately, the research might serve as a springboard for future research into theatrical community environments and what role that community plays in an actor living and acting in Kansas City or Southern California.

## CHAPTER 1

### ACTOR INTERVIEWS

In order to paint a picture of the beginning actor's life, I sat down with several young actors and actresses working across the country. Several of the interviewed parties work or have worked in the Kansas City or Los Angeles areas. Their insights into the career-starting process will help demonstrate the necessary components in both geographical areas, including a general idea of starting off as an actor or actress in any city in the United States.

#### **Price Messick**

Actor Price Messick rushed backstage to meet me after finishing a compelling performance of a little-known musical, *John and Jen*, at The Fishtank Theatre in Kansas City, MO on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Messick was determined to carry on with the interview, despite having to stay late anyway on closing night to perfect a few scenes for the recorded version of the production. He walked into the backstage "office" designated for our chat with a spiked coke container, warmly greeted me and sat across from me as if we had known each other for years, and began talking. Even though Messick and I have met on occasion through our similar circles of friends, and even once at an audition when we read together, this was the first time that I had talked with him at length about his career.

Messick has worked in Kansas City for several years as a professional actor; however, he does not have his Equity card. In fact, he gave up his card after a short stay in New York City, saying that having an Equity card as a young actor in Kansas City prevents the actor from acquiring as many jobs. Messick has worked at several

professional theatres as a paid actor in the Kansas City area, including the Coterie Theatre, the Off-Center Theatre and the American Heartland Theatre, where he also works in the box office. He reminisces about how fortunate he has been to be consistently cast in Kansas City since graduating from Kansas State University's Department of Theatre. Interestingly enough, Messick is currently planning to move back to New York City in 2011.

#### Interview

DeSeure: How did you get started?

Messick: With theatre or professional theatre or--?

DeSeure: Let's do just theatre first

Messick: I was like a choir boy. I did just choirs all over the world. Like boy choir stuff. So I was always singing I did a couple musicals as a kid, opera, it kinda got me interested a little bit. And while I was in choir I saw, I went to New York, I saw a Broadway show. But so I was always interested in musicals never plays ever. And it wasn't really my intent to go to school for theatre at all. Vocal performance, for opera, but not for theatre.

DeSeure: Oh really?

Messick: But, yeah, after a year in the program I just found I was singing in these workshops and these studio sessions and I would be singing next to these baritones, like Michael Grange, and they were all twice my size. (Laughs) And I would do these other workshops performances with these sopranos who were twice my size. And I talked to my vocal coach, and I was like, it was really awkward, am I going to get much work? As a man that's five foot eight? And a hundred sixty pounds? And he told me pretty much no. It would be pretty much character things. And so I was like okay...



DeSeure: So you have to be big—?

Messick: Well, to be a baritone in opera a lot of times. There are some. But you have to be amazing to stand next to a big huge—the women, the sopranos in opera are big ladies.

DeSeure: Oh, yeah, so it would look funny.

Messick: Exactly. You have to have a big football baritone man to sing next to. And so I was like, all right, I'll audition for a musical. I auditioned for my first show my freshman year. Late in the season. I didn't get in but I did go to callbacks. I was nervous, it was my first big college audition, you know, outside of what we do for vocal performance. I was out of my element. But I was encouraged through to callbacks. So I was like, I'm not going to do vocal performance anymore, I'm going to try the open option and take some more option classes. I took some theatre classes and my advisor in the theatre department she said to try auditioning for the plays and things like that. And I was enjoying it. New interaction and all those types of things. And then I did my first audition and randomly got cast. It was a mainstage production and Vi Tran who's a local guy here was in it. He was in the graduate program at the time.

DeSeure: And what school?

Messick: K-State.

DeSeure: Oh okay.

Messick: He was in the grad school program at K-State and he was in the directing program. So I was cast as a really small part as a waiter in the show. But, what happened in that a man I still really respect think very highly of, amazing actor, Joe Clark, and just to see him work. I would sit in rehearsals 'cause I would have some time off and just see him work I fell in love with his passion and what he was doing onstage. And just he was

so into it. I mean, it was *Beyond Therapy*, I mean it's not in your head at all. But it's—he was creating this amazing character and I was so in love with how he was creating it. To see his process? I was in love with his process and I just fell in love with it (theatre) then. I fell in love with theatre and it went on. I got a new passion for it. I took stage combat and that got me in another show. I was assistant fight choreographer, sort of got me in as a small part. But from there that was where it grew. And it kind of blew up. And I found that my program just enjoys people that work hard and uh, are all about growth. I definitely had ability, but I was by no means an actor starting out. But I could audition for musicals and be fine, especially after that first one. I was so out of my element there. All those big seniors. And they're all huge guys and girls and there was no way I was going to cast. After that though I started to get cast and started really enjoying what I was doing, taking dance classes. I had never taken a dance class in my entire life and I really loved dance. I loved dance all of a sudden and um I kept taking vocal lessons and stuff and everything just kind of came together. And what I enjoyed doing was learning from the upperclassmen. At that time, the K-State program was really solid. Had a lot of really great actors. At that time.

DeSeure: I've heard that—

Messick: Well, there was about fifteen years that K-State had a really strong program, a group of really strong actors. And some of those guys are still there. And I was just learning and learning from these guys. They were guys that I could really get along with, into sports and stuff like that. Their passion for theatre was the same as their passion for sports. And it was like a sporting event for us and lot of camaraderie going on. It was almost like we were on a football team or something like that. So the passion was really

strong and I'm a very passionate person. And so to see that and to see that theatre could be that, you know I took that into my dance and into my singing. So I have, I was really lucky in college and got to go a lot of places. I was able to be exposed to other people and to talk, with like ACTF. One of the biggest things that helped me get to the next level, the professional level was ACTF, competing in the finals. At K-State we were always like, Keenan, they made it to the finals all the time. I mean, it's a big thing to make it to the finals, but they made it all the time.

I mean there's a lot of people. You have to go through a lot of process, a lot of rounds, you get knocked down...I mean, sixteen pairs and it was in Fargo, no Iowa State and this theatre was huge. And everyone shows up for final night. It was packed out and it was the biggest crowd I'd ever performed for, I mean K-State had McCain but still, not like this. And we did really well. We didn't win. But we got a lot of attention, not attention, but a lot of people coming up saying we did good work. It was nice to know it wasn't like musical theatre getting me through this, it was my acting. I was like okay, okay, I'm not just a musical theatre guy, I can do this.

DeSeure: I'm legit!

Messick: Yeah! Exactly. I can do this.

DeSeure: It's important component.

Messick: It is. It really is. So I came here (KC) and I was lost again.

DeSeure: So why did you come here?

Messick: Because I graduated in, four...four and a half and yes, I graduated in four and half. And the people I was planning on moving with were still a semester behind. And I didn't want to stay in Manhattan and I didn't want to go home. So I was like well, at least

I can go to Kansas City and at least there's some professional theatre there, I mean I hadn't seen any professional theatre there, but um I was like, it's professional theatre. I spoke with Vi again, and Vi got me into Bar Natasha, a job, so I got to perform all the time. I got in contact with Missy and everyone there were actors so I was kinda in the community without having to be here for awhile. I was already in the middle of it. And then Steve Eubank saw me perform at Bar Natasha and that's how I got cast in Zanadont with him in 06 or 07 when I did that I had some friends, I got done with that show and the train was moving. I had four or five of my friends that were going to New York and I said let's go, let's do it, it was good it was New York. And you know New York is rough especially your first year. Just because it's so massive and so many things you have to learn before you go. You have to learn to walk in New York before you can actually go audition. You have no idea. So how are you supposed to focus on auditioning? Almost impossible. I tried to find myself a job, focused on getting used to the city a little bit. And a few months in, four months maybe, three four, I went to a call for—getting jobs, this is one thing, getting on Playbill and trying to search for jobs, wanting theatre related jobs, just being connected I Tabled that would be the best way, who to audition for, what companies not to audition for, um, but none of them paid. So I was kinda like, I was just lost. Then I got a couple jobs through theatre friends, so they were kind of somewhat related to theatre. One of my jobs was working at a casting agency but it was just commercials so ya know bombshell models checking in. But I'm still like in the business a bit, I was still sort of in the know. People in the agency were totally supportive. I got another job. It was just good money, a good money job. So I would also start really looking into auditioning. I did a lot of self reflection, I felt like, you know, I'm in New

York, I'm not here to spend a bunch of money or anything, so I didn't go out to bars and stuff. So when I'd come back go on Actors' Equity and look and I didn't even know if I could go to Equity calls.

DeSeure: Were you Equity at that point?

Messick: No, at that point all I had under my belt was my college shows and one show outside of college. Well, besides summer stock. One show outside of that. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have any actor friends in New York that were doing theatre; they were doing commercials and improv. Other than that, I didn't have anybody to look to. But I did have the support of friends. My roommates were all theatre people, and they were actors, which was nice, because they were like the work is there. So I went, I got a call, saw a call on Actors' Equity, it was for Theatre Works USA. And I went to the call thinking I showed up thirty minutes prior to the call to sign in. I go in, all stapled and ready to go, and there are people in the elevator as I go up they're coming down, and uh we're holding the elevator and they're talking about how the auditions went, and they were like we're on the waiting list. But I said, I'm thirty minutes early. Oh well, I'm the 250<sup>th</sup> alternate on the waiting list. And I was like, what? How is that possible? So a lot of people weren't leaving their headshots and resumes. But I was like, no I might as well leave my headshot and resume and I left. And I don't know if it's because I had some children's theatre from summer stock on my resume, and one of them was *Seussical*, but Theatre Works USA does children's work. I was really depressed, I put my resume on that big pile, I went home and was out to lunch with a friend who was visiting and I got a call, a random NY number. I didn't answer it, because I was told not to answer phone calls and it was a call from this guy from Theatre Works USA asking me to come in for a

callback and I went in. Got all the sides, and this is really weird, because it was for something it was uh, whatever it was, they didn't tell me what I was going in for so I just assumed that I was going in for this leading male character. Because the other characters were a British General or a 70 year old Eastern European woman. So duh, I'm going for the leading male. I go in and I've prepared, but I find out what character I'm supposed to do when I get there. I did my 16 bars and then they told me what to do. I was like, okay, weird, I went out in the lobby and was preparing my accents and was like alright, whatever, I'll try. We start going on the scene with the reader and I see all the people at the table and they look down at my resume and look at me and stop me. They say, I'm sorry I think we gave you the wrong sides. And I said, yeah I didn't want to say anything, but I kind of thought this wasn't what you wanted me to read. So I did the other one and I came in and did it. They said thank you but I don't know if you're right for this, but thank you. But they were still kind of positive. A couple weeks later I get another call from them and they call me back for a show about a kid and a dog. A little boy and a dog, and I thought cool, I'll play a little kid because I look like a kid. I prepared little kid, and they asked me to do the dog. I was like, what, I don't understand this. So I went out and prepared this dog. Alright! I've got this dog down. It was for the same casting director and I go in and start reading and she stops me midway through, and she says, did I? Did I give you the wrong sides? Yeah, it happened again, I prepared the little kid, and she says, this isn't right for you either. But I have something that I think might be right, so come in at this date and read this. I try to do a new song because she said prepare an up tempo, but I wasn't taking lessons, so it was song I'd never done besides recording in my apartment, and ended up blowing it. I bombed it, blanked. I asked to start over and started over, I

was shaking, and bombed again, and did my other song which was nothing like they wanted. But I knew I had blown it with that company. I went home so upset, so emotionally just done. Then I was at work at casting, and I got a call, listened to the message, and it was the same company asking me to come in for a replacement for a tour. So I went in really excited. I thought I would never get called back. I was the first slot to audition and she told me that I think this is it, I think this is right, I can't be positive, but I think we want you for it. We'll know by lunch. Lunch time hit and they called me and said I had it and that I would go out in three days. It was Thursday and I had to go out for it on Monday. I took my lunch break and ran and got my costume fitted, learned the show over the weekend, and did Junie B Jones for four months starting on that Monday. Got my Equity card and then got rid of my Equity card. I got back with my girlfriend Olivia and knew, I was like, but I can't be Equity in Kansas City...

DeSeure: Explain that a little bit more—

Messick: Just that, I think my age. There's so many people coming to Kansas City out of college and why would they hire an Equity guy when they can pay half as much to a person, who may not be the same, may be better, but may be not as good, because they, you know all companies, especially new companies, and we're in a recession, are trying to save money. So why would they hire an Equity actor if they can get the same thing half price. So I dropped my card.

DeSeure: Do you think it's hard for actors our age in Kansas City to get started? Or is it just a matter of—

Messick: Actually, in Kansas City it is. It's such, this community, is such a tight knit community that it's really hard to break in. Because the casting directors, directors and

producers know who they like and who they want, and so they keep going to the same people. So actors that get work get continuous work and they've done work with them before, the chance of getting rehired is decent. While in New York, you get cast once, win a Tony and you may never work again. So it's really tough to break in. It's why I feel lucky.

DeSeure: Well, and you described how you got jobs right away and you've been busy.

Messick: And I was just given my Equity card, I never had EMC points or anything. That part was easy. But when I moved back to Kansas City, when they wanted me to do Rocky right when I moved back to town within a week and I had gotten in touch with Jeff Church who let me come to the callback even though I'd missed auditions. They had all had their music for two or three months. I asked a friend at Bar Natasha, am I going to need to memorize these words? He's like, you'll be fine, don't worry about it. I get into the audition and everyone's memorized, they've had the material forever. And I was so like I had the worst, well second-worst, audition ever. I was so torn apart because he gave very specific directions in callbacks off book. So I wrote Jeff an email, and I said something along the lines of apologizing for being unprepared, thought I was going in for an audition, oh, what did I say, I thought I was going in for a Shakespeare show, whatever it was, Jeff Church loved it and thought it was hilarious, so I went in for the callback for *Seussical* and David Ollington, one of my professors at K-State and Molly the music director had all the guys sing their pick. All the guys wanted to sing the high tenor part, and I was like I'll do the middle, my odds are better. I had a dance off for the middle part and got cast later that day. Jeff Church saw Rocky and put me in the lead role for that for the monkeys. I just started, it comes from work ethic, being nice, and it's not a



Stephens thing for me, thank you is important, but being honest and working hard. We say thank you at K-State, too, but it was never taught, I think everyone should just be nice. Listening and working my ass off, that's what I did. This path just kept me hired and ended up, somehow, I've had overlapping shows every week since I've been back. It's been great, it's been a little too much, but, it's positive. Now I'm coming back to New York. I'm moving back in March. I came back for Olivia, but I knew I wanted to be back. It was unfinished. I had gotten my Equity card; all of us on tour had gotten our cards and were so excited to be able to audition, so it's unfinished business. My goal was to go back to New York with my card. I have nine weeks left and I have a twelve week contract and that's, it's been a rough go this year, a little too much. One of things about coming back, I was excited to spend time with family, but I haven't been able to see them much. But it's the business.

### **Miriam White, Philadelphia**

I met Miriam White during my internship at La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, California. White taught scene study at the High School Conservatory summer program while Assistant Directing at the playhouse. White splits her career performing between her home in Philadelphia and Southern California. She has also traveled around the country as an actress in various regional theatres like The Old Globe and La Jolla Playhouse. She obtained her degree in 2004. I had the pleasure of spending the entire summer with White teaching at La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, California. While teaching her high school students, White also assistant directed *Cankerblossom* and understudied a role at The Old Globe.

White has an infectious energy and carries an exuberance that only a young actress can carry. As her interview below shows, she's eternally optimistic and upbeat about casting opportunities. White's teaching style matches her energy. She opened every class this summer with a high energy, sound or movement game. Her students responded with creative and unabashed impulses during these games. White uses David Mamet and Uta Hagen as her primary sources for her scene study instruction.

#### Interview

DeSeure: In your opinion, how can an actor successfully "break in" in your city (place where you live the majority of your time or where you work primarily)?

White: There's no recipe for breaking in. My advice to any actor moving to a new city is to do some serious research on what theatre companies you are most interested in working for. Then, contact the theatre's casting director, artistic director, dramaturg, literary manager... anyone. Be brave. Ask to go out to coffee and learn about what it's like to work in this new city. Then keep up with these relationships. Identify roles that you think are good fits and speak to your contacts about getting an audition. Also, go see shows. Artistic Directors love nothing more than hearing what you think about the work of their company.

DeSeure: Do you think it's easy for newcomers to "break in" in your city? Why or why not?

White: Philly is a great city for a new actor. However, I wouldn't call anything about working in the professional theatre easy. Like all cities I've lived/worked in, it's tough to attract the attention of directors. There's an incredibly active and talented group of performers and directors are wary of taking risks on new performers. Let's face it. Actors

can be flaky, so why risk it! However, theatres are always looking for the next, hot performer. Philadelphia offers a wonderful service to the acting community. In June of each year, the Theatre Alliance (the alliance of professional theatres) offers a unified audition by application. If accepted, you have the opportunity to perform in front of many of the city's theatre companies.

DeSeure: Getting consistently cast is something that most actors strive for. Do you think this is an attainable goal? Why or why not?

White: Goodness. I don't know. There are many actors in Philadelphia who work all season. However, it ain't easy. The majority of actors feel fortunate to work twice per year and fill the rest of the year by self-producing (and of course working day jobs.)

DeSeure: Does your city have room for new faces? Why or why not?

White: Absolutely. I think Philadelphia is particularly in need of actors of color. I can name on one hand the number of Hispanic and Asian actors we have. Philadelphia doesn't have an African American theatre and I have heard frequently that actors of color just can't find enough work in Philly. Recently, Philadelphia has witnessed an explosion of new theatre companies. There's well over 100 theatre companies in Philadelphia, many professional and doing top notch work. New theatre companies mean more work which requires more actors!

### **Jennifer Sampson, Bakersfield, CA**

I also met Jennifer Sampson at La Jolla Playhouse in California. Sampson works as an actress and teaches voice to student actors. Sampson is a grounded professional, focused and driven. Her energy, while similar to White's, exudes more scholastic presence.

## Interview

DeSeure: In your opinion, how can an actor successfully "break in" in your city (place where you live the majority of your time or where you work primarily)?

Sampson: Bakersfield CA is becoming much more culturally aware and artistically motivated, but we have a long way to go. There are several theatres in town and a decent sized theatre community but it's a very casual, community theatre atmosphere. People here do theatre for fun and because of that, it is very easy to "break in" to the theatre scene. There are several season auditions and play-by-play auditions in town to attend and get to know the various leaders. By attending the auditions and doing well, you will easily gain a positive reputation in town and begin to work regularly.

DeSeure: Do you think it's easy for newcomers to "break in" in your city? Why or why not?

Sampson: It is very easy for newcomers to break into Bakersfield's theatre scene because the community is mostly non-professional and always looking for new talent and more help putting up a show. The community is welcoming to anyone with talent and a good work ethic.

DeSeure: Getting consistently cast is something that most actors strive for. Do you think this is an attainable goal? Why or why not?

Sampson: If one is talented and has a solid work ethic, being cast consistently is very attainable.

DeSeure: Does your city have room for new faces? Why or why not?

Sampson: Bakersfield definitely has room for new faces.

## **Danielle Beckmann, New York City/Southern California**

I met Danielle as an undergraduate performing major in college at Chapman University. She was the most vibrant personality in our graduating class; she always played comedic roles, her most memorable as Stephano in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. After growing up and attending college in Southern California, Danielle made the move to New York City, where she is now pursuing her acting career. She recently began successfully performing stand-up comedy. The day of our interview, she called me sick and due to an increasingly busy upcoming season of commitments, she requested to email the interview to me.

### Interview

DeSeure: Why did you choose to move to New York after going to college and living in southern California?

Beckmann: I am a Southern California girl. I grew up in San Diego and my parents now live in Long Beach and South Orange County. So Cal has always been my home. Growing up there, my parents always encouraged me to travel and explore and go for my dreams. I am so fortunate to have had supportive parents during my upbringing. My childhood dream was to be an actress/singer/dancer on Broadway and so I knew that the end result would be NYC! Although I am not ON Broadway now, I am in an Off-Broadway show! And I am making connections, meeting people, and always performing. I am living out my dreams and I know that I am on the right path to my eventual goal of being a working and paid actor.

DeSeure: What kind of benefits do you think New York offers to actors over Los Angeles?

Beckmann: New York is a much, much smaller network than L.A. Just the geography alone allows New York actors/producers/directors/playwrights to all be in one place at the same time: the subway, the streets, walking around, etc. Los Angeles is more isolated. Everyone is in their cars—it's just a different culture. Also, New York always has internship festivals, tons of acting programs, and opportunities to see Broadway shows for free in Central Park/Bryant Park. The Tony Awards are here; just a lot is always going on! Example: I was at an outdoor cafe (with \$3 margaritas) called blockheads in “Hell's Kitchen” the other week and I was sitting with two girl friends. Anyway long story short, we ran into another friend of ours named Brian and he came and sat at our table and ate with us. Then his friend Tituss Burgess (he is a big Broadway actor) just happened to be walking by—Brian and Tituss—go way back, so long story short, Tituss sat at our table. Eventually Brian had to leave, and it was just me, my girlfriends, and Tituss, this big Broadway star. He invited us to his birthday and we became Facebook friends. Networking BAM. Without even trying! That is NYC right there!

DeSeure: Did your college education benefit the career you are pursuing now?

Beckmann: Yes. Overall, I think that Chapman really gave me a good base for the art of acting, however, the business side, not so much. Perhaps they prepared us more for L.A. but in N.Y.C. I had to find my own way around when it came to auditions, etc. I will say though that in auditions I often feel like the most prepared person and I constantly am getting cast and working on things because of the Chapman training plus my talent...obviously, haha!

DeSeure: Did your college education prepare you for life in the professional world?

Beckmann: I am currently producing a stand-up comedy show, and the skills that I am using for that are more practical and professional. However, I just learned them on my own. They're not from Chapman. Chapman was great with general education and expanding my mind, but overall, being a theatre major mainly focused on the art of acting and not the professional world. Although, I will say, I have my real estate license, and things such as organizing, talking to people, writing, networking, are all skills I used in that job, but those are more innate things that I have as opposed to something I learned at Chapman.

DeSeure: I know you're doing stand-up comedy a lot now, how has that progressed?

Beckmann: I have always had comedic timing, and I finally decided to take the leap and take a stand up class back in October 2010. It has really paid off! I started by performing at Comix in N.Y.C. and from there my comedy reel has been posted online and on my website, so I have gotten some other gigs. Now I am producing a show called "Comic Diversity," and it involves people from my comedy class. We are all sort of sticking together. Our current show is March 5th and it is sold out with a waitlist. Then we are performing it again in April (perhaps at Gotham comedy club!) then again in May in Brooklyn with my theatre company. I am in a theatre company called Sparrow Tree.

## CHAPTER 2

### KANSAS CITY STUDENT ACTORS

#### **University of Missouri-Kansas City**

The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Department of Theatre serves both undergraduate and graduate populations in Kansas City. The undergraduate program does not require an audition. Theatre majors can choose from three tracks. The graduate programs range from Master of Arts degrees in Theatre to Master of Fine Arts degrees in Acting and Directing or Design Technology. The M.F.A. program in Acting currently has two classes of students totaling approximately 15 people. During the last five years, the program has graduated approximately 50 students. The total number of theatre students contacted for survey responses was approximately 100 students, including undergraduate and graduate students. The expected number of responses was fifty. Students were instructed to take the survey if they were current students or alumni, living in Kansas City.

UMKC's MFA philosophy of education for its Acting program is described as "rigorous," and committed to excellence. The faculty attempt to find intelligent and talented actors. The program diversifies itself with a number of different areas of performance study, ranging from classical to modern to contemporary to experimental. The department prides itself on making the city its stage. Actors in the MFA program work at area professional theatres like the Coterie, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the Unicorn Theatre, Kansas City Actors Theatre and more. By the time they finish their three year training, they present showcases for professional directors in New York City and Los Angeles. There are many alumni who stay in Kansas City and many who travel



to other regional cities. However, those who stay, find themselves working at the same theatres they worked in during their graduate years.

### **Stephens College**

Stephens College is a small, private college in Columbia, Missouri. Stephens's theatre department currently has theatre majors and graduate alumni within the last five years. Stephens alumni are known for moving to Kansas City and pursuing successful careers in professional theatre. In fact, their reputation as professional and hard-working actors has given them positive media attention. The Kansas City Star published an article about Stephens graduates asserting their competency as actors, but more importantly, their professionalism as a key to success in Kansas City theatre. Stephens College Department of Theatre states that it trains students in a master-apprentice style of training.

The college offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree in theatre. The B.F.A. program lasts three years with two summers spent performing at area theatres in Missouri and a theatre in Iowa.

### **Kansas State University**

Most recently, K-State has been able to boast powerhouse alumni like Emmy award-winner Eric Stonestreet, from television's Modern Family on ABC. Stonestreet graduated from K-State's theatre department in 1996. Stonestreet wasn't a theatre major upon arriving at K-State, but started to perform in plays because of a bet he made with a fraternity member. Stonestreet's experience as a male actor entering the department of theatre isn't a unique one. Kansas City's Price Messick, as described in his interview, speaks about the closeness of the male community in the theatre department at K-State.

Increasingly, K-State's theatre program has grown in size and caliber during the last ten to fifteen years. The department speaks mostly about "output" and sending a good product of a student into the world of professional theatre. The department offers undergraduate degrees in performance, directing, technical and design, playwrighting, and stage management. K-State offers a unique Master's program in Drama Therapy.

### **The University of Kansas**

The University Theatre at KU boasts a both a large season, including summer theatre, and a large department. According to their website, KU Theatre faculty sees the world of theatre as:

...a way of ordering, clarifying, and understanding human experience. We see ourselves as humanists, sharing the general goal of discovering and putting into communicable form hypotheses about human beings and the world as they interact with it. We are artists and scholars, and our work includes the creation of theatre, teaching, and scholarship. As a result we serve our disciplines, the University, and the surrounding community in our capacities as teachers, scholars, and artists.

For undergraduates, the department offers a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and a Bachelor of General Studies in Theatre. For graduate students, a Master of Arts degree in Theatre Studies and a Ph.D. in Theatre Studies are offered.

## CHAPTER 3

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA STUDENT ACTORS

#### **University of California-Los Angeles**

The University of California-Los Angeles Department of Theatre reports having eleven hundred undergraduate majors and forty graduate students. UCLA offers a Bachelor of Arts, Master of Fine Arts and Master of Arts in Theatre. Both the undergraduate and graduate acting students undergo an audition process for admittance. The M.F.A. in Acting puts importance on experience, saying that “experience is paramount.” Like UMKC, it calls itself rigorous and looks for talented and dedicated students. An interesting difference between the two programs is that UCLA has created a focus on the actor-producer, that is, the actor who can also produce his or her own works.

#### **Chapman University**

Chapman University is located in Orange, California, approximately thirty miles south of Los Angeles, Chapman was selected due to its feed into L.A.; many graduates move directly north to pursue their careers, thus they make an ideal alumni population. The researcher also graduated from the institution and was able to communicate easily between the university Department of Theatre staff and its students.

Chapman offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts in acting and screen acting, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree. The department currently has one hundred and sixty-five undergraduate theatre majors. Of these one hundred and sixty five, the majority of majors are performance driven, despite the availability of a generalized degree. The department focuses on creating a professional actor training that prepares students to achieve their fullest potential, focuses on excellence and professional ethics. All majors must either audition or submit a portfolio for review. I was able to obtain site approval to contact

students via their theatre department. Fifty responses were expected from Chapman University.

### **University of California-San Diego**

UCSD is located in luxurious La Jolla, California. On site with the department, La Jolla Playhouse works alongside academic departments and theatre students, sharing spaces and oftentimes M.F.A. actors. UCSD is difficult to get accepted into as a theatre student. Not only are the academic requirements of UCSD high, the talent level of those auditioning and applying is also high. UCSD offers undergraduate degrees in Theatre and a dual degree of Theatre and Dance. The graduate school offers an M.F.A. program in Theatre with emphasis in Acting, Design, Playwriting, DanceTheatre, Directing or Stage Management. They also have a joint Ph.D. in Theatre and Drama with the University of California-Irvine.

### **University of Southern California**

USC offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees in theatre, including a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, and Master of Fine Arts in acting. USC boldly states the prominence and well-known stature of their program on their website:

USC has long been a leader in the arts. Through our intimate and rigorous programs, we offer exceptional professional preparation, a determined and creative student culture, and access to a thriving and active alumni network. By graduation, students have undergone a significant personal and professional transformation that has prepared them well for future career success. This is the USC Advantage.

CHAPTER 4  
THE ACTOR'S LIFE

**Kansas City**

“At first shake, Kansas City seems a rather sleepy place - it has a dominant automobile culture with much sprawl and little in the way of foot traffic, so the sidewalks don't bustle the way they do in bigger cities. But a closer inspection reveals that some of the most adventurous restaurants and arts organizations are situated in historic buildings that radiate charm and warmth.”<sup>1</sup> Many people might be surprised to hear that Kansas City is a thriving and growing artist community, a community with an exciting Kansas City Fringe Festival, a 46 year old Kansas City Repertory Theatre and dozens of small theatre companies.

Positive economic trends coupled with blossoming new theatre companies and existing theatres, Kansas City may become a viable place for an actor to lay down his or her roots. After all, during the roaring 1920's and 1930's Kansas City was known as the Paris of the Plains. The city has always had an exciting theatre and arts scene, particularly at the beginning of its cultural history and during its most flourishing theatrical time period during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

According to Actors' Equity, Kansas City is home to nine Equity theatres alongside numerous other smaller theatres that operate with Special Appearances or Guest Artists contracts. AEA's website asserts the connection between professionalism and membership in Equity: “If you are a professional stage actor or stage manager, you

want to be a member of Actors' Equity Association. We are the Union that supports, promotes and fosters the art of professional theatre.”<sup>3</sup>

However, Kansas City is home to over one hundred theatre companies, and only nine of which are Equity theatres. This means that not all professional theatres in Kansas City are Equity. The connection between professionalism and Equity, though argued persuasively by AEA, simply cannot be applied to a theatre community like Kansas City. The sheer number of theatre companies, both large and small, speaks volumes to its growth and potential as a theatrical community. In fact, on KC Stage's website listings of theatres in Kansas City, that periodical distinguishes theatres in several categories: academic, non-professional, professional and union.<sup>4</sup> Important to note is the clear divergence in terminology. Kansas City theatre artists may view professional and union separately, or at least that one does not exclude the other.

Kansas City has a strong reputation in professional theatre that is only getting better. In the last several years, theatre has grown and expanded its repertoire in the city. According to theatre reviewer Bob Trussell in an article written December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in the Kansas City Star, many new and successful theatre companies have started, alongside existing theatres expanding their performances and production qualities. He points out two relatively new theatre companies in the Crossroads District, The Living Room and The Fishtank Performance Studio, where individuals have begun producing edgy and exciting professional theatre.<sup>5</sup> The Fishtank in particular gives artists and producers of theatre a unique and intimate venue to perform new works and showcase performers. According to its website, “The Fishtank Performance Studio develops works from concept to concert by providing a low risk, low cost environment that nurtures the

development of new work and inspires theatrical entrepreneurship.”<sup>6</sup> From dramatic readings of Sarah Palin’s book to original works like HYBRID’s *L’Histoire D’Amour, a clown love story*, the Fishtank’s variety speaks to thriving theatrical entrepreneurship in Kansas City.

On the other, larger side of professional theatre in Kansas City, the Kansas City Repertory Theatre’s production of *Venice* was signaled Best Musical of the Year by Time Magazine.<sup>7</sup> Artistic Director Eric Rosen, alongside Matt Sax, wrote and directed the musical which received overall impressive and positive reviews. Rosen has been at the Rep since the beginning of the 2008-2009 season and has succeeded every season in bringing good theatre to Kansas City. Rosen himself, however, said in an interview that Kansas City is a few theatres shy of being a place where a theatre artist can make a living for him or herself.<sup>8</sup> However, that may be changing.

There are several other professional theatres that speak to the growth in the theatre community of Kansas City. Within the past couple of years, the Unicorn Theatre expanded from one performance space to two, doubling its capacity for producing new and edgy works. The Off-Center Theatre, an old movie theatre located in Crown Center, went unused for many years until recently. It was renovated and transformed into a performance space for theatre companies to rent for productions. In particular, Egads Theatre Company has utilized this space on numerous occasions, making The Off-Center Theatre the company’s home base. Inside Crown Center alone, there are several professional theatre companies, including The Off-Center Theatre, the Coterie Theatre, an internationally recognized children’s theatre, and the American Heartland Theatre. The Coterie was founded in 1979 and has been providing Kansas City audiences with

professional theatre for young audiences ever since. In the past year, under the artistic direction of Jeff Church, four of the eight season productions during 2008-2009 were premieres, three of which were world premieres. On top of season productions, the Coterie provides education and outreach in the forms of classes, the Dramatic AIDS Education Project that tours to middle and high schools and The Young Playwrights Festival. The American Heartland Theatre was founded in 1986 by Jim Assad with the goal of providing exciting ambiance and theatrical entertainment.

Every thriving theatrical community has outdoor summer theatre and Kansas City is no exception. Ranging from professional to community-based, several area outdoor theatres attract thousands of audience members each summer. The notable community outdoor theatres are Gladstone Theatre in the Park and Shawnee Mission's The Theatre in the Park. Gladstone Theatre in the Park began in 1988 and since its inception has produced 45 musicals, averaging two shows per summer. Gladstone Theatre in the Park's admission cost is free and employs hundreds of community volunteers each summer. Its audience climbs into the thousands each night a show performs during the summer. Shawnee Mission Theatre in the Park is one of the largest outdoor community theatres in the country and began in the summer of 1980. It is not uncommon for The Theatre in the Park to attract over six hundred community actors to its auditions every year. The performances attract thousands every summer and on average attract 50,000 guests throughout the season. In its history, The Theatre in the Park has produced hundreds of musicals, averaging three to four productions each summer.

On the professional side of outdoor theatre in Kansas City are Starlight Theatre and the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival. Starlight Theatre dates as far back as



1925 in celebration of Queen Marie's arrival from Rumania. A celebration production was organized in her honor and since then, Starlight has built on that single production to become the professional theatre company it is today. Construction of the outdoor theatre itself began in Swope Park in 1949, and was completed in 1950. According to its website, during their early years, Starlight Theatre produced ten shows a season, including operettas, light opera and new musical comedies. Today, it self-produces one or two shows a season along with hosting national Broadway musical touring shows. The Heart of America Shakespeare Festival provides free Shakespeare to the Kansas City community during the summer. Usually, the festival produces one Shakespeare play, although some years they have produced more. During its eighteen years, the festival has produced twenty-three Shakespeare productions in Southmoreland Park in the Plaza neighborhood. Both Starlight and the Shakespeare festival have Education and Outreach programming that offer classes to youth, preshow and post show education, summer camps and internship opportunities for students of theatre.

Outside of the theatrical realm, Kansas City is a decently sized city with a foothold in two states: Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri. The two are separated by the state line merely. The city grew tremendously after bridges were constructed in Kansas City's geographical location versus other smaller cities nearby. Kansas City could easily have been as small as St. Joseph, Missouri, or another smaller Kansas or Missouri towns on the river if the bridges had been built in different geographical locations. Because of the frequent rail, air and highway travel through Kansas City, it became an economically advantageous place to live. In many ways, this trend continues to the present day. Ford Automobile Company has a plant in Kansas City

and Sprint Mobile placed their headquarters in the city. Even though the job market is tight everywhere in the country in 2011, there are opportunities with retail, restaurant and business companies in the city to provide part time employment and even full time employment; Kansas City boasts more than 50,000 small businesses.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's 2011 Economic Forecast predicts a two in three chance of economic recovery in 2011. "The Kansas City-area economy was less ravaged by the recession than that of the United States, and it has advantages in terms of costs and location."<sup>10</sup> On top of these positive persuasive economic forecasts and facts, Kansas City's affordability compared to the rest of the country adds another advantage for the budding actor. For example, even as gas prices have begun to spike in January 2011, Kansas City stayed below the national average.<sup>11</sup> Housing costs are also relatively low, especially when compared to a market like L.A. It's not uncommon for a tenant to find rent priced anywhere from \$300 to \$600 a month in Kansas City. Also, Travel + Leisure ranked Kansas City second for barbecue and gave the city high marks for affordability.<sup>12</sup>

### **Los Angeles**

California's reputation buzzes with Hollywood glamour and glitz, with sunshine, beaches and palm trees. Los Angeles has long been a so-called "mecca" for actors and actresses searching for fame and theatrical success, especially after the advent of film lots in the early twentieth century. Many silent film stars, like Charlie Chaplin from London, from big theatre and vaudeville towns moved to the west coast in pursuit of a new art-form: film. They were probably unaware, though they might have had a hunch, that the industry would explode and engulf the majority of popular entertainment in American culture today. Film and television are now staples of the American and global experience.

What about the stage? Los Angeles attracts hundreds of thousands of actors all vying for performance gigs; are there opportunities for actors and actresses not solely fixed on the silver screen?

In the early twentieth century Los Angeles had a thriving vaudeville and variety theatre scene.<sup>13</sup> According to Singer, theatre construction in Los Angeles increased during this period and even in those times actors flocked to the city for its mild weather. Singer cites affordability, favorable audiences and good theatres as the other reasons why actors traveled to the area.<sup>14</sup> “Subsequently, radio, motion pictures, television, and modern theatre all benefited from the legacy of vaudeville. Los Angeles itself was one of the last cities to close the doors of vaudeville and it did so without erasing vaudeville’s memory.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1997, former executive director of the Theatre Alliance League William Freimuth said “L.A. has more stages than Seattle has Starbucks.”<sup>16</sup> That same article that quoted Freimuth predicted the rise of mid-size theatres in Los Angeles. In 2011, Equity lists Los Angeles as having 7,237 members out of the 11,858 total Western Regional Equity members.<sup>17</sup> The Western Region reported a weekly working average of 1,086 Equity members. That number encompasses the entirety of the west; however, keep in mind that 7,237 of its west members are working in Los Angeles. It is unclear how many of the 1,086 average weekly number of working Equity members are from Los Angeles.

The theatre scene in Los Angeles has an interesting reputation. In a city dominated by its film and television industry, theatre often gets overlooked. However, L.A. boasts a considerable number of mid-size, large, small and off-the-beaten-path theatres. The 2009-2010 Ovation Awards (theatrical awards for the Los Angeles area)

gave honors to twenty-three different theatre companies in the dozens of categories from acting to lighting design. The number of different theatres awarded speaks to the caliber and variety of theatre currently produced there. L.A. also has a great number of notable professional and community theatres; it seems the abundance of small professional theatre companies outnumbers the already numerous community theatres. But the largest professional theatres in Los Angeles are a part of the Center Theatre Group (CTG). CTG has three stages: the Mark Taper Forum, the Ahmanson and the Kirk Douglas. The Taper and the Ahmanson are both in the same location in downtown L.A.; the Ahmanson on one end, the music hall on the other and the Taper between two. The Taper recently underwent a renovation in 2008 to accommodate patrons, cast and crew. The theatre, designed by architect Welton Becket, opened in 1967, was beautiful, and has sparked many inventive productions since its opening; however, it was designed without a user in mind. CTG leased the building and began producing theatre but soon encountered problems with spaces that include the lobby, bathrooms and backstage areas that hindered patron experience, crew load-in and intermission bathroom breaks.<sup>18</sup> CTG produces a full season of shows on each stage and for the 2010-2011 season will produce fifteen shows on its three stages. One of the most compelling features of the CTG can be found in their ticket policies. They offer a season subscription for three shows for students for \$48; that's only \$16 per show to the most prestigious theatre company in Los Angeles.

An actor in Los Angeles choosing from the myriad of theatre companies to submit and audition for might become overwhelmed with the options and with staying on top of who is casting and when. For the purposes of this paper, a list has been compiled in the appendix of the twenty-three professional theatres awarded by Ovation, and added to that

list some important theatres in Los Angeles. Also included are theatre companies in other areas in Southern California. The reasoning behind this lies in the ability of the actor or actress living in Los Angeles to audition for and be cast in shows produced in Orange County and San Diego County. The list totals fifty-seven theatres.

L.A. professional theatres have a tendency to be ensemble based and to cast strictly from a company of pre-determined actors. Approximately one dozen of the listed theatres operate from an ensemble format of casting. Besides an abundance of professional theatre, L.A. has a good number of community theatres to round out its theatrical culture.

The economic environment in California, however, is constantly challenged. In fact, California's unemployment rate in 2010 was 12.4%.<sup>19</sup> California's recovery has been difficult; its budget deficits combined with the housing market problems have created a drag on recovery and as such, creates a more difficult environment for artists, particularly actors and actresses. "Even if the U.S. recovery heats up, California has dug such a deep hole for itself that it will take a long time to fully recover. The housing crash hit California harder than most other states, and the state's monstrous budget deficit has forced cutbacks at all levels of government."<sup>20</sup> On the bright side for artists, companies are more willing to hire part-time work in industries like retail, restaurant and other service-related type jobs. For an actor, it might be easier to find part-time work in L.A. than full-time work. Furthermore, L.A. is a large metropolis with thousands of restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores and other sources of employment. Much as in New York City, the stereotype of an actor working a restaurant job is a popular one in L.A. In fact, for several years inside Disneyland's California Adventure theme park in Anaheim,

California, a mural on the wall displayed a server with a tray and a joke about serving for a “big break.” This demonstrates the popularity of the stereotype even in L.A.

And it’s no wonder that such a stereotype exists in Los Angeles considering the number of small to mid-size to even large professional and community theatre companies. L.A. needs a good number of actors and actresses to fill its stages and screens. For the budding professional actor, no question remains about the availability of theatre companies to work at, however, does the number of companies equate to eventual success? Does the availability of theatre in L.A. provide opportunity to new faces?

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS ABOUT GATHERED STUDENT OPINIONS

#### **Interviews**

From the interviews, interesting observations can be made about the reasons actors choose to live in particular locations. For some, like Miriam White, her work directed her to her living location. Because she was hired in Philadelphia and Southern California, she frequently commutes between the two locations. On the other hand, Price Messick and Jennifer Sampson moved or are moving to cities due in part to a significant other living in that location. Messick moved back from New York City to Kansas City to be with his girlfriend Olivia while she finished school, and now that she has finished, they will both return to N.Y.C. this year. Sampson, while still living in Southern California, resides in Bakersfield largely due to her significant other's job location at a college in town. Danielle Beckmann moved to N.Y.C. because she had dreams of doing so, the same reason Messick and Olivia will move this year; these stories are common for actors who choose to move to N.Y.C. or L.A. because the two cities are most often associated with careers in acting. Those who dream about becoming professional actors, most likely also dream about Broadway or Hollywood—or both. All of the actors interviewed possessed an optimistic spirit; they had high hopes for the future and most spoke about their accomplishments with pride.

Some observations can also be made about the two geographical areas being discussed. First, Messick's description of the Kansas City acting community is an important one. He talked about the closeness of the community and assesses it as both an advantage and a disadvantage. In Messick's opinion, if you're in with people in the theatre community, it's easier to get cast and make those important actor-director

connections; however, for an actor outside that circle it becomes difficult. Messick clearly states that directors in Kansas City know who they want to work with, and they don't necessarily want to welcome a new face. He also observes that Kansas City is a difficult city for a young Equity actor. As previously noted, Messick dropped his Actors' Equity Membership upon moving back to Kansas City because:

...there's so many people coming to Kansas City out of college and why would they hire an Equity guy when they can pay half as much to a person, who may not be the same, may be better, but may be not as good, because they, you know all companies, especially new companies, and we're in a recession, are trying to save money. So why would they hire an Equity actor if they can get the same thing half price. So I dropped my card.

Unlike Messick's glowing review of his college theatre experience, Beckmann applied a more critical analysis of her education. Although she states that Chapman did prepare her in the artistry of acting, she felt unprepared professionally. Messick similarly describes N.Y.C. as a "whole new ballgame," where actors relearn and re-orientate themselves to their new surroundings. Perhaps that is the dynamic Beckmann is speaking of.

Alongside the survey conclusions, the interviews provide anecdotal reference to the questions asked of the many survey takers in both geographical locations. In other words, the survey findings provide measureable opinions and the interviews provide specific experiences and opinions.

### **Survey Results**

Thirty-five volunteers participated in the survey, which had a completion rate of approximately seventy-seven percent. The survey takers had to be either current theatre students or recent theatre student alumni. In order to eliminate unqualified survey-takers,



Survey Monkey allows for a function to question the survey taker before getting to the meat of the survey to make sure each individual is qualified. Due to the fact that this was a relatively small sample, correlation conclusions between questions can't be made, instead, general observations and impetuses for future study can be obtained from these results. I also received very few alumni responses; in fact, I only received two alumni responses. Because of this, I chose to focus on current student answers in my data analysis. As I went through the several dozen questions posed to actors, I decided to narrow down the results to gauging student opinions through these key questions:

1. Are there more student actors in actor unions in Kansas City or Southern California?
2. Is it easier to get cast as a young actor in Kansas City or Southern California?
3. Which economy offers the greatest opportunities for a young actor?
4. Which environment or community offers the greatest opportunities for a young actor?
5. Does a college degree in acting/theatre help an actor's career?

After narrowing down the items I wanted to focus on, I selected just fewer than two dozen questions from the survey to analyze with basic statistics.

*Are there more student actors in actor unions in Kansas City or Southern California?*

TABLE 5.1 SURVEYED ACTOR MEMBERSHIPS IN ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION (AEA)

		Membership in Actors' Equity Association (AEA)		Total
		Yes	No	
Kansas City	Count	0	12	12
Southern California	Count	2	16	18
Total	Count	2	28	30
	% of Total	6.7%	93.3%	100.0%

Table 5.1 shows the number of surveyed actors in each geographical location who are members in Actors' Equity Association (AEA). Out of the number of responders, only two were members in AEA, both from Southern California. 6.7% of those surveyed are members in AEA.

TABLE 5.2 SURVEYED ACTOR MEMBERSHIPS IN SCREEN ACTORS' GUILD (SAG)

		Yes	No	Total
Kansas City	Count	0	12	12
Southern California	Count	3	15	18
Total	Count	3	27	30
	% of Total	10.0%	90.0%	100.0%

Continuing the trend in low numbers of student membership in unions, only three responders are members of the Screen Actors' Guild (SAG).

TABLE 5.3 SURVEYED ACTOR MEMBERSHIP IN EMC

		Agree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	2	10	12
	% within Kansas City	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	% within I am enrolled in the Equity Membership Candidacy (EMC) program	33.3%	41.7%	40.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	33.3%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	4	14	18
	% within Socal	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
	% within I am enrolled in the Equity Membership Candidacy (EMC) program	66.7%	58.3%	60.0%
	% of Total	13.3%	46.7%	60.0%
Total	Count	6	24	30
	% of Total	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%

Table 5.3 for Equity Candidacy Membership (EMC) program is much more interesting. In Kansas City, 16.7% of responders are enrolled in EMC versus 22.2% in Southern California. Of the total number of responders who are enrolled in EMC, 66.7% of them are from Southern California.

Based on the opinions of the responders in this survey, there are more students or recent students who are members of Unions in Southern California. In fact, students in Southern California also reported membership in AFTRA.

*Is it easier to get cast as a student in Kansas City or Southern California?*

TABLE 5.4 THERE ARE PLENTY OF ACTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUDDING ACTORS IN MY CITY

		Agree	Slightly Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	2	9	0	1	12
	% within Kansas City	16.7%	75.0%	.0%	8.3%	100.0%
	% within There are plenty of acting opportunities for budding actors in my city.	40.0%	45.0%	.0%	33.3%	40.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	30.0%	.0%	3.3%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	3	11	2	2	18
	% within Socal	16.7%	61.1%	11.1%	11.1%	100.0%
	% within There are plenty of acting opportunities for budding actors in my city.	60.0%	55.0%	100.0%	66.7%	60.0%
	% of Total	10.0%	36.7%	6.7%	6.7%	60.0%
Total Count		5	20	2	3	30
% of Total		16.7%	66.7%	6.7%	10.0%	100.0%

After taking into consideration the different number of respondents from each geographical location, the conclusion can be made that student actor opinions about the availability of acting opportunities are comparable.

TABLE 5.5 I AM SATISFIED WITH THE AMOUNT OF ACTING WORK I RECEIVE

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	3	3	4	0	2	12
	% within Kansas City	25.0%	25.0%	33.3%	.0%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within I am satisfied with the amount of acting work I receive.	75.0%	27.3%	80.0%	.0%	28.6%	40.0%
	% of Total	10.0%	10.0%	13.3%	.0%	6.7%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	1	8	1	3	5	18
	% within Socal	5.6%	44.4%	5.6%	16.7%	27.8%	100.0%
	% within I am satisfied with the amount of acting work I receive.	25.0%	72.7%	20.0%	100.0%	71.4%	60.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	26.7%	3.3%	10.0%	16.7%	60.0%
Total Count		4	11	5	3	7	30
% of Total		13.3%	36.7%	16.7%	10.0%	23.3%	100.0%

The same conclusion cannot be made about the statement, “I am satisfied with the amount of acting work I receive.” In Kansas City, 25% of respondents agree they are satisfied with the amount of acting work they receive, compared to only 5.6% in Southern

California. Of the responders who answered “Agree” to this statement, 75% of them were from Kansas City. 27.8% of Southern California responders answered “Disagree,” compared to 16.7% of Kansas City responders

TABLE 5.6 IF AN ACTOR IS TALENTED AND HARD-WORKING HE OR SHE WILL GET CAST IN MY CITY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	2	7	3	0	0	12
	% within Kansas City	16.7%	58.3%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within If an actor is talented and hard-working, they will get cast in my city.	66.7%	43.8%	37.5%	.0%	.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	23.3%	10.0%	.0%	.0%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	1	9	5	2	1	18
	% within Socal	5.6%	50.0%	27.8%	11.1%	5.6%	100.0%
	% within If an actor is talented and hard-working, they will get cast in my city.	33.3%	56.3%	62.5%	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	30.0%	16.7%	6.7%	3.3%	60.0%
Total Count		3	16	8	2	1	30
% of Total		10.0%	53.3%	26.7%	6.7%	3.3%	100.0%

Kansas City responders generally agree more with this statement than those from Southern California. 16.7% of Kansas City survey takers agreed versus 5.6% of Southern California survey takers. Southern California responders comprised 100% of the

“Somewhat Disagree” and “Disagree” answer choices, and 62.5% of “Neither Agree or Disagree.”

TABLE 5.7 I AM OVERWHELMED BY THE SHEER NUMBER OF OTHER ACTORS IN THIS CITY COMPETING FOR THE SAME JOBS

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	1	4	4	2	1	12
	% within Kansas City	8.3%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%
	% within I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of other actors in this city competing for the same jobs	14.3%	33.3%	57.1%	66.7%	100.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	13.3%	13.3%	6.7%	3.3%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	6	8	3	1	0	18
	% within Socal	33.3%	44.4%	16.7%	5.6%	.0%	100.0%
	% within I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of other actors in this city competing for the same jobs	85.7%	66.7%	42.9%	33.3%	.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	20.0%	26.7%	10.0%	3.3%	.0%	60.0%
Total Count		7	12	7	3	1	30
% of Total		23.3%	40.0%	23.3%	10.0%	3.3%	100.0%

Overwhelmingly, Southern California survey responders reported “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” to this statement, making up 85.7% of “Agree” and 66.7% of

“Somewhat Agree” answers. 33.3% of Southern California responders answered “Agree” compared to 8.3% of Kansas City responders.

TABLE 5.8 IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO GET CAST CONSISTENTLY IN MY CITY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	3	4	5	0	12
	% within Kansas City	25.0%	33.3%	41.7%	.0%	100.0%
	% within It takes a long time to get cast consistently in my city	33.3%	33.3%	71.4%	.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	10.0%	13.3%	16.7%	.0%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	6	8	2	2	18
	% within Socal	33.3%	44.4%	11.1%	11.1%	100.0%
	% within It takes a long time to get cast consistently in my city	66.7%	66.7%	28.6%	100.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	20.0%	26.7%	6.7%	6.7%	60.0%
Total Count		9	12	7	2	30
% of Total		30.0%	40.0%	23.3%	6.7%	100.0%

Of the survey responders who answered “Agree” and “Somewhat Agree” 66.7% of them were from Southern California, however, none of the responders from Kansas City answered “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree.”



TABLE 5.9 THERE ARE TOO MANY OTHER PEOPLE THAT ARE MY TYPE IN THIS CITY FOR ME TO GET CAST CONSISTENTLY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	0	1	4	5	2	12
	% within Kansas City	.0%	8.3%	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within There are too many other people that are my type in this city for me to get cast consistently.	.0%	20.0%	57.1%	41.7%	40.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	.0%	3.3%	13.3%	16.7%	6.7%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	1	4	3	7	3	18
	% within Socal	5.6%	22.2%	16.7%	38.9%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within There are too many other people that are my type in this city for me to get cast consistently.	100.0%	80.0%	42.9%	58.3%	60.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	13.3%	10.0%	23.3%	10.0%	60.0%
Count		1	5	7	12	5	30
% of Total		3.3%	16.7%	23.3%	40.0%	16.7%	100.0%

TABLE 5.10 I BOOK A LOT OF ACTING JOBS EVERY YEAR

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas city	Count	1	2	5	3	1	12
	% within Kansas City	8.3%	16.7%	41.7%	25.0%	8.3%	100.0%
	% within I book a lot of acting jobs every year.	50.0%	40.0%	45.5%	60.0%	14.3%	40.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	6.7%	16.7%	10.0%	3.3%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	1	3	6	2	6	18
	% within Socal	5.6%	16.7%	33.3%	11.1%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within I book a lot of acting jobs every year.	50.0%	60.0%	54.5%	40.0%	85.7%	60.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	10.0%	20.0%	6.7%	20.0%	60.0%
Total Count		2	5	11	5	7	30
% of Total		6.7%	16.7%	36.7%	16.7%	23.3%	100.0%

Again, both sets of responders nearly answer the exact same; however, 85.7% of the responders who answered “Disagree” were from Southern California.

TABLE 5.11 THEATRE IN MY CITY SEEK OUT NEW TALENT

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	0	6	3	1	0	10
	% within Kansas City	.0%	60.0%	30.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within Theatres in my city seek out new talent	.0%	42.9%	60.0%	25.0%	.0%	37.0%
	% of Total	.0%	22.2%	11.1%	3.7%	.0%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	2	8	2	3	2	17
	% within Socal	11.8%	47.1%	11.8%	17.6%	11.8%	100.0%
	% within Theatres in my city seek out new talent	100.0%	57.1%	40.0%	75.0%	100.0%	63.0%
	% of Total	7.4%	29.6%	7.4%	11.1%	7.4%	63.0%
Total Count		2	14	5	4	2	27
% of Total		7.4%	51.9%	18.5%	14.8%	7.4%	100.0%

60% of Kansas City responders answered “Somewhat Agree” versus 22.2% of Southern California responders; however, 11.8% of Southern California responders answered “Agree.” Of the responders who answered “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree,” Southern California responders made up 75% for “Somewhat Disagree,” and 100% for “Disagree.”

TABLE 5.12 IT IS EASY TO “BREAK-IN” AS AN ACTOR IN THE CITY WHERE I LIVE

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	0	2	3	5	0	10
	% within Kansas City	0%	20.0%	30.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within It is easy to "break-in" as an actor in the city where I live	0%	40.0%	60.0%	41.7%	.0%	37.0%
	% of Total	0%	7.4%	11.1%	18.5%	.0%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	0	3	2	7	5	17
	% within Socal	0%	17.6%	11.8%	41.2%	29.4%	100.0%
	% within It is easy to "break-in" as an actor in the city where I live	0%	60.0%	40.0%	58.3%	100.0%	63.0%
	% of Total	0%	11.1%	7.4%	25.9%	18.5%	63.0%
Total Count		0	5	5	12	5	27
% of Total		0%	18.5%	18.5%	44.4%	18.5%	100.0%

No responders answered “Agree” to this statement. 20% percent of Kansas City responders answered “Somewhat Agree” compared to 17.6% of Southern Californians. 29.4% of Southern California responders answered “Disagree” compared to 0% Kansas City responders. 50% of Kansas City responders answered “Somewhat Disagree.”

TABLE 5.13 CASTING MEAN REPORT

City		Q#1	Q#2	Q#3	Q#4	Q#5	Q#6	Q#7	Q#8	Q#9
Kansas City	Mean	2.0000	2.5833	2.0833	2.8333	2.1667	3.6667	3.0833	2.5000	3.3000
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	10	10
Southern California	Mean	2.1667	3.1667	2.6111	1.9444	2.0000	3.3889	3.5000	2.7059	3.8235
	N	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	17	17
Total	Mean	2.1000	2.9333	2.4000	2.3000	2.0667	3.5000	3.3333	2.6296	3.6296
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	27	27

- Q#1: There are plenty of acting opportunities for budding actors in my city.
- Q#2: I am satisfied with the amount of acting work I receive.
- Q#3: If an actor is talented and hard-working, they will get cast in my city.
- Q#4: I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of other actors in this city competing for the same jobs
- Q#5: It takes a long time to get cast consistently in my city
- Q#6: There are too many other people that are my type in this city for me to get cast consistently.
- Q#7: I book a lot of acting jobs every year.
- Q#8: Theatres in my city seek out new talent
- Q#9: It is easy to "break-in" as an actor in the city where I live

The mean report, Table 5.13, offers an opportunity to gauge the average response to each question asked. The “mean” represents the average number response. The number corresponds with an answer. 1 equals “Agree,” 2 equals “Somewhat Agree,” 3 equals “Neither Agree or Disagree,” 4 equals “Somewhat Disagree,” and 5 equals “Disagree.” N equals the count or number of answers for each question. For some questions there are different “n” values, this is due to responders not completing the survey. Thus, some questions were not answered because the responder left the survey before completion.

Responders statistically agreed on questions number one, three, and five through nine, but answered differently on questions two and four. On average, Kansas City responders answered “Somewhat Agree” to the statement number two “I am satisfied with the amount of acting work I receive” in comparison to the average response of “Neither Agree or Disagree” answered by Southern California responders. 44.5% of

Southern California responders answered “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree” to this statement. Therefore, it can be observed from the gathered actor opinions that student or recent student actors in Kansas City are more satisfied with the amount of work they receive than in Southern California.

Statement number four, “I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of other actors in this city competing for the same jobs,” student or recent student actors responded similarly; however, Southern California actors averaged a response of 1.9333 compared to Kansas City averaging 2.8333, meaning on average Southern California actors answered “Agree” more frequently than Kansas City actors. Also, compare that average to the percentage to each answer. 85.7% of all those who agreed with statement four were from Southern California. According to opinions gathered in this survey, Southern California student or recent student actors are more overwhelmed by the number of actors competing for jobs than Kansas City student or recent student actors.

*Which economy offers the greatest opportunities for a young actor?*

TABLE 5.14 I AM ABLE TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT MYSELF AS AN ACTOR

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	0	2	1	2	7	12
	% within Kansas City	.0%	16.7%	8.3%	16.7%	58.3%	100.0%
	% within I am able to financially support myself as an actor	.0%	66.7%	25.0%	40.0%	41.2%	40.0%
	% of Total	.0%	6.7%	3.3%	6.7%	23.3%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	1	1	3	3	10	18
	% within or Social	5.6%	5.6%	16.7%	16.7%	55.6%	100.0%
	% within I am able to financially support myself as an actor	100.0%	33.3%	75.0%	60.0%	58.8%	60.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	3.3%	10.0%	10.0%	33.3%	60.0%
Total Count		1	3	4	5	17	30
% of Total		3.3%	10.0%	13.3%	16.7%	56.7%	100.0%

The results of answers from the question in Table 5.14 were quite similar between the two groups. It is worth noting that the only “Agree” answer came from Southern California.

TABLE 5.15 FOR A START-UP ACTOR THERE ARE PLENTY OF PART TIME JOBS AVAILABLE TO HELP PAY THE BILLS

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	2	5	0	3	0	10
	% within Kansas City	20.0%	50.0%	.0%	30.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within For a start-up actor there are plenty of part time jobs available to help pay the bills	66.7%	38.5%	.0%	42.9%	.0%	37.0%
	% of Total	7.4%	18.5%	.0%	11.1%	.0%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	1	8	3	4	1	17
	% within Socal	5.9%	47.1%	17.6%	23.5%	5.9%	100.0%
	% within For a start-up actor there are plenty of part time jobs available to help pay the bills	33.3%	61.5%	100.0%	57.1%	100.0%	63.0%
	% of Total	3.7%	29.6%	11.1%	14.8%	3.7%	63.0%
Total Count		3	13	3	7	1	27
% of Total		11.1%	48.1%	11.1%	25.9%	3.7%	100.0%

70% of Kansas City responders either “Agree” or “Somewhat Disagree” to this statement, compared to 53% of Southern California responders. Of the group who answered “Somewhat Disagree,” Southern California constitutes 57.1% of that population.



TABLE 5.16 I WORK FULL TIME OR PART TIME IN ANOTHER FIELD BESIDES THEATRE

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	4	1	2	3	10
	% within Kansas City	40.0%	10.0%	20.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	% within I work full time or part time in another field besides theatre	30.8%	20.0%	50.0%	60.0%	37.0%
	% of Total	14.8%	3.7%	7.4%	11.1%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	9	4	2	2	17
	% within Socal	52.9%	23.5%	11.8%	11.8%	100.0%
	% within I work full time or part time in another field besides theatre	69.2%	80.0%	50.0%	40.0%	63.0%
	% of Total	33.3%	14.8%	7.4%	7.4%	63.0%
Total Count		13	5	4	5	27
% of Total		48.1%	18.5%	14.8%	18.5%	100.0%

TABLE 5.17 ECONOMIC MEAN REPORT

City		Q#1	Q#2	Q#3	Q#4
Kansas City	Mean	4.1667	2.4000	2.7000	1.4000
	N	12	10	10	10
	Range	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00
Southern California	Mean	4.1111	2.7647	1.9412	3.5882
	N	18	17	17	17
	Range	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Total	Mean	4.1333	2.6296	2.2222	2.7778
	N	30	27	27	27
	Range	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Q#1: I am able to financially support myself as an actor

Q#2: For a start-up actor there are plenty of part time jobs available to help pay the bills

Q#3: I work full time or part time in another field besides theatre

Q#4: The cost of living is affordable in my city

Southern California actors answered an average of 3.5882 to the statement “The cost of living is affordable in my city,” (Neither Agree or Disagree). 64.7% of Southern California responders answered either “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree” to this statement. I included the range in this chart because it shows the deviation to the right or left on the one through five scale. For example, this statement shows a range of 4 for Southern California responders, meaning many different answers went to the left or right of the average. On the other hand, Kansas City responders answered an average 1.4000 with a range of 1.0. Since the average of 1.4 is far and almost completely to the left of the scale, the conclusion can be drawn that most Kansas City responders “Agree” with this statement.

*Which environment or community offers the greatest opportunities for a young actor?*

TABLE 5.18 I AM SATISFIED AS AN ACTOR LIVING IN THIS CITY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	2	6	2	1	1	12
	% within Kansas City	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%	100.0%
	% within I am satisfied as an actor living in this city.	40.0%	50.0%	33.3%	20.0%	50.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	20.0%	6.7%	3.3%	3.3%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	3	6	4	4	1	18
	% within Socal	16.7%	33.3%	22.2%	22.2%	5.6%	100.0%
	% within I am satisfied as an actor living in this city.	60.0%	50.0%	66.7%	80.0%	50.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	10.0%	20.0%	13.3%	13.3%	3.3%	60.0%
Count		5	12	6	5	2	30
% of Total		16.7%	40.0%	20.0%	16.7%	6.7%	100.0%

66.7% of Kansas City responders answered “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree,” compared to 50% of Southern California responders. 27.8% of Southern California responders answered either “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree,” compared to 16.6% of Kansas City responders.

TABLE 5.19 NO MATTER HOW TALENTED I AM, I WILL PROBABLY ALWAYS HAVE TO WORK THAT “OTHER JOB” IN THIS CITY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	1	8	1	0	0	10
	% within Kansas City	10.0%	80.0%	10.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within No matter how talented I am, I will probably always have to work that "other job" in this city.	33.3%	57.1%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	37.0%
	% of Total	3.7%	29.6%	3.7%	.0%	.0%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	2	6	2	1	6	17
	% within Socal	11.8%	35.3%	11.8%	5.9%	35.3%	100.0%
	% within No matter how talented I am, I will probably always have to work that "other job" in this city.	66.7%	42.9%	66.7%	100.0%	100.0%	63.0%
	% of Total	7.4%	22.2%	7.4%	3.7%	22.2%	63.0%
Total Count		3	14	3	1	6	27
% of Total		11.1%	51.9%	11.1%	3.7%	22.2%	100.0%

90% of Kansas City responders either “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” with this statement, compared to 47.1% of Southern California responders. This is a fairly large difference in responses, indicating that actors in Southern California feel that they will

not always have to work another job to supplement income; they feel more optimistic about the idea of working solely as an actor.

TABLE 5.20 MY CITY IS A PLEASURABLE PLACE TO LIVE

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	6	4	0	0	0	10
	% within Kansas City	60.0%	40.0%	0%	.0%	0%	100.0%
	% within My city is a pleasurable place to live.	37.5%	40.0%	0%	.0%	0%	37.0%
% of Total		22.2%	14.8%	0%	.0%	0%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	10	6	0	1	0	17
	% within Socal	58.8%	35.3%	0%	5.9%	0%	100.0%
	% within My city is a pleasurable place to live.	62.5%	60.0%	0%	100.0%	0%	63.0%
% of Total		37.0%	22.2%	0%	3.7%	0%	63.0%
Total Count		16	10	0	1	0	27
% of Total		59.3%	37.0%	0%	3.7%	0%	100.0%

TABLE 5.21 I ENJOY MANY DIFFERENT REREATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN MY CITY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	5	3	2	0	0	10
	% within Kansas City	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	.0%	0%	100.0%
	% within I enjoy many different recreational activities in my city	29.4%	60.0%	66.7%	.0%	0%	37.0%
	% of Total	18.5%	11.1%	7.4%	.0%	0%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	12	2	1	2	0	17
	% within Socal	70.6%	11.8%	5.9%	11.8%	0%	100.0%
	% within I enjoy many different recreational activities in my city	70.6%	40.0%	33.3%	100.0%	0%	63.0%
	% of Total	44.4%	7.4%	3.7%	7.4%	0%	63.0%
Total Count		17	5	3	2	0	27
% of Total		63.0%	18.5%	11.1%	7.4%	0%	100.0%

The only noticeable differences in answers to this statement are in the “Somewhat Disagree” category. 11.8% of Southern California responders answered “Somewhat Disagree.” 20% of Kansas City responders answered “Neither Agree or Disagree,” while approximately 80% of Southern California responders either “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” to this statement.

TABLE 5.22 I SPEND OVER AN HOUR COMMUTING TO WORK AND/OR AUDITIONS

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	0	1	0	1	8	10
	% within Kansas City	.0%	10.0%	.0%	10.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	% within I spend over an hour commuting to work and/or auditions	.0%	16.7%	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	37.0%
	% of Total	.0%	3.7%	.0%	3.7%	29.6%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	3	5	3	4	2	17
	% within Socal	17.6%	29.4%	17.6%	23.5%	11.8%	100.0%
	% within I spend over an hour commuting to work and/or auditions	100.0%	83.3%	100.0%	80.0%	20.0%	63.0%
	% of Total	11.1%	18.5%	11.1%	14.8%	7.4%	63.0%
Total Count		3	6	3	5	10	27
% of Total		11.1%	22.2%	11.1%	18.5%	37.0%	100.0%

By far, Southern California responders agree more than Kansas City responders to this statement. 90% of Kansas City responders answered “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree,” compared to 35.3%.

TABLE 5.23 I ENJOY THE CLIMATE OR WEATHER IN MY CITY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	1	5	3	1	10
	% within Kansas City	10.0%	50.0%	30.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	% within I enjoy the climate or weather in my city	6.7%	83.3%	75.0%	50.0%	37.0%
	% of Total	3.7%	18.5%	11.1%	3.7%	37.0%
Southern California	Count	14	1	1	1	17
	% within Socal	82.4%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	100.0%
	% within I enjoy the climate or weather in my city	93.3%	16.7%	25.0%	50.0%	63.0%
	% of Total	51.9%	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	63.0%
Total Count		15	6	4	2	27
% of Total		55.6%	22.2%	14.8%	7.4%	100.0%

Responders’ opinions clearly favor the climate or weather in Southern California over Kansas City. 40% of Kansas City responders answered “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree,” compared to 11.8% of Southern California responders. 82.4% of Southern California responders answered “Agree,” compared to 10% of Kansas City responders.



TABLE 5.24 ENVIRONMENT MEAN REPORT

City		Q#1	Q#2	Q#3	Q#4	Q#5	Q#6
Kansas	Mean	2.4167	2.0000	1.4000	1.7000	4.6000	2.8000
	N	12	10	10	10	10	10
City	Range	4.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00
	Mean	2.6667	3.1765	1.5294	1.5882	2.8235	1.4706
Southern California	N	18	17	17	17	17	17
	Range	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
Total	Mean	2.5667	2.7407	1.4815	1.6296	3.4815	1.9630
	N	30	27	27	27	27	27
	Range	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00

Q#1: I am satisfied as an actor living in this city.

Q#2: No matter how talented I am, I will probably always have to work that "other job" in this city.

Q#3: My city is a pleasurable place to live.

Q#4: I enjoy many different recreational activities in my city

Q#5: I spend over an hour commuting to work and/or auditions

Q#6: I enjoy the climate or weather in my city

The mean report, Table 5.24 again provides a good description of average answers for each environmental question. Taking into consideration the averages and the individual cross tabbed results, some conclusions can be made about survey-taker's opinions about each environmental area. Kansas City student or recent student actors, on average, somewhat agreed that they will probably always work another job besides acting, while Southern California actors seem to be more optimistic towards the right on the scale of that question, averaging 3.1765. Kansas City survey-takers were also less-satisfied with the weather or climate compared to Southern California responders who were overwhelmingly positive about the weather or climate. Not surprisingly, actors in Southern California report long travel times to and from work/auditions, reporting an

average score of 2.8235, compared to an average score of 4.6000 from Kansas City responders.

*Does a college degree in acting/theatre help an actor’s career?*

TABLE 5.25 MY EDUCATION WILL HELP ME “BREAK IN” AS AN ACTOR IN THIS CITY

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	4	5	1	1	1	12
	% within Kansas City	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	100.0%
	% within My education will help me “break in” as an actor in this city.	50.0%	41.7%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	13.3%	16.7%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	4	7	3	3	1	18
	% within Socal	22.2%	38.9%	16.7%	16.7%	5.6%	100.0%
	% within My education will help me “break in” as an actor in this city.	50.0%	58.3%	75.0%	75.0%	50.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	13.3%	23.3%	10.0%	10.0%	3.3%	60.0%
Total Count		8	12	4	4	2	30
% of Total		26.7%	40.0%	13.3%	13.3%	6.7%	100.0%

The majority of responders in both groups agree that their college education will help them “break in” as in actor in their respective geographical locations, though there is a slight difference between Kansas City and Southern California percentages. 75% of Kansas City responders answered “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree,” compared to 61.1% of

Southern California responders. 16.6% of Kansas City responders answered “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree,” compared to 22.3% of Southern California responders.

TABLE 5.26 MY COLLEGE EDUCATION HAS BENEFITED MY ACTING CAREER

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	7	3	2	0	12
	% within Kansas City	58.3%	25.0%	16.7%	.0%	100.0%
	% within My college education has benefited my acting career.	36.8%	42.9%	66.7%	.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	23.3%	10.0%	6.7%	.0%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	12	4	1	1	18
	% within Socal	66.7%	22.2%	5.6%	5.6%	100.0%
	% within My college education has benefited my acting career.	63.2%	57.1%	33.3%	100.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	40.0%	13.3%	3.3%	3.3%	60.0%
Count		19	7	3	1	30
% of Total		63.3%	23.3%	10.0%	3.3%	100.0%

66.7% of Southern California respondents answered “Agree” to this statement versus 58.3% of Kansas City respondents. 22.2% of Southern California respondents answered “Somewhat Agree” and Kansas City respondents 25%. 16.7% of Kansas City respondents answered “Neither Agree or Disagree,” compared to 5.6% Southern California respondents. 5.6% of Southern California respondents answered “Somewhat Disagree.” No respondents answered “Disagree.”

TABLE 5.27 MY COLLEGE’S ACTOR TRAINING PROGRAM SUCCESSFULLY PREPARED ME FOR MY CAREER

		Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Kansas City	Count	3	2	6	1	0	12
	% within Kansas City	25.0%	16.7%	50.0%	8.3%	.0%	100.0%
	% within My college's actor training program successfully prepared me for my career.	42.9%	16.7%	75.0%	50.0%	.0%	40.0%
	% of Total	10.0%	6.7%	20.0%	3.3%	.0%	40.0%
Southern California	Count	4	10	2	1	1	18
	% within Socal	22.2%	55.6%	11.1%	5.6%	5.6%	100.0%
	% within My college's actor training program successfully prepared me for my career.	57.1%	83.3%	25.0%	50.0%	100.0%	60.0%
	% of Total	13.3%	33.3%	6.7%	3.3%	3.3%	60.0%
Count		7	12	8	2	1	30
% of Total		23.3%	40.0%	26.7%	6.7%	3.3%	100.0%

Kansas City respondents seemed more indecisive in this category than Southern California respondents. 77.8% of Southern California respondents answered “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree,” compared to only 41.7% of Kansas City respondents. 50% of Kansas City respondents answered “Neither Agree or Disagree,” versus only 11.1% of Southern California respondents.

TABLE 5.28 EDUCATION MEAN REPORT

City		My education will help me "break in" as an actor in this city.	My college education has benefited my acting career.	My college's actor training program successfully prepared me for my career.
Kansas	Mean	2.1667	1.5833	2.4167
City	N	12	12	12
	Std. Deviation	1.26730	.79296	.99620
Southern	Mean	2.4444	1.5000	2.1667
California	N	18	18	18
	Std. Deviation	1.19913	.85749	1.04319
Total	Mean	2.3333	1.5333	2.2667
	N	30	30	30
	Std. Deviation	1.21296	.81931	1.01483

Southern California respondents, on average, were more optimistic about their education in relationship to success. The mean averages appear very similar in this table; however, attention should be paid to the percentages highlighted throughout this section. The only mean average where Kansas City averages farther to the left than Southern California is the statement, “My education will help me ‘break in’ as an actor in this city.”

### Conclusions

#### Union Membership

Out of all of the actors surveyed, the majority of union memberships were observed in the Southern California group. Whether or not this has any connection to other areas of interest surveyed is unclear.

## Casting

Both groups of actors surveyed demonstrate similar positive opinions about the availability of acting opportunities in their communities, but when asked about their satisfaction level with the amount of acting work being received, Southern California responders differed from Kansas City responders. 5.6% of Southern California responders answered “Agree,” but 25% of Kansas City responders answered “Agree.” Therefore, Kansas City actors are more satisfied with the amount of acting work they receive. Kansas City responders also agreed more than Southern California responders to the statement, “If an actor is talented and hard-working he or she will get cast in my city.” Kansas City actors seem more optimistic about the casting prospects and are more satisfied with the amount of acting work they receive. Furthermore, Southern California survey-takers reported being overwhelmed by the surrounding competition. 33.3% of Southern California responders answered “Agree,” and 44.4% answered “Somewhat Agree” to the statement, “I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of other actors in this city competing for the same jobs,” compared to Kansas City responder answers of 8.3% for “Agree” and 33.3% for “Somewhat Agree.”

All of the survey-takers generally agreed that casting takes a long time in each city. 58.3% of Kansas City responders answered “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree.” 77.7% of Southern California responders answered “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree.” Kansas City actors seemed less decisive on the topic with 41.7% answering “Neither Agree or Disagree.”

Only 8.3% of Kansas City responders agreed to the statement, “there are too many other people that are my type in this city for me to get cast consistently,” while

27.8% of Southern California responders agreed. Neither group of actors overwhelming agreed to booking a lot of acting jobs every year, in fact the majority in each group disagreed. However, 60% of Kansas City responders agree that theatres in Kansas City seek out new talent; 29.4% of Southern California responders disagreed. 58.9% of Southern California responders agreed that theatres seek new faces. Only 10% of Kansas City responders disagreed with this statement.

The biggest differences in answers can be noted in the two following statements: “I am satisfied with the amount of acting work I receive” and “I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of other actors in this city competing for the same jobs.” Kansas City survey-takers present a more optimistic opinion than Southern California survey-takers about the casting process. Based on the opinions of those surveyed, Kansas City’s casting climate is more hospitable than Southern California’s.

#### Economic

Very few of the actors surveyed reported the ability to support themselves financially, but survey-taker opinions show Kansas City as a healthier economic climate for actors. 70% of Kansas City responders agree there are plenty of part-time jobs to help pay bills, while only 53% of Southern California responders agree. The mean average analysis of the statement “the cost of living is affordable in my city” provides the best insight into the economic question. Kansas City responders agree that their city is an affordable place to live, while 64.7% of Southern California responders disagree with this statement.

## Environment

From the actors surveyed, satisfaction rates are higher in Kansas City than Southern California. 66.7% of Kansas City responders agree that they are satisfied as an actor living in their city versus only 50% of Southern California responders. Not included in the charts within the chapters of this paper, but still providing important data for analysis, responders' answers to the statement "my city's theatre community is a supportive environment" provides a much needed parallel comparison. An impressive 91.6% of Kansas City responders answered "Agree" or "Somewhat Agree" to that statement, compared to 66.7% of Southern California responders. By and large, according to the opinions of those surveyed, the actor community in Kansas City is more supportive than Southern California. Furthermore, Kansas City actors have a higher satisfaction rate than those in Southern California.

Southern California respondents also spend more time commuting to and from work than Kansas City responders. Southern California wins on weather/climate, with a massive majority agreeing that they enjoy the climate or weather in their city.

## Education

The majority of survey-takers reported their education has benefited their career; however, Southern California responders were more confident in the connection between their education and career success. Kansas City survey-takers were more convinced that their education will help them "break in" to their geographical area, while Southern California survey-takers were more convinced that their education has benefited their acting careers. Southern California responders also agreed more that their college actor



training program successfully prepared them for their careers, climbing to 77.8% agreed versus only 41.7% of Kansas City responders who agreed.

### Correlations and Areas for Future Research

There were several limitations to this study; unfortunately, too few responses were collected to make correlations between observations. The observations themselves are valid for a small sample group, but in order to make correlations between statements and factors, a larger sample is needed. There are several areas where there may be correlations at play. The opinions of survey-takers lead me to hypothesize that young Southern California actors are less-satisfied with their careers than young Kansas City actors. I also hypothesize that satisfaction correlates with levels of agreement to the statements in casting, environment and economy. Education and union membership seems to be the isolated factor out all of the five areas I've chosen to focus on.

Despite this study's shortcoming, the relevancy of the topic makes it important to continue to study and research. Kansas City Star writer Robert Trussell recently published an article just one week after completing my survey titled, "Young actors are home, home in Kansas City." In it, Trussell discusses how more and more young actors are flocking to Kansas City. "There are probably more theater artists — actors, designers, directors, playwrights — in their 20s and 30s in Kansas City than ever before. Some are UMKC graduates. Others went to Stephens College in Columbia. Some went to New York and decided to come back. Many of them...are choosing to live here.<sup>1</sup> Several of the young Kansas City actors Trussell interviewed spoke about how much they love Kansas City. He also discovered that Kansas City has plenty of opportunities for non-Equity actors. Trussell also discusses how the community of actors in Kansas City has

remained the same for many years, giving young actors consistency, strong community and long-term viability. In the same article, UMKC M.F.A. Acting head Ted Swetz expressed his opinions on why students stay in Kansas City. "...I think people do stay here because of the economy. I think a combination of things has happened. I think they're working more and getting themselves known in Kansas City. They actually have relationships they have nurtured because once you have a theater or an artistic director who believes in you good things happen. And New York isn't going anywhere."<sup>2</sup> The topic of regional theatre cities as viable communities for professional actors deserves more research and attention.

I plan to continue my research about these five factors and continue to gather survey volunteers to expand observations to make stronger correlations between all five factors and areas of research. Instead of relying on anecdote alone as reason for moving to one city over the other, perhaps this study will start a movement to base those conclusions on evidential research. By obtaining young actor survey-takers, much can be learned from their attitudes and opinions about each factor in relationship to the appeal of a city as a place to live and act.

## APPENDIX A

### ACTOR TEXTBOOKS

*A Director Prepared: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre* by Anne Bogart

*A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeline Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Previtio, Scott Zigler and David Mamet

*Acting Power* by Robert Cohen

*Acting Onstage and Off* by Robert Barton

*Acting: The First 6 Lessons* by Richard Boleslavski

*An Actor Prepares* by Constantin Stanislavsky

*An Actor's Work* by Constantin Stanislavsky

*And Then, You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World* by Anne Bogart

*Building a Character* by Constantin Stanislavsky

*Devised and Collaborative Theatre: A Practical Guide* by Tina Bicat

*Embodied Wisdom: The Collected Papers of Mosche Feldenkrais* by Mosche Feldenkrais and Elizabeth Beringer

*Freeing the Natural Voice* by Kristin Linklater

*Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* by Keith Johnston

*My Life in Art* by Constantin Stanislavsky

*Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen

*The Actor at Work* by Robert Benedetti

*The Empty Space* by Peter Brook

*The Theatre and its Double* by Antonin Artaud

*The Viewpoints Book* by Anne Bogart

*The Way of Acting* by Tadashi Suzuki

*Theatre Games for the Lone Actor* by Viola Spolin

*To The Actor* by Michael Chekhov

*Towards a Poor Theatre* by Jerzy Grotowski

*True and False: Hersey and Common Sense for the Actor* by David Mamet

*Voice and the Actor* by Cicely Berry

*Year of the King* Anthony Sher

## APPENDIX B

### THEATRES IN LOS ANGELES AND KANSAS CITY

#### **Los Angeles**

Actors Art Theatre

Actors Co-op

A Noise Within

Bootleg Theatre

Cabrillo Music Theatre

Celebration Theatre

Center Theatre Group

Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts

Chance Theatre

Circle X

Civic Light Opera of South Bay Cities

Deaf West Theatre

Ebony Repertory Theatre

Falcon Theatre

Fountain Theatre

Havok Theatre Company

Hollywood Bowl

Hollywood Fight Club

International City Theatre

Joy Theatre

Knightsbridge Theatre  
La Jolla Playhouse  
Moving Arts  
Music Theatre West  
Odyssey Theatre Ensemble  
Open Fist Theatre Company  
Pacific Resident Theatre  
Pacific Stages  
Pantages Theatre  
Pasadena Playhouse  
Playwrights' Arena  
Reprise Theatre Company  
Robey Theatre Company  
Rogue Machine  
Sacred Fools Theatre Company  
Shakespeare by the Sea  
Shakespeare Festival/LA  
Shakespeare Orange County  
Shining City  
SkyPilot Theatre  
Son of Semele  
South Coast Repertory Theatre  
Stephanie Feuiry Studio Theatre

The Actors' Gang  
The All American Melodrama Theatre  
The Blank Theatre Company  
The Colony Theatre Company  
The Los Angeles Theatre Ensemble  
The MET Theatre Company  
The Old Globe  
The Road Theatre Company  
The Theatre @ Boston Court  
Theatre of Note  
Theatre West  
Troubadour Theatre Company  
West Coast Ensemble  
Write-Act Repertory

### **Kansas City**

Actor Training Studio  
Alcott Arts Center  
American Heartland Theatre  
American Youth Ballet Anomaly Orange  
ART=E=MC2 (Theatre of Relativity)  
Ballet North  
The Barn Players, Inc.  
Bell Road Barn Players

Blue Springs City Theatre  
Bottoms Up Sketch Comedy  
Broadway Review / Spring Hill Recreation Commission  
Buran Theatre Company  
Butcher Block Productions  
Byrd Productions  
CenterSeason Theatre  
Chestnut Fine Arts Theatre  
Children's Performing Theatre  
Christian Youth Theater  
CinnamonEye  
City in Motion Dance Theater  
City Theatre of Independence  
ComedyCity  
Commedia Sans Arte  
Corbin Theatre Company  
The Coterie Theatre  
CounterClockwise Comedy  
Crossroads Theatre Company  
The Culture House  
Egads Theatre Company  
Encore Theatre  
Encore! Dance & Gymnastics



Fishtank Performance Studio

Folly Theater

Fourth Wave Theatre

Gardner Community Theatre, Inc. Gladstone Theatre in the Park

Gorilla Theatre Productions

Heart of America Shakespeare Festival

InPlay

Jest Mysteries

Journeyman Theatre Company

Just Off Broadway Theatre Association

Kansas City Actors Theatre

Kansas City Ballet

Kansas City Burlesque Festival

Kansas City Cappies

Kansas City Improv Festival

Kansas City Murder Mystery Players

Kansas City Repertory Theatre

Kansas City Young Audiences

The Kansas City Renaissance Festival

KC Cabaret

KC Crossroads Comedy @ The Fishtank

Kearney/Holt Community Theatre

Kiwanis Club of Excelsior Springs

Lawrence Community Theatre  
Lawrence Opera Works  
Leawood Stage Company  
Lee's Summit Family Theatre  
Liberty Performing Arts Theatre  
The Living Room  
Lyric Opera of Kansas City  
Maples Repertory Theatre  
Martin City Melodrama & Vaudeville Company  
Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre  
Minds Eye Theatre  
Murder Mystery USA  
Music Theatre for Young People of Kansas City  
Musical Theater Heritage  
The Mystery Train  
New Theatre Restaurant  
Omnibus Theatre Company  
Paul Mesner Puppets  
PerformOUT KC  
Potluck Productions  
Quality Hill Playhouse  
Quixotic Performance Fusion  
Rainbow's End Theater

Reach...a movement collective inc.  
Right Between the Ears  
River City Community Players  
River City Players  
Robidoux Resident Theatre  
The Roving Imp Theater Senior Barn Players  
She&Her Productions  
Sonlight Productions  
Spinning Tree Theatre  
Starlight Theatre Association  
StoneLion Puppet Theatre  
Tantrum  
The Theatre Gym  
The Theatre in the Park  
Theater League  
Theatre at Vis  
Theatre Atchison  
Theatre for Young America  
Theatre of the Imagination  
Topeka Civic Theatre & Academy  
Tried & True  
Trilogy Cultural Arts Centre  
The Trip Fives

Unicorn Theatre

Union Station Kansas City, Inc.

Westport Center for the Arts

William Inge Center for the Arts

Willie's Wenches

APPENDIX C

SURVEY

- 1=Agree
- 2=Somewhat Agree
- 3=Neither Agree or Disagree
- 4=Somewhat Disagree
- 5=Disagree

**Select the union/s (if applicable) that you are a member of.**

- Actor's Equity Association (AEA)
- AFTRA
- Screen Actor's Guild (SAG)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**I am enrolled in the Equity Membership Candidacy (EMC) program.**

1      5

**I would like to join Actor's Equity at some point in the future.**

1      2      3      4      5

**Joining Actor's Equity is a sign of being a professional actor.**

1      2      3      4      5

**Joining Actor's Equity helps an actor's career in my city.**

1      2      3      4      5

**My education will help me "break in" as an actor in this city**

1      2      3      4      5

**My connections will help me "break in" as an actor in this city**

1      2      3      4      5

**My college education has benefited my acting career.**

1      2      3      4      5

**Professional connections are more important to success as an actor in this city than an actor's training or education**

1      2      3      4      5

**My college's actor training program successfully prepared me for my career**

1      2      3      4      5

**My college provided me with important professional and academic connections in theatre**

1      2      3      4      5

**I work approximately \_\_\_\_ hours per week as an actor in theatre.**

Less than 5 hours

6-10 hours

11-15 hours

16-25 hours

More than 25 hours

**I perform in \_\_\_\_ community (unpaid) shows per year (circle one).**

Less than 1

1-2

2-5

5-10

more than 10

**I have been involved with a professional show.**

1      2      3      4      5

**Most of my time is spent working in theatre versus other commitments.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I wish that I could spend more time working in theatre versus the other job/s that I work.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I am satisfied with the number of plays that I perform in.**

1      2      3      4      5

**There are plenty of acting opportunities for budding actors in my city**

1      2      3      4      5

**My city's theatre community is a supportive environment**

1      2      3      4      5

**I am satisfied with the amount of acting work I receive**

1      2      3      4      5

**If an actor is talented and hard-working, he or she will get cast in my city.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of other actors in this city competing for the same jobs**

1      2      3      4      5

**My city is overly competitive for actors**

1      2      3      4      5

**The same people always get the part.**

1      2      3      4      5

**Professional connections are more important to success as an actor in this city than an actor's training or education**

1      2      3      4      5

**Actors are cast in my city because they are the most talented person considered for a given role.**

1      2      3      4      5

**It takes a long time to get cast consistently in my city.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I constantly compare my successes as an actor with other actors**

1      2      3      4      5

**I am always getting "beat out" by the same people.**

1      2      3      4      5

**There are too many other people that are my type in this city for me to get cast consistently**

1      2      3      4      5

**Most of the acting jobs in my city are paid.**

1      2      3      4      5

**Living as a professional actor working solely in the entertainment industry is possible in my city.**

1      2      3      4      5

**Most of my acting jobs are paid.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I am able to financially support myself as an actor.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I need to be hired as an actor more often**

1      2      3      4      5

**I feel anxious to get cast more often**

1      2      3      4      5

**I book a lot of acting jobs every year.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I consider myself a professional actor.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I am a successful actor.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I view myself as an artist**

1      2      3      4      5

**I am satisfied as an actor living in this city.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I feel confident that I will succeed in advancing my acting career in this city.**

1      2      3      4      5



**I plan to move to a different city to pursue my acting career.**

1      2      3      4      5

**This city is a temporary stepping stone in my acting career.**

1      2      3      4      5

**As long as a good actor works hard, my city's theatres welcome new faces**

1      2      3      4      5

**Theatres in my city want to cast new faces.**

1      2      3      4      5

**With hard work, I expect to "make it" as an actor in this city**

1      2      3      4      5

**Theatres in my city seek out new talent**

1      2      3      4      5

**I view the casting process as fair and equitable in my city**

1      2      3      4      5

**It is easy to "break in" as an actor in the city where I live**

1      2      3      4      5

**It is difficult to "break in" as an actor in this city.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I expect to start getting cast consistently in this city**

1      2      3      4      5

**I will probably never be able to get cast consistently in this city**

1      2      3      4      5

**I feel confident in my audition skills**

1      2      3      4      5

**I get discouraged by the audition process**

1      2      3      4      5

**I get discouraged by the casting process**

1      2      3      4      5

**For a start-up actor there are plenty of part time jobs available to help pay the bills**

1      2      3      4      5

**There are not enough part time jobs to help pay bills**

1      2      3      4      5

**I work full time or part time in another field besides theatre**

1      2      3      4      5

**I work approximately \_\_\_\_ hours per week outside of theatre.**

Less than 5 hours

6-10 hours

11-15 hours

16-25 hours

More than 25 hours

**Most of my time is spent working on other commitments versus theatre.**

1      2      3      4      5

**The other job or jobs that I work are in the following industries...**

Restaurant/Food

Education

Public Service

Sciences

Sales

Customer Service

Administrative

Graphic Arts

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**I often need to leave my “other job” to audition**

1      2      3      4      5

**No matter how talented I am, I will probably always have to work that “other job” in this city**

1      2      3      4      5

**My city is a pleasurable place to live.**

1      2      3      4      5

**I enjoy the climate or weather in my city**

1      2      3      4      5

**I enjoy many different recreational activities in my city**

1      2      3      4      5

**The cost of living is affordable in my city**

1      2      3      4      5

**I spend over an hour commuting to work and/or auditions.**

1      2      3      4      5

## APPENDIX D

### LETTER TO SCHOOLS/SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Dear (INSERT NAME)

Greetings! My name is Erin DeSeure and I am a graduate student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, pursuing a Master of Arts in Theatre. I graduated from Chapman University in Orange, CA, with a BFA in Theatre Performance in 2008. I am thrilled to hear that you are interested in participating in my research by Survey Monkey.

The purpose of this thesis is to compare theatre students' descriptions of acting opportunities in a smaller-market Kansas City versus a larger market Los Angeles. The survey will take about twenty minutes to complete and is online via Survey Monkey. Your answers will be kept confidential and will not be associated with your name. Even I will not know your identity in relation to the answers you give to each question. Participation is completely voluntary, if you at any time during the survey want to stop, please feel free to do so.

Participation in this study may offer a unique opportunity to be involved in a study that describes budding actors' opportunities across the country. To date, I have not found any data or research that gauges student opinions about acting opportunities in particular cities. Answering this question could inform actors who have considered both locations. It could also pose further study beyond this thesis and provide a springboard for future research about other regional theatre cities in comparison to larger markets like LA, Chicago and New York City. Regional theatre cities have gotten little attention when it comes to discussing professional actor working environments. Students' observations on this matter could be obtained by this survey.

Please follow the link below to complete the survey. Thank you again for your participation!

Sincerely,

Erin K DeSeure  
Candidate, M.A. Theatre (2011)  
B.F.A. Theatre Performance, Chapman University 2008  
UMKC Theatre Training News, Chief Writer and Editor  
UMKC Graduate Teaching Assistant, Theatre 130: Foundations of Fine Arts  
913-708-2227  
[ekdzq7@umkc.edu](mailto:ekdzq7@umkc.edu)

APPENDIX E  
INFORMATION SHEET

This study will survey students and recent graduates of theatre programs at four colleges/universities. Your participation in this survey is voluntary.

Despite the hardship associated with an actor's early years, these are the years I am most interested in for this thesis. Students stand at the precipice of new theatrical experience and can offer insightful opinions about the variety of different factors that go into a successful acting career. This study may offer a unique opportunity to be involved in research that describes budding actors' opportunities across the country. To date, I have not found any data or research that gauges student opinions about acting opportunities in particular cities. Answering this question could inform actors who have considered both locations. It could also pose further study beyond this thesis and provide a springboard for future research about other regional theatre cities in comparison to larger markets like L.A., Chicago and New York City. Regional theatre cities have gotten little attention when it comes to discussing professional actors' working environments. Students' observations on this matter have been obtained through surveys from Chapman University in Orange, CA, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Stephens College in Columbia, MO, and the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC).

**Primary Investigator:** Erin DeSeure, 913-708-2227

**SSIRB, UMKC:** Sheila Anderman, *Research Protections Manager*, 816-235-537, [andermansh@umkc.edu](mailto:andermansh@umkc.edu)

## APPENDIX F

### SITE APPROVAL, CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

Erin,

As long as you have complied with all of the requirements for student research required at UMKC, that would be satisfactory and you have my permission as department chair.

How do you intend to recruit student volunteers? Can we be of assistance in this?

I would enjoy seeing your results when you conclude your work.

Regards,  
Nina LeNoir

Dr. Nina LeNoir  
Department Chair  
Department of Theatre  
Chapman University  
One University Drive  
Orange, CA 92866  
[www.chapman.edu/copa](http://www.chapman.edu/copa)  
Phone: 714.997.6622  
FAX 714.744.7015  
[lenoir@chapman.edu](mailto:lenoir@chapman.edu)

APPENDIX G  
SSIRB APPROVAL

February 24, 2011

Felicia Londre, Ph.D.  
Erin DeSeure, MA  
UMKC 404 Performing Arts Center  
4949 Cherry Street  
Kansas City, MO 64110

Dear Investigators:

Your protocol IRB #SS11-15X entitled, "Living and acting in Kansas City versus Southern California" was reviewed by a member of the UMKC Social Sciences Institutional Review Board and classified as exempt in accordance with exemption criteria #2 in the Federal Guidelines 45 CFR Part 46 as follows: "Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability or reputation".

It is our understanding no identifiers will be used to link the subjects with data collected.

Reapproval is also required and you are asked to submit a progress report before 02/01/12 if your project continues beyond this date. If your project is terminated earlier, a final report to the Review Board is required within 90 days.

Sincerely,

Sheila Anderman, CIP, CIM  
Research Protections Program Manager  
UMKC Social Sciences  
Institutional Review Board

## ENDNOTES

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### Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> Bonnie Gillespie, *Self-Management for Actors: Getting to Down (Show) Business* (Los Angeles: Cricket Feet Publishing, 2003), 23.
- <sup>2</sup> Tony Noice and Helga Noice, *The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 10.
- <sup>3</sup> Noice and Noice, *The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting*, 5.
- <sup>4</sup> Patti P. Gillespie and Kenneth M. Cameron, "The Teaching of Acting in American Colleges and Universities," in *Teaching Theatre Today: Pedagogical Views of Theatre in Higher Education*, ed. Anne L. Fliotsos and Gail S. Medford (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 51-64.
- <sup>5</sup> Stucky, Nathan and Jessica Tomell-Presto, "Acting and Movement Training as a Pedagogy of the Body," in *Teaching Theatre Today: Pedagogical Views of Theatre in Higher Education*, ed. Anne L. Fliotsos and Gail S. Medford (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 103-124.
- <sup>6</sup> David Mamet, introduction to *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeleine Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Previto and Scott Zigler (New York: Random House, 1986), ix-xi.
- <sup>7</sup> Noice and Noice, *The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting*, xv.
- <sup>8</sup> Michel Saint-Denis, *Guiding Principles: The progression of the training* (New York: The Arts Book, 1982), 86.
- <sup>9</sup> Saint-Denis, *Guiding Principles: The progression of the training*, 86-87.
- <sup>10</sup> David Mamet, introduction to *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeleine Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Previto and Scott Zigler, xi.
- <sup>11</sup> David Craig, *On Performing: A Handbook for Actors, Dancers, Singers on the Musical Stage*, (Horizon Book Promotions, 1989), 17.
- <sup>12</sup> Noice and Noice, *The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting*, 47.
- <sup>13</sup> Noice and Noice, *The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting*, xiii.
- <sup>14</sup> Noice and Noice, *The Nature of Expertise in Professional Acting*, xiv.
- <sup>15</sup> Eric T. Hetzler, "Actors and emotion in performance," *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 8, no. 1 (2008): 60.
- <sup>16</sup> Thalia Goldstein and Ella Winner, "Living in alternate and inner worlds: Early signs of acting talent," *Creativity Research Journal* 21, no. 1 (2009): 117.

### Chapter Four

- <sup>1</sup> Christy DeSmith, "Eric Rosen Risky at the Rep," *Internet FAQ Archives*, (April 1, 2010), <http://www.faqs.org/periodicals/201004/2020604841.html> (accessed January 10, 2011).



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<sup>2</sup> Felicia Hardison Londré, *The Enchanted Years of the Stage: Kansas City at the Crossroads of American Theatre, 1870-1930* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> *Actors' Equity Association*,

<http://www.actorsEquity.org/areliaisons/areliaison.asp?liaisonCode=40> (accessed January 12, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> *KC Stage*,

<http://www.kcstage.com/?a=List&op=View&md=Theatre&sid=1294695471> (accessed January 10, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Robert Trussell, "From 'Venice' to the 'Moon,' local theatre rose to new heights," *The Kansas City Star* (December 25, 2010),

<http://www.kansascity.com/2010/12/25/2535958/theater-from-venice-to-the-moon.html> (accessed January 10, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> *Fishtank Theatre*, <http://fishtanktheater.blogspot.com/> (accessed January 10, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Zoglin, "Venice, by Way of Kansas City: The Year's Best Musical," *Time Magazine* (May 14, 2010),

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<sup>9</sup> *Kansas City Business Journal*, "52 areas have more than 25,000 small business, including Kansas City," <http://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/> (accessed January 20, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Suzanna Stagemeyer, "Forecast expects Kansas City's economic recovery to gain steam in 2011," *Kansas City Business Journal*, (October 10, 2010),

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<sup>11</sup> Rosen, "Your weekend fill-up: Prices pushing \$3 again, but below national average."

<sup>12</sup> Suzanna Stagemeyer, "Kansas City gets high Travel + Leisure rankings for barbecue, affordability," *Kansas City Business Journal*, (November 8, 2010),

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<sup>13</sup> S. Singer, "Vaudeville in Los Angeles, 1920-1926: Theatres, management and The Orpheum," *Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (February 1992): 103.

<sup>14</sup> Singer, "Vaudeville in Los Angeles, 1920-1926: Theatres, management and The Orpheum," 104.

<sup>15</sup> Singer, "Vaudeville in Los Angeles, 1920-1926: Theatres, management and The Orpheum," 113.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Hayes, "Up from the wavery: Los Angeles hits the midsize-to-big-time." *American Theatre* 14, no. 8 (1997): 20.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen DePaola, "AEA Annual Report,"

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<sup>18</sup> Zachary Pincus-Roth, "A Los Angeles Theater Is Renovated, Relieving Headache-Inducing Quirks." *New York Times* (August 27, 2008), 5.

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<sup>19</sup> Dale Kasler, “Road to Recovery: California economy inches back up – except for hiring,” *Seeking Alpha* (December 12, 2010), <http://seekingalpha.com/news-article/212827-road-to-recovery-california-economy-inches-back-up-except-for-hiring> (accessed January 18, 2011).

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## **Chapter 5**

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<http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1989375,00.html> (accessed January 10, 2011).

## VITA

Erin DeSeure was born on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1986, in Shawnee, Kansas. She grew up in Argentine, a small neighborhood in Kansas City, KS, where she attended New Stanley Elementary. Shortly after her education began, she switched to private Catholic schools (St. Agnes Elementary and then Bishop Miege High School, both in Roeland Park, KS). While at Miege she participated in debate, forensics, choir, band, theatre and various sports teams. In 2004 she was selected by her classmates to speak at commencement and also earned the highest honor at Miege awarded called the Ursuline Award. Given at the Awards Assembly in May and at Graduation, this award is limited to a minimum of eight percent of the senior class. To be selected for an Ursuline Award, a student must exhibit the following: Scholastic achievement commensurate with ability; above-average service to the school and/or community; leadership in an elected office, in the community or in the classroom; and excellent Christian character.

After graduating from Miege, Erin travelled to Chapman University in Orange, California, to earn her B.F.A. in Theatre Performance, which she completed in May 2008. While at Chapman she acted in numerous academic productions as well as other independent film projects and L.A. area theatre/commercial work. She returned to Kansas City during the summer holidays, working at Starlight Theatre as an Education Intern under UMKC MA alumni Anne Johnston and performing at Gladstone Theatre in the Park's *Cinderella*.

After a short time at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC and some soul searching, Erin moved back home to Kansas City to pursue a career in theatre and to obtain a Master of Arts degree in Theatre from the University of Missouri - Kansas

City. She is an eclectic academic and theatre artist, choosing to pursue a career that delves into various areas including teaching, acting, and dramaturgy. She believes she is far too young to know exactly what life has in store for her.

While at UMKC, Erin has served as Dramaturg for two productions, *The Laramie Project* directed by Ron Schaffer and *Green Whales* at the Unicorn Theatre directed by Cynthia Levin. She has also worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant to Dr. Howard Martin and taught two semesters of Foundations of Theatre. During her final semesters at UMKC she edited the Theatre Training News, an annual journal distributed by the department in the fall, and she again taught Foundations of Theatre during the spring. Alongside her academic pursuits, she performed in two shows at The Barn Players in Mission, Kansas and during the summer of 2010 worked as an Education Intern at the prestigious La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, California. Erin will receive her Master of Arts degree in May of 2011. Afterward, she plans on seeking Theatre Education and Outreach opportunities, and possibly the pursuit of doctoral degree in social sciences.