

1-1-2006

The academic gap between the "real-world" and theatre and film

Thomas V Grasso
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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THE ACADEMIC GAP BETWEEN
THE "REAL-WORLD" AND
THEATRE AND FILM

By

Thomas V. Grasso

Bachelor of University Studies
University of Nevada Las Vegas
2007

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

**Masters of Arts Degree in Theatre Arts
Department of Theatre Arts
College of Fine Arts**

**Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2008**

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Thesis Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

November 19, 2008

The Thesis prepared by

Thomas V. Grasso

Entitled

The Academic Gap Between the "Real-World" and Theatre and Film

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Theatre



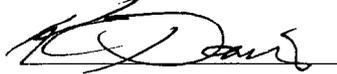
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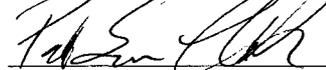
Dean of the Graduate College



Examination Committee Member



Examination Committee Member



Graduate College Faculty Representative

ABSTRACT

The Academic Gap Between The “Real-World” And Theatre And Film

by

Thomas V. Grasso

Professor Jeffrey Koep, Ph.D., Examination Committee Chair
Dean of the College of Fine Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This thesis will determine the validity of universities' present-day approach, curriculum, standards and techniques in preparing young students with a vision of entering the labyrinth and often time ambiguous vocation titled entertainment. The focus concentrates on theatre and film studies.

There are various issues and concerns by professionals and scholars alike. There is disputation in the debate, as well as, numerous issues and varied possibilities for a conclusion.

This thesis will ask the question are students of theatre and film really prepared to enter the “real-world” of entertainment. Are university studies up-to-date in order to prepare students for this complexed and often ambiguous venture?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express our sincere gratitude to Jeffrey Koep, Ph.D. for his patience, suggestions and understanding in the development of this thesis. I wish to thank the distinguished committee members: Sean Clark, K.C. Davis and Brackley Frayer. Special thanks to Harriet Barlow Ph.D. for her guidance for this Masters program development.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

This thesis will examine the expanding gap between the pedagogy in theatre and film at the university level and the “real world” of entertainment. Research has revealed, especially in film, there has been a continuous debate by scholars and professionals since 1927 regarding this breach. There are numerous issues and varied possibilities for a conclusion. Therefore, it depends on defining factors within the debate regarding theatre and film pedagogy in order to come to an unequivocal conclusion.

The purpose of this thesis is not to cast aspersions on any one university program. This thesis will argue that the academic domain is a political entity unto itself. There exist professors within the ranks, who have never produced, directed, or written a movie, play, or television show of professional commercial recognition in their entire career; however, they consider themselves experts in the field. Their interpretation and choice of educational studies are variable and in many cases do not relate to the true axioms of the profession. This can vary from university to university, but it is to be expected, or *res ipsa loquitur*.

Patricia Thompson in her dissertation, *The Foundational Academic Training of American Production Dramaturges in Liberal Arts Universities*, explains this point, “Yale professor Mark Bly said that our universities have

difficulty preparing students for theatre careers; because, no one understands it.”¹ Thompson further questions, “[a]nd why do graduate production dramaturge, today, so often find themselves, through no fault of their own, ill-prepared to participate in professional productions?”² Thompson continues by offering a solution to the question proposed, “It seems more likely that American educators of dramaturgy are not taking the insights of practicing professional American dramaturges into consideration, when designing their academic programs.”³ It can be argued that Thompson’s observation and assumption is only a portion of the problem. However, she does offer a more lucid commentary, “Universities have difficulty teaching the rules of a vocation in which so few rules exist.”⁴

In Dana Polan’s book entitled, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginning of U.S. Study of Film*, she offers a humorous quip on how film studies began at the university level. “Film studies quietly and easily slipped into academic settings as much because no one was really paying any attention.”⁵ This thesis acknowledges that education of theatre and film is essential and that universities do at least attempt to provide answers to skills for a complicated world that is ambiguous in content. Unlike other studies, such as law and medicine, that requires licensed credentials for their career, it is not a prerequisite for the entertainment industry. In fact, it is not mandatory to attend a college or

¹ Thompson, Patricia. *The Foundational Academic Training of American Production Dramaturges in Liberal Arts Universities*. Diss. S.D.S.U, 1998. 4. Print.

² Ibid. 5.

³ Ibid. 5.

⁴ Thompson, Patricia. *The Foundational Academic Training of American Production Dramaturges in Liberal Arts Universities*. Diss. S.D.S.U, 1998. 6. Print.

⁵ Polan, Dana. *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginning of U. S. Study of Film*. U of California P., 2007. 30.

university to gain entry into theatre or film. However, John Ford, the legendary film director, said it best, "You have to learn your craft before you can learn your art."⁶

Do universities only offer a scholarly study or a vocational curriculum? Is a student prepared after earning a Bachelor's or Master's degree in theatre or film to acquire an immediate position in the real world of entertainment?

This thesis will explore the issues based on facts. While the author does not claim to be an expert, this thesis is based on verity, suggestive thought and observation based on the author's forty-one years of professional experience in the entertainment field.

Film, theatre and the various entities of media comprise a world-wide infrastructure for entertainment and each is an industry unto itself. It is no longer comprised of just Broadway and Hollywood. Today, the American Theatre and the Hollywood film industry subsist on their laurels.

If it were not for capacious corporations that seem willing to fund Broadway there definitely would not be a "Great White Way." Today Broadway seems to only survive on revival, revival and more revivals. It could be argued that Broadway died in 2000 with the death of David L. Merrick. However, the irony reveals that no one has told Broadway "they are" dead, too.

Producing a hit Broadway theatrical is an arduous task. "In theatre historically, the odds against ever seeing a return on investment are well over two to one. An estimated 80% of shows never fully recover their costs."⁷

⁶ Levy, Bill. *John Ford: A Bibliography*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Green Wood Press, 1998. 10.

The boom years for Broadway and Wall Street were the 1920's where things changed for the better on the professional stage. Kenneth MacGowan in his essay, *The Educational Theatre for Tomorrow*, observes, "In the latter half of that decade [1920's] came a new need for activity in the university theatre."⁸ MacGowan also points out the reason for this activity. "The competition of two new forms of entertainment began threatening the stage, taking away playhouses, playgoers and some actors. It was silent movies and eventually talkies that cut into the audiences of plays."⁹

The Great Depression of 1929 almost wiped out theatre. MacGowan explains, "The 80 more or less "legitimate theatres" of New York shrank to less than 30. The 5,000 theatres of the Road diminished to 50. The 400 touring stock companies were gone. Thus, the heart of the living stage of today is the educational theatre and to a lesser degree, the community theatre."¹⁰

Prior to the advent of theatre arts in universities Steel MacKaye, who was an American playwright, actor, director, inventor and most of all a visionary, realized a need to establish an acting school in America as early as 1877. It should be noted that Steel MacKaye's concept came about, because actors in America had rejected the European style of acting and training for the stage.

Writer James McTeague describes the development of the first establishment for an acting school. McTeague reveals, "In 1887, the Lyceum

⁷ Vogal, Harold L. *Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis 7th Ed.* Cambridge UP, 2007. 460.

⁸ MacGowan, Kenneth. *The Educational Theatre for Tomorrow*. *Educational Theatre Journal*, 9:2 (1957: May) 86.

⁹ *Ibid.* 86-87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 87.

Theatre School was established. A formal curriculum composed of a wide range of courses and was taught by experts and today it remains the overwhelmingly predominate model for teaching acting in America.”¹¹ This format carried over to universities and took on various forms. Academic requirements interjected, therefore, into a degree program. Over the years academia became more prominent. We surmise the gap began to form early in the development of theatre arts programs at university levels. The complexities of society, technology and the real world of the business helped widen this disparity, as well. The problem has not gone unnoticed, but no one at a university level seems to want to confront it. This thesis asks does a gap exist?

The background for university theatre can best be illustrated from the article in *Educational Theatre Journal* titled, *Historical Background to University Research in Theatre*. “[Theatre] began in the departments of language and literature with courses surveying the history of drama in a particular country or a particular period. Out of such academically respectable courses came studies in the history of the theatre and of the arts of the stage more radical perhaps than literary analysis, but not unallied to such acceptable academic subjects as archaeology, art history, and musicology. Finally came what might be called practical courses in theatre arts, acting, design, direction and theatre technology, scene construction architecture, and lighting.”¹² The discussion continues, even today, between professional theatre, university theatre and the academic world.

¹¹ McTeague, James H. *Before Stanislavski” American Professional Acting Theory 1875- 1925*. Scarecrow Press Inc.: New Jersey and London, 1993. X.

¹² Educational Theatre Journal. *Historical Backgrounds To University Research In Theatre*. 19:2a 1967:June 238.

Kenneth MacGowan speculates the following analysis, "We heard more often that the educational theatre is spending too much time and energy on teaching teachers to teach teachers."¹³ MacGowan further illustrates, ironically, that this claim comes most often from fellow educators, who seem to attack departments as vocational schools. This thesis asserts that there are too many individuals, who receive a Masters degree in theatre or film and immediately seek employment as an instructor. They are inexperienced in their ability to teach the finer professional aspects of the business. Furthermore, the majority have never worked in the professional field of theatre and relies strictly on theory. The result equates to the student who suffers the consequences for they are not prepared to enter the "real world" of theatre.

John Istel writes in a short essay, *What Does 'Professional' Really Mean?* "There are too many programs for the talent pool [T]he profession has no need for the great volume of students that are being trained. There are not enough teachers available with both professional experience and education expertise for all those professional programs."¹⁴ Students are led to believe they have a chance to make their mark in theatre. Istel maintains, "They (students) are used and a very valuable segment of their life is occupied in pursuit of goal for which they appear to have no special ability. This waste of youth is truly unforgivable."¹⁵

¹³ MacGowan, Kenneth. *The Educational Theatre for Tomorrow*. *Educational Theatre Journal*, 9:2 (1957: May) 89.

¹⁴ Istel, John, *What Does 'Professional' Really Mean?* *American Theatre* Vol. 12; (1995: Jan) 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 8.

Noted Professor Robert Brustein of Harvard writes in his article, *The Education of a Theatreperson*, "The training for theatre many confuse two kinds of institutions – trade schools and universities." Brustein points out a critical impasse, "The excessive attention to stage activity on the undergraduate level is leaving us with a generation of theatre illiterates, who come to conservatories not only with little knowledge of literature, society, politics, but with ill prepared basic skills as well."¹⁶

On a positive note, Dick Moore, child actor, points out in his book, *Opportunities in Acting*; universities provide the theatre arts student with the following: "[A] broadening of your intellect, the development of your personality, a deeper appreciation of culture."¹⁷ But, is it going to get them a job? The issue is how to give students a comprehensive education in both humanities and the theatre with an overall knowledge of the complexities of the professional world.

Film Studies

The pedagogy of Film Studies at the university level had a peculiar origin. Dana Polan in her book, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginning of the U.S. Study of Film*, provides a simple explanation on how film studies derived as an academic entity. She notes, "Film slipped quietly and easily into academic settings as much because no one was really paying any attention."¹⁸

¹⁶ Brustein, Robert. *The Education of a Theatreperson*. Performing Arts Journal, Vol. 11, No1, (1988). Pp.14-19.

¹⁷ Moore, Dick. *Opportunities in Acting*. NTC Contemporary Publishing Group: Chicago, 1999. 116.

¹⁸ Polan, Dana. *Scenes of Instruction: Beginning of the U.S. Study of Film*. U of California P, 2007. 30.

Surprisingly, the study of film at universities did not begin in a southern California university, the focal point of the movie industry at the time. Movies began on the east coast and literally fled to California to escape the legal wrath of Thomas A. Edison. "For years [Edison] claimed to have invented the motion picture camera and projector, and he had backed the claim with length and expensive litigation against all pretenders."¹⁹ "He also asked his rival producers to consider a new scheme - monopoly."²⁰

Edison failed to control this new media form of entertainment because legal litigation on patent infringements became too expensive. Thus, Hollywood became the film hub for producing and supplying movie houses across the country with the much sought after motion picture product.

Film studies officially began at Columbia University in the 1920's and it was not a course on the art of making film. A professor in the English department introduced the first course and his name was Victor O. Freedberg PH.D. The course was designed for study in "photoplay" or more commonly today called screen writing for the motion picture.

Freedberg believed in the future possibilities of film studies within universities. Through the assistance of Will Hays, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributers of America, they were able to persuade Jesse Lasky of Paramount Studios to contribute a scholarship fund to the newly formed department. Lasky, however, became interested in securing storage facilities at Columbia University (rent free) for his vast film library that he was beginning to

¹⁹ Gabler, Neal. *How the Jews Invented Hollywood: An Empire of Their Own*. Anchor Books: New York, 1988. 57.

²⁰ Ibid. 57.

build. "Lasky's servitude for the support of film studies faded and he ended his financial support. He was not confident that students were taught the professional skills required to enter efficiently into the studio system which controlled the art of motion pictures studios."²¹

Dana Polan reveals that Freedberg was optimistic for the future of film studies. "Freedberg believed as he stated at the end of his first chapter of *The Art of Photoplay Making*: "[T]here can be no fair appraisal of the potentials of an art form like the new art of film without knowledge."²²

Freedberg's tenure quickly faded at Columbia. He became interested in his personal vision of grandeur and of obtaining a place in Hollywood. His attitude conflicted with the powers to be at Columbia and he was dismissed.

A component leader and a visionary for the future of a film studies took over. Her name was Francis Peterson and she would successfully develop an active film department that would eventually grow in scope.

"In 1927 film studies were also developed at the University of Southern California (USC) under the direction of Professor Boris Markorim, who matched his classroom pedagogy with strong efforts in moral reform through cinema."²³ This coincided with the formation of the Hays Office that regulated a form of moral standards in film. Also, in 1927 Harvard's School of Business, initiated a course centering on business in film. It was supported by the strict dictates of the

²¹ Polan, Dana. *Scenes of Instruction: Beginning of the U.S. Study of Film*. U of California P, 2007. 10.

²² Polan, Dana. *Scenes of Instruction: Beginning of the U.S. Study of Film*. U of California P, 2007. 55.

²³ Ibid.10-11.

Hays Office or formally called Motion Picture of Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (MPAPAI). The collaboration was put into place to give Harvard a prestigious image for this new fashionable art, the movies.

“There was a portion of society that believed film could develop into an immoral influence on society. Subliminally, the new moguls of Hollywood wanted to disarm this possible negative concept. Supporting the study of film as art at universities would give the industry credibility.”²⁴ However, as Dana Polan explains, “Among the practices of everyday culture, cinema posed a problem for pedagogy. There was the widespread assumption that film’s power – both positive and negative – was that it was a popular art that spoke accessibly to everyone. If this was indeed the case, what could academic discourse add to cinema’s evident function as democratic culture?”²⁵

It may be confusing, but by the early forties the film industry lost interest again in supporting the study of film. The motion picture industry was established and the war efforts increased their popularity. Therefore, they did not see a need to support film studies at a college level. The internal structure of the studio system trained young promising hopefuls from within; thus, giving them control according to their system on how to make movies. University students were basically shutout of the industry.

In 1927 through the early 1930’s, the University of Southern California and Stanford University sought the support of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPASC) for support to entice the major studios to donate

²⁴ Polan, Dana. *Scenes of Instruction: Beginning of the U.S. Study of Film*. U of California P, 2007. 110-12.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 28.

monies for scholarships. However, each college failed in their attempt to procure support from the studios. Even craft unions looked the other way. It would not be until the mid to late sixties that Hollywood would actively show a vital interest in creative students who had something to offer.

From the 1960's, there emerged for the first time at the University of Southern California (USC) and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) a new breed of film makers. Recognition of these new innovative directors, writers and future producers opened up future possibilities for film schools. In Jean-Pierre Geuens exceptional book, *Film Production Theory*, he describes the new breeds thirst for the silver screen, "Where as the previous generation remained connected to the power of the written word, this new group was entranced by the magic of image."²⁶

Geuens quotes the notable producer/director/writer George Lucas who describes the mind set of the new college educated film maker. "One of the things we tapped into – not just Steven (Spielberg) or I - but our whole 60's generation – is that we didn't come from an intellectual generation. We came from a visual generation. We enjoyed the emotional highs we got from movies and realized that cranking up the adrenaline to a level way beyond what people were doing when they treated film as a more literary medium."²⁷

Universities would prosper and the film students' possibilities for entry into the motion picture business blossomed. The studios were actively taking a second look at the new age of the innovators to take them to the next echelon.

²⁶ Geuens, Jean-Pierre. *Film Production Theory*. SU of New York P, 2000. 60.

²⁷ Ibid. 60.

Finally, some felt the university academia approach and development had reached a new zenith.

It was not just the new breed of film makers that changed the face of Hollywood. The collapse of the studio system ended the empire of the controlling movie moguls. Neal Gabler depicts the vicarious change, "The Hollywood Jews who created the American film industry at a certain time, in a certain place, and for certain reasons – ended."²⁸ He further deliberates on the changing Hollywood, "The studios have survived, though fragmented and empty; places in which others create visions rather than monarchies promulgating the visions of their rulers. Conglomerates and industrialists have assumed financial control in what amounts to a kind of vicarious assimilation of the old Hollywood."²⁹

The star system was disseminated by the infamous Music Corporation of America (MCA) a booking agency created by a young college student in the 1920's, Dr. Julius Stein, and was backed by Al Capone the all powerful gangland emperor.³⁰ MCA would succeed and control the star system and Hollywood. Their efforts set the pace of how business is conducted. In both theatre and film, today, it is the art of the deal.

Film courses flourished in the 1970's – 2000. Community colleges even developed courses, but concentrated on the technical portion. Suddenly, inspiring students wanted to be the next George Lucas, Stephen Spielberg, or Francis Ford Coppola of tomorrow.

²⁸ Gabler, Neal. *How the Jews Invented Hollywood: An Empire of Their Own*. Anchor Books: New York, 1988. 431.

²⁹ Ibid. 431.

³⁰ McDougal, Dennis. *The Last Mogul*. Da Capo Press, 1998. 11.

In the nineties, six rebels from the backlot surfaced. They were directors such as Quentin Tarantino, Steven Soderbergh, Paul Thomas Anderson, David O. Russell, David Tucker, and Spike Jonze. Sharon Waxman denotes the persona of these screen trendsetters, "The young generation that emerged in the 1990's – and these young men were chief among them – were nothing if not self-conscious to the mantle of directors such as Coppola."³¹

It appeared they were the new breed, but their outlandish style and morose storylines quickly faded, as did their rising star. Why? Simply, the tone of society quickly lost interest. Unfortunately, they influenced the next generation of film students who only seemed to be interested in video games and could care less about theatre or film history. It should be noted that the majority of the six directors never finished college or a film school. Tarantino never finished high school.

Today's new genre of film makers are into gothic novels – technology and computer graphics - minus text. It is quick cuts from music videos and satanic images. Studios are ruled by huge media conglomerates. Movies are produced from the outside in and the once great mecca of classic films are only seen on Turner Classic Movies, where there only exists images of legendary directors and indisputable movie stars.

Movies seem to lack a beginning, middle and an end. They fail to bring closure or closure to the characters depicted. It appears the young mavericks have never studied the structure of Shakespeare. Today, this once great American invention is all about money, imagery and ancillary rights.

³¹ Waxman, Sharon. *Rebels of the Backlot*. Harper Collins: New York, 2005. X.

This thesis asks these questions: Where are the next John Fords, who knew how to tell a story on film? Where, too, are great directors of theatre such as Eilia Kazan, and writers as Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller of theatre? Are universities the solution to creating quality film professionals?

Geuens writes, "The problem is how to save general education and its values within a system where specialization is necessary . . . the difficulty of such an operation are undoubtedly still with us today. Should the university serve merely as the job training facility of the business or should it reflect practical teaching through a special prism in wrapping up the immediate needs of commerce within a larger cultural perspective?"³²

Review of the Literature

Research indicates that there is a wealth of material, but in actuality, it is limited. After an extensive search and the aid of two library researchers, it was determined substantial in-depth facts are not readily available. However, the specifics garnered are solid evidence to present an argument that there is an academic gap between academia and the professional world of theatre and film and that the debate continues, but it is adversely addressed without solid remedies.

It is interesting to note, "The University of Indiana's University Center for Post Secondary Research, along with Vanderbilt University's Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy are in the early process of a three year study on the

³² Geuens, Jean-Pierre. *Film Production Theory*. SU of New York P, 2000. 57.

portrait and study of the lives and careers of the nation's creative class.³³ The heart of the study focuses on two questions: "What makes or breaks an artist? And is there a typical career path?"³⁴

"Organizers of this survey will ask students who finished training 5, 10, 15 and 20 years earlier to complete an extensive online questionnaire about their training, job history, salary, mentors, and career successes and downfalls. The survey will help arts educators evaluate their curricula and determine how to better serve students, the arts community and the public. Finally, a systematic study is being developed to look at artists, but also at those who could have become artists, but didn't."³⁵ It is interesting to note that the survey idea grew out of repeated requests from educators for more institutional data about arts and will hopefully answer questions as to how to improve university studies for both theatre and film and the arts in general.

This thesis was developed after reading an article by David Weddle, who worked professionally in the film industry and who was a concerned father of a daughter whom he spent a large amount lot of money on her education. He felt his daughter's university experience at the University of Santa Barbara had not adequately prepared her to find a job in the film industry. The heart of the article is as follows:

My daughter was required to take 14 units of film analysis and theory before she could graduate with her bachelor's degree in film studies. That's the equivalent of going to school full time for one

³³ "What Becomes of Arts Alumni." The Chronicle Review 1 August 2008: B14-B15.

³⁴ Ibid. B13.

³⁵ Ibid. B14.

quarter, which made it relatively easy to crunch the numbers. Including tuition, books, school supplies, food and rent, it cost about \$6,100 for Alexis to learn how to distinguish between a chair and a nostalgic feeling. I don't like to complain, but that just didn't seem like a fair return on my investment. Is there a hidden method to these film theorists' apparent madness? Or is film theory, as movie critic Roger Ebert said as I interviewed him weeks later, "a cruel hoax for students, essentially the academic equivalent of a New Age cult, in which a new language has been, invented that only the adept can communicate in"? ³⁶

In order for this thesis to acquire the facts concerning the theorized gap between academia and the "real world," the author evaluated a multitude of academic journal articles, scholarly books by professionals in the industry; yet, all are not detailed studies of the dilemma. In other words, the problem is questioned, but no in-depth studies or rational solutions exist in order to reveal a constructive conclusion. Books such as *Film Production Theory* by Geuens, *The Big Picture*, by Epstein and *Rebels on the Backlot*, by Waxman offer brief, but ingenuous hints of the problem. The secondary information contained in academic articles provides secondary solid evidence that the problem exists; however, they do not prescribe a definitive solution.

Chapter 2 of this thesis attempts to profile students who enter university programs in theatre and film with the future desire of making a career in the arts. However, a justifiable profile does not exist because of the lack of research data.

³⁶ Weddle, David. "Film School Isn't What is Used to Be." Los Angeles Times 13 July 2003.

Hopefully, in the next three years the Indiana University study will develop more precise information that will help educators to assert that there is a problem and offer educational solutions.

Chapter 3 focuses on interviews with professionals, who have made a living in the “real world” and have earned a degree. Their opinions and comments will offer a frank and professional outlook to the issue of an academic gap between the two worlds. Their candid statements have valid thoughts for the issue.

Chapter 4 contains this author’s theory based on observation and career experience. It is, also, an analysis of the author’s observations and suggestions in order to confront the issue at hand. Credence for the author’s statements is based on working experience beginning in 1960. During nearly four decades, the author witnessed historical and technical changes in film, television and theatre. The author of this thesis learned his craft working on shows such as *The Judy Garland Show*, *Bob Hope*, *Steve Allen*, *Danny Kaye* and several movies such as Frank Sinatra’s *Robin and Seven Hoods* and as a sketch writer for Soupy Sales. Also, the author has produced, directed or wrote approximately two hundred and eighty-four television shows and was affiliated with concerts and theatre productions.

Chapter 4 concludes with a basic overview on how to remedy the growing gap and an opinion on how to revamp the arts curriculum for future students. However, this author is cognizant that in reality his opinion will not have a profound effect.

Nevertheless, this thesis does expose a need to improve the experience of theatre and film at a university level. We realize that the art in America and as a society is struggling to define itself, on the other hand, regain its once fashionable revelations in both theatre and film.

CHAPTER 2

THEATRE AND FILM STUDENT PROFILES

What is an appropriate profile for a potential student of theatre or film?

Unfortunately, there is not adequate data to determine an explicit profile.

Therefore, it is difficult for this thesis to verify that determination. This thesis can only theorize or assume a profile. Hopefully, a planned three year study by the University of Indiana will provide educators with a precise overview for future use.

This thesis suggests that there is a definite separation between theatre and film studies. You cannot theoretically juxtapose their profiles. This thesis would argue that there is a different mindset between the two.

Theatre students are more attracted to the arts of dramatics and the past history of Greek theatre, the Elizabethan period of Shakespeare and classic plays. It has been this author's observation that theatre students are arrogant and often condescending. However, when they set forth on their sojourn to find work in the theatre they become humbled. It is part of the learning process.

Today's film students are intrigued by graphic novels, Computer Graphic Imagery (CGI). They have little understanding of storyline, history of film and are completely ignorant of budgets. A vast majority of undergraduates want to be a director and believe they have the final word. They are oblivious as to what a

producer's function is and they believe a producer only raises the money for a production. Many do not know the mastery of the late John Ford, Howard Hawks, or John Houston, Buster Keaton, or Fatty Arbuckle. Max Sennett is a complete enigma to them and they could care less. Ingmar Berman films bore them and they may be correct in their assumption. Why do film students write dialog with curse words on every other page? However, both theatre and films students are intrigued by the arts at an early age. Today, the logical attraction is made possible by the vast technological aspects of television, film, and video games, as well as, the immensity of the Internet.

The new genre of the arts, as previously stated in Chapter 1 by George Lucas, are enthralled by imagery, but, however, lack the intellect of literature.¹ Unfortunately, their knowledge of history is lacking. The majority of students entering these two programs have little understanding of what happened before 1980. However, it is not the students fault as blame can be attributed to our educational system at the high school level.

The problem with film students as quoted by Geuens in an article by Steven Maras titled *The Problem of Theory and Practice: Towards a Constitutive Analysis*, "A lack of students with too many blockbuster movies in their heads and emulation of commercial requirements' rather than artistic and

¹ Geuens, Jean-Pierre. *Film Production Theory*. SU of New York P, 2000. 60.

experimentation.”² Maras also highlights Jean-Pierre Geuens statement: “[C]inema has shrunk around a particular hermeneutic attitude oriented towards promotion and the entertainment package – ‘the themes must be explicit, the action relentless’ – that narrows the possibilities of the medium.”³ In other words, young film makers lack the ability of being able to tell a story with meaningful dialog (text) which contains stories of humanity that derives at a conclusion and brings the characters to a conclusion within the story. Furthermore, this thesis would argue that the young future communicators cannot communicate through the written word. This thesis defines the previous statement by stating they are not able to tell a story in written form without overpowering images of inexorable action. To be more exact . . . to hell with dialog . . . let’s blow something up. Better yet, who needs a storyline?

The young enterprising hopeful of theatre is faced with another dilemma, which is best explained by Eugene O’Neill in a letter to George Pierce Baker, July 16, 1914. For clarity this letter was written to Baker after O’Neill was kicked out of Princeton and O’Neill was pleading admittance to the prominent theatre program at Yale University. O’Neill writes, “Although, I have read all the modern plays I could lay my hands on and many books on the subject of Drama, I realize how inadequate such a haphazard, undirected mode of study it must be. With my present training I might hope to become a mediocre journey-man . . . I want to be an artist or nothing.”⁴

² Maras, Steven. *The Problem of Theory and Practice: Towards a Constitutive Analysis*. Journal of Media Practice Vol. 6 No. 2, 2002. 100.

³ Ibid. 100.

⁴ Istel, John. *Training for Nothing? 17 Views*. American Theatre. Jan. 95. pp. 12-20.

This thesis notes a more convincing point by John Istel. He notes, "That since O'Neill's letter concerning theatre education and training - - whether offered at a conservatory, at a university, or in a studio - - it has become a big business. Also, over the past few decades more than 70 institutions offer MFA degrees. However, the possibility of so many graduates earning a living exclusively in the theatre - - without working in other more lucrative media as well - - is unlikely as ever."⁵ Istel further makes his case by demonstrating figures from Actors Equity Association confirming the dilemma. "Working actors average 18 weeks of work, earning a median income of just over \$5,371."⁶ It should be noted that these figures have not changed much over the last decade.

John Istel continues:

"The question is do conservatory and university theatre programs reflecting this reality in their course offerings and educational philosophy? The American Theatre surveyed a wide cross section of university, conservatory and private educators about their approaches to the changing dynamics. The response that followed was organized in three areas:

- The need to reach (theatre students) career building skills to make a life in the theatre, if not a living.
- The relationship of work in film and TV to basic theatre training.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 12-20.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 12-20.

- The need for educators to focus on inspiring visionaries rather than training when O'Neill referred to a "mediocre journeymen."⁷

Istle's observation in his 1995 article at least acknowledges that there was a continuing debate. Has that much changed in the past eleven years or is it just lip service by academia? It is also interesting to note that many educators cited that the low priority of Americans place on the arts as part of the reason that making a living in the theatre remains so difficult. However, they felt theatre educators may not to be able to solve the large cultural problems, but they can instill in their students an artistic ideal that like other abstract notions, are only given force by the struggle to attain (Paraphrased).⁸

In this article noted acting studio founder, Michael Howard summarizes it best. "[U]niversities and conservatories best benefit may be simply by providing students - - whether just out of high school or just out of work - - with a place to extend. After all what O'Neill sought was a safe haven where he could try to become an artist."⁹

Noted Professor Robert Brustein responding to a similar essay by Bruce Wilshire titled, *The Education of a Theatreperson* said, "You call for more rigorous intellectual standards in theatre education and it is a sound one. But, in charging conservatories of training with "being trade schools for the profession" and thereby usurping the place formally given to "criticism, theory, and history; I think you are confusing two different kinds of institutions, each with their own distinctive goals and purposes. I agree that university theatre departments,

⁷ Ibid. pp. 12-20.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 12-20.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 12-20.

whether graduate or undergraduate, should be more engaged with intellectual and scholarly matters.”¹⁰

Brustein continues, “[U]ndergraduate level is leaving us with a generation of theatre illiterates, who come to conservatories not only with little knowledge of literature, society, politics and thought, but with ill prepared basic skills as well. . . . [I]t is my own conviction that such departments should be closely allied with, if not assimilated into, departments of literature and the humanities.”¹¹

The thesis argues that academic studies do offer the novice a safe haven to explore the possibilities of a career in the art of theatre or film. This thesis also submits that the reality of perfecting a perfect curriculum is probably impossible; however, adjusting course curriculum to benefit a more precise understanding for the student to grasp the realities of the “real world” would be beneficial. As the late actress Ruth Gordon said, “It is not just enough to have talent, skills and an education – ya gotta know what to do with it!”¹²

For students entering the curriculum of study, this thesis theorizes that “creative arts” should focus on truth and to achieve perfection one must concentrate on his or her craft. To achieve your goal in excellence dedication is not only required, but is demanded. In order to commit oneself to the realm of art, a total commitment must be attained through knowledge, professional skill and not just theory. As stated by Ms. Gordon, what one does with that developed talent is just the beginning. Earning a degree in either theatre or film

¹⁰ Wilshire, Bruce. *The Education of a Theatreperson*. *Performing Arts Journal*. Vol. 11, No.1. Rev. Robert Brustein. 1998. pp. 114-115.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp, 114-115.

¹² Moore, Dick. *Opportunities in Acting*. NTC Contemporary Publishing Group: Chicago, 1999. ix.

will not guarantee a successful career. Therefore, universities are merely a portal – an introduction. Nevertheless, the expansion of one's academic prowess is extremely beneficial and it elevates future proficiency. These two industries compel a continuous process of continued study to achieve success.

As previously stated the level of student's knowledge entering a university study program for theatre is varied. In addition, education equates at different levels, too. A well formatted curriculum will mold the academic learning process for all students in the beginning years of their study.

It is common knowledge that theatre students reading assignments are more pronounced and demands for familiarity with classic plays far exceed film students. Obviously, image and knowledge of film classics is most important for film hopefuls. For both groups, learning technical terms and production techniques are necessary. Understanding directorial terms, formats and various elements of production is extensively important for the learning scale and is pretty much par for most university studies. In other words, universities teach the beginning basic principles for both theatre and film.

The growing demand for trained experienced technical personnel is expanding and unfortunately universities on the whole lag behind because of budgetary inefficiency. Furthermore, experienced teachers in these new innovative crafts are also needed, but again universities lack the funds to employ them as part of their curriculum.

Students of either theatre or film enter universities filled with ambitious dreams. Questions arise: Are they informed on just how difficult it is to

succeed? Often it is a long path before they hit the main road. It is called paying your dues. Do students understand the formula of show business? This author's personnel experience discovered a formula in his early progress. It is as follows: 80% business, 10% talent and 10% luck. Luck is the hard part

This thesis agrees with the previous statement by John Istel, "They (students) are used and a very valuable segment of their life is occupied in pursuit of a goal for which they appear to have no special ability. This waste of youth is truly unforgivable."¹³ It is only fair to point out that many universities do attempt to screen potential candidates in their arts programs.

For a profile of a film student Jean-Pierre Geuens gives this prospectus. "Students enroll in film school because they want to make films and believe a college or a university education is the most effective way to help them do just that. What most of them do not realize at that stage of the game is that cinema is far from a settled field of study, that filmmaking is a cultural battlefield as well as an economic one."¹⁴

Geuens goes into further detail, "[T]hey (students) do not suspect that a film department reflects these conflicts as well, that it too is an area of struggle between competing schools of thought Everywhere teaching takes place, there are influences representing the contending forces the dominant as well as the subversive ones, and that consequently there will be, conflicts and contradictions, within its very walls."¹⁵

¹³ Istel, John. *Training for Nothing? 17 Views*. American Theatre. Jan. 95. pp. 12-20

¹⁴ Geuens, Jean-Pierre. *Film Production Theory*. SU of New York P, 2000. 55.

¹⁵ Ibid. 55.

Geuens, also, refers back to a report that is referred to as *The Harvard Report of General Education of 1945*. It confronted this issue when it declared that, "The problem is how to save general education and its values within a system where specialization is necessary. In other words, the commission was trying to distinguish pragmatic learning in a humanistic environment from mere apprenticeship."¹⁶

The difficulties of university studies are undoubtedly still with us today. Should universities serve merely to train teachers to be teachers or can it refract its teaching through a specially designed curriculum; thus, accommodating the needs of commerce within a larger scope of a cultural perspective? It is an interesting theory, but this thesis believes an unlikely avenue because there lacks in general a staff of professors with valid in-depth experience in the "real world" who could subjectively give effective instruction.

There is another profile of film students to consider, they are students who begin their studies at a university and then suddenly quit. Sharon Waxman profiles them in her book *Rebels on the Backlot* and gives several examples of recent notable film directors. She describes Paul Thomas Anderson's brief academic sojourn. In his youth he was kicked out of various high schools for fighting. He became enamored in the possibilities of becoming a film maker. Waxman profiles his academic efforts, "[A]nderson spent two semesters at Emerson College as an English major, before dropping out, and then got into the

¹⁶ Geuens, Jean-Pierre. *Film Production Theory*. SU of New York P, 2000. 57.

prestigious New York University Film School. He dropped out after two days, deciding they had nothing to teach him.”¹⁷

Paul Thomas Anderson who had experimented in his early youth with making home movies decided he had the courage to make it on his own. He would go on to write and direct such movies such as *Boogie Nights*.

Another example of a student who believed university studies was a waste of his time was David Fincher. Waxman describes his distained attitude toward film studies at a university. “Fincher while still in high school planned to apply to the prestigious film school at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles where Lucas had gone, probably no coincidence. By the time he graduated, he had no patience for that. The notion of two years of undergraduate work before I could spend \$70,000.00 of my own money to make a film that USC would then own the copyright just seemed ludicrous.” “Okay, I am going to have to go and do all this crap that I don’t want to do for the opportunity to spend my money to make assets for the USC Film School. I don’t think so.”¹⁸ Waxman continues, “Fincher proceeded to acquire a job with Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) working for George Lucas. After ILM, he left to direct videos for the likes of the Rolling Stones, Michael Jackson, and Aerosmith. In 1992, Fincher’s first movie was *Alien Three* for Twentieth Century Fox and followed by *Seven* followed by *Fight Club*.”¹⁹

These two directors understood that if they were going to make films a degree is not necessarily the required background to achieve in order to be

¹⁷ Waxman, Sharon. *Rebels on the Backlot*. Harper Perennial: New York, 2006. 85.

¹⁸ Waxman, Sharon. *Rebels on the Backlot*. Harper Perennial: New York, 2006. 145.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 145-146.

successful. Both are intelligent young men who basically understood their goals and had the courage to go after what they wanted. It should be pointed out that these unique directors were exceptional in their objective to achieve their goal. Not all students who enter either a theatre program or a film course at a university have the confidence or inspirational self-drive. Having earned a degree in either curriculum provides no certainty of achieving a career.

Chapter 2 concludes with a synopsis of the various opportunities a student may take in their study of theatre or film education. Do they choose a university which offers a more socialistic format or a community college that specializes in a precise category of technical production? On the other hand, they may just build their own path, as this is a business that does not require a degree to become successful.

There are two year college programs which offers courses designed specifically for a subject or craft such as, Los Angeles City College (LACC). This college operates more on a conservatory structure and provides professional courses such as lighting design, acting and film production. Classes are taught by industry professionals. However, they only offer a certificate not an accredited degree.

This thesis notes that not every student who has a desire to enter entertainment is enriched with scholastic abilities. A study at a university may not equate with their ability; however, by attending a community college such as LACC, they can focus more directly in their desired area of study. By taking this path a student is less likely to drop out of college altogether.

LACC appears to have a high success rate. There are only four colleges of this caliber and they are as follows: 1) Los Angeles City College, 2) Full Sail University in Orlando, Florida, 3) Florida Community College in Jacksonville, Florida and 4) Santa Monica College in Santa Monica, California.²⁰ Note: Full Sail University started out as a community college and has recently gained university status.

Chapter 3 will expound on the aspects of the benefits of a university degree and will answer questions concerning the debate and issues. The interviewees are entertainment professionals who have obtained higher education at the university level. They share their comments on the realities of the gap between academia and the “real-world.”

²⁰ Research data from: < www.fulsaild.edu. > < www.fccj.edu. > < ww.smc.edu. > < theatreacademy.lacitycollege.edu > 10 November 2008.

CHAPTER 3

INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS

To further demonstrate that this thesis has established that there is a gap between academia and the “real-world,” the following interviews were conducted with three individuals. Each has been successful in their profession within the entertainment industry. A quick review of these three interview professionals is as follows. Mr. James Moody spent nearly forty years as a Lighting Designer/Lighting Director. His credits cover concert lighting for John Denver, Stevie Wonder, Linda Ronstadt to name a few; before making a transition to television and the legitimate theatre. Mr. Moody holds a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Theatre from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Mr. Keegan graduated from Villanova University with a Bachelors in Philosophy and Theatre. Mr. Thomas Keegan has had a prodigious career in television syndication and also executive positions in cable television, as well, as serving as a producer for television specials. Ms. Ramirez received a Bachelors in Broadcasting from California State University (CSU) in Radio, Television and Film. Ms. Diane Ramirez worked in New York for the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) and various recording companies. She is

currently an executive for a major music, film, television clearing house for creative rights in Hollywood. (See Appendix I).¹

Interviews

James Moody

Mr. James Moody was a successful Lighting Director and Designer. After forty-one years in the business, Mr. Moody has begun a second career as professor at Los Angeles City College and teaching Lighting Design. He is, also, the author of six books dealing with the various aspects of theatre, television and concert design. Among Mr. Moody credits, he was Lighting Director and Lighting Designer for Entertainment Tonight, Jeopardy, and Wheel of Fortune, as well as, hundreds of television shows, plus, live theatre presentations. While Mr. Moody currently teaches at the community college level, he has continued his education; he will complete his doctorates degree from the University of Phoenix.²

Questions:

1. Do you believe there is an academic gap between university studies and the “real- world” of the business?

Yes, but it has closed more and more the past 10 to 15 years. Normal college theatre programs realize that they cannot sustain their programs if they do not

¹ See Appendix for all three Bio's.

² Moody, James. E-mail Interview. 18 September 2008.

meet the student's expectations of employment after graduation. There are only four programs like the Theatre Academy in the country.

2. When students graduate are they really prepared?

Absolutely!

3. Is the job market better today compared to when you first entered the field?

Absolutely today is wonderfully open, yes, yes, yes...the field has grown by leaps and bounds with the addition of concert tours but also more theatre road companies, theme parks etc.

4. How does a student, upon graduation, obtain a job in the working industry or your suggestion for them.

First, contact the unions to get on their "casual worker list," then contact the non-union companies who hire out crews, then contact the rental houses for shop work (meet a lot of people here), follow the trade magazines for leads on shows opening...there are so many ways including attending conferences such as Live Design International and United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Inc. (U.S.I.T.T.) each year.

5. What do you think the future is for potential graduates in the entertainment field?

There is a lot of potential. What I tell students is try everything and do not turn down any opportunity that gets you into the business that can lead to what you want to do. You must learn to network.

Tom Keegan

Mr. Keegan began his career as a television producer and syndicator with Winters Rosen Productions & Twentieth Century Fox Television becoming Vice President of Program Development. In the 80's, he pioneered advertising on cable television with Westinghouse Broadcasting and as vice president of Storer Communications. He founded TLK Entertainment Group packaging and selling programming to networks and worldwide syndication. Clients include Turner Media Group, ABC, and NFL among others. Mr. Keegan became the vice president and general sales manager of Family Net Television Network making deals with FOX News Corp, Salem Communications, and Initiative Media etc. Currently, he is the executive producer of a nationally televised special on WGN Superstation³

Questions:

1. Do you believe there is an academic gap between university studies and the “real world” of the business?

There is a huge gap between university studies and the “real world”. When you have your name, credibility, livelihood and future at risk with split second decision points day after day-----there is a live or die attitude one assumes. The big difference between university life and the “real world” is that in the entertainment industry, they shoot real bullets.

2. When students graduate are they really prepared?

³ Keegan, Tom. E-mail Interview. 25 September 2008.

University training will not prepare students for a future in the television business or any branch of the entertainment industry. They may get a rudimentary understanding of the basic technical aspects, especially as it relates to high-tech applications but how the process works from the script to the screen cannot be lectured.

3. Is the job market better today compared to when you first entered the field?

The job market is no better or worse than it was when I entered the business. The major difference is the addition of multitudes of platforms, but on a highly diluted basis. When I entered the field there was four major companies / networks to do business with on a national basis, today there are 300+. But those 300+ companies / networks don't come close to delivering the market share that the four majors did. The problem today is that fewer people will ever arrive at the opportunity to participate in the real process of creating and/or producing a show.

4. How does a student, upon graduation, obtain a job in the working industry or your suggestion for them.

If I was attending a university now and preparing to enter the entertainment industry, I would work towards choosing a specialized area of the business and put much of my concentration on that. Forty years ago, if you studied to be a doctor, chances are, you became an MD. Today, by the time you graduate, you have chosen a specialized area like dermatology, cardiology, vascular surgery etc. The same holds true for the entertainment industry. You can start with the

first question: choosing the creative side or the business side of show business, then you can get down to everything from writing to becoming a gaffer to packaging financial elements of a film. The other important tip is get the students all over the inside business dealings and research that is available through recognized trade papers, periodicals and industry associations. Have them thinking inside the business before they enter it.

5. What do you think the future is for potential graduates in the entertainment field?

It is going to depend on the changes within the industry. It has changed so much in the last ten years. The problem as I see it is job availability.

Diane Snyder Ramirez

Diane Snyder Ramirez comes from a show business family. She worked for this author as a production assistant (PA) before going to New York to work for ASCAP. Diane is now a highly successful professional in the copyright and music industry in Hollywood.⁴

Questions:

1. Do you believe there is an academic gap between university studies and the “real-world” of the business?

I feel that there is a pretty big gap between what is studied in school and the real world in the entertainment business. Entertainment is not a business that goes by the book. Unions don't follow their own rules about hour limits in a working

⁴ Ramirez, Diane. E-mail Interview. 1 October 2008.

day, record labels find very creative ways to bend the rules of marketing and promotion, entertainment attorneys shop artists on a commission basis to the highest bidder, regardless if the deal is right for the artist, record labels can be very creative in the ways they interpret contract terms taking advantage of inexperienced artists. You can't teach any of this in a book. Books don't tell you how the rules get bent, just how it's supposed to work in a Pollyanna world. Rules generally don't apply in the music business. I remember one prerequisite class I had to take when I transferred to the four year university. It was beginning radio. I had already gotten my Federal Communications Commission (FCC) license and had nearly two years on-air broadcasting experience and one year as assistant music director for the JC radio station and I was working at the four year university station in music programming in my first semester. What we were taught in class and "by the book" directly conflicted with what I had experienced in my nearly two years on air and what I was experiencing in my weekly radio station internship class at the university station. It made it very hard to take tests and I nearly failed this basic class. I had to remember to study and answer questions based on the book, even though I knew the book was wrong based on my real world experience. It really made me question a lot of what I was learning in the university program. I realized I had more current experience in the entertainment business than many of the professors.

2. When students graduate are they really prepared?

I don't feel that most university trained college students have enough "real-world" experience to enter into many positions in entertainment. I find a huge

gap, especially in the specialty programs such as specific “music business” programs where the ego of “I studied this specifically at this prestigious school, so I deserve this job” attitude actually set these recent graduates back in their careers. The entertainment business is so much more based on whom you know first, then your experience, than possibly your education. I feel they are not taught enough in universities with entertainment programs.

3. Is the job market better today compared to when you first entered the field?

I think the job market in the music business is a lot worse than it once was due to the economy, bloated artist rosters, too many artists signed for too much money and the music industry being way behind on adopting technology. However with the internet and cross marketing in other entertainment markets, there are many more outlets for music related positions than there once was.

4. How does a student, upon graduation, obtain a job in the working industry or your suggestion for them.

I feel that an average student who took the time to build a resume, experience and contacts while they are in college have a much better chance of being prepared than the straight A student who read all the books and tested well. I find that there is a bit of attitude in students where they think they are entitled to a position with decent pay just because they have a degree in an entertainment field, that they're above everything and don't need to work their way up from the bottom. I don't think they realize that a degree doesn't earn you a position; experience, willingness to work hard at whatever is put in front of you, even grunt

work and maybe even working under so-and-so's nephew who cares less will prepare you better than having read a book on radio promotions. If you want to work in TV production, you'll likely begin as PA making squat dollars working horrible hours and if you're lucky, someone may need a little extra help and you move up from there. You don't walk into an assistant director position based on work you produced in college and your degree, no matter how many awards you won and how good your grades were. Students also need to know how to network in the entertainment business. You can't be taught this skill in any university class or textbook. You need to learn by doing, experiencing and taking risks outside of any textbook learning.

5. What do you think the future is for potential graduates in the entertainment field?

I feel that graduates with more general experience, regardless of a specific degree in an entertainment field will fare much better. Today's entertainment business spans from internet companies that don't consider themselves entertainment companies, but technology companies to true production or music companies. Graduates with a diverse background and experience will be able to more easily find work than those with "book degrees" in a business that can really only be learned by real world experience. Entertainment degree graduates will have a lot more competition from people with other types of degrees for the same position, especially in today's technology based world.

Summary

Analysis of the interviews concludes that all three maintain that the debate is really about theory vs. practice.

While each has used higher education to advance their careers each person's opinion was based on their past experiences in film, theatre or the television industry. Mr. Keegan and Ms. Ramirez maintain that there is a gap between academia and the "real-world of entertainment. Mr. Moody does not clearly define how to improve the gap process, but states it has closed over the past ten to fifteen years. Ms. Ramirez strongly suggests students need to network while still in college to begin the process of securing a job in the industry right after they graduate.

Only Mr. Moody believes that students are prepared to immediately enter the business after completing their education in either a conservatory or university setting. Mr. Keegan and Ms. Ramirez do not concur with Mr. Moody that students are ready after graduation to secure a position of authority in the industry. Ms. Ramirez is vocal in here opinion that students who graduate with an academic attitude will find it much harder to compete in today's market without some general experience in the entertainment field. Ms. Ramirez remarks parallel the fundamental argument of this thesis that students are only exposed to college based courses and what is lacking is a solid understanding of the business. This author also agrees with Ms. Ramirez and notices that students today are limited and lack a versatile background and knowledge in the various areas of the entertainment field.

today are limited and lack a versatile background and knowledge in the various areas of the entertainment field.

Mr. Keegan and Ms. Ramirez are both concerned about the availability of employment in the industry. The increased technology aspects in both theatre and film require today's students to become more knowledgeable in imagery.

Broadway has implemented new technology in, due to the efforts of companies such as Disney, and it creates new challenges for stage craft for all involved in theatre production. For a variety of reasons, many professors and universities are limited in teaching these new skills because of budget limitation in teaching this new technology.

The interviewees reveal that future professional conservatories will be a strong competing factor with universities because they are more concentrated in specific craft and technological areas. Students will seek out an education that can offer a more updated curriculum that holds a direct connection with the current field of entertainment.

In observations based on the interviews, it seems that students graduating in the entertainment field should have an overall working knowledge of theatre, film and television in order to increase their ability to find employment and survive in this arduous and competitive field.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATION

It is important to reiterate the gap between academia and the “real world” of entertainment is not a recent issue. It is a topic that continues in an elusive manner trying the patience of academics and will continue until both academia and the various levels of the professional world work together to enhance the curriculum to assist a student’s working knowledge of the business of theatre and film. It must be conceived that further in-depth study is required to link theory and practice for improvement for students.

A factor that could create an influence for change is technology. Edward Epstein demonstrates this theory in his book, *The Big Picture*, “As film itself becomes obsolete in the new digital era, and much of the movie culture based on it fades away, the distinction will further blur between animated cartoons, live action, and interactive computer games in movie, television programs and reality shows – as will the boundaries between conventional advertising . . . there still may be movies made for grown-up audiences to see in theatres, but they will play an ever smaller part of the big picture.”¹ Restructuring of the audience and the type of entertainment forms created by technology may have an influence on student’s job opportunities in the market place. Students should have a working

¹ Epstein, Edward. *The Big Picture: Money and Power in Hollywood*. Random House:NewYork, 2005. 252.

knowledge of business trends and changes occurring in the world they are about to enter after graduation.

There are excellent professors and various outstanding departments that excel in the arts of theatre and film. By preparing students for the arduous world of entertainment, universities should reveal the difficulties of the business. Students should have a broader knowledge of the entertainment business, budgeting, understanding of legal issues that could arise, deal memos, copyright protection, knowledge of union contracts and demands, etc.

The late actor Roddy McDowall is quoted in the introduction of Dick Moore's book, *Opportunities in Acting*, and comments on a significant observation. "I have long thought that schools, classes, and many teachers almost completely ignore one of the most necessary elements when teaching an actor: The nuts and bolts of the basic trials of how to deal with the commerce of the profession and the labyrinth of its dilemmas."²

One can translate Mr. McDowall's comment suggesting that students complete a course of entertainment law. Currently, however, most universities offer entertainment law only as an elective. Most students, especially in theatre and film, have little knowledge of structure pertaining to the law. Legal issues, today, is a predominate component of the entertainment business and knowledge of the law will become more crucial in the future. This thesis recommends that at least one semester of entertainment law should be required. Students should be taught how to deal with agents, managers, accountants, and

² Moore, Dick. *Opportunities in Acting*. NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group: Chicago, 1999. ix.

lawyers and how each are under separate disciplines. This applies to both theatre and film departments.

Both theatre and film have gone through drastic changes since 1995. There are fewer jobs; studios no longer produce movies, they only distribute; sound stages have become rental facilities at studios; scenic shops are rapidly disappearing from studio lots; and executive positions are being reduced.

There is another facet to the equation, which will eventually widen the gap or put a demand on university curriculum for improvements. The business itself is changing as a result of technology and the structure of audience interest. Theatre and film have to adjust to compete for an audience base. As a result of these changes job opportunities as a business will take on different forms. Students need to be made aware of business trends.

The cost to produce a Broadway play has soared and there are fewer original productions. In June of 2008, "Broadway theatres report that both attendance and revenues were down more than 10% from a year ago."³ Under the current economic global circumstance, Broadway could suffer greatly over the next few years resulting in fewer prospects.

Currently, universities are beginning to be beset by budget cuts. The status of the overall economy could reduce student enrollment and if the current economic crises continues, scholarships will also diminish enrollment. Students need to consider, is it worth spending four years in a major that offers little opportunity once you have completed a program that does not relate to a changing business?

³ <http://blogs.wsj.com/enconomics>. *Economic Woes Hit Broadway*. June 11, 2008.

This thesis has presented information that indicates that there is a gap between academia and the “real-world” of theatre and film. It is a problem that could be defined as an impasse of theory vs. practice, which brings it into the frame of the analysis. Theory is not the same as production for the working professional and the requirements of the “real-world.” Steven Maras clarifies the difference. “Using a delineation that would not be found in say Aristotle’s *Poetics*, here production making, defines difference. It is a different regime of valuation: defined not by significance or importance, but by instrumentalism and utility (is philosophy necessary . . .).”⁴ Maras continues, “We need a critical sociology of media [theatre & film] education examining the various links between curriculum and the marketplace.”⁵

The three year study being conducted by Indiana University may produce answers, solutions and recommendations that will help create a curriculum to tighten the gap and provide educators with creative educational ideas. At the same time increase student’s career knowledge with a more solid understanding of what will be expected of them as a professional in the work environment.

The content of the news release announcing the study also mentions aspects and questions contained in this thesis. The following is a copy of that release in full:

May 1, 2008

SNAAP: New National Project to Examine Impact of Arts Training

⁴ Maras, Steven. *The Problem of Theory and Practice: Towards a Constitutive Analysis*. *Journal Media Practice*. Vol. 6 Number 2, 2005. 93.

⁵ *Ibid.* 93.

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) was launched today to examine the impact of arts training. It will provide a first-ever in-depth look at the factors that help or hinder the careers of graduates of arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within universities, whether the alumni work as artists or pursue other paths.

Arts alumni who graduated 5, 10, 15 and 20 years earlier will provide information about their formal arts training. They will report the nature of their current arts involvement, reflect on the relevance of arts training to their work and further education, and describe turning points, obstacles, and key relationships and opportunities that influenced their lives and careers.

The results of the annual online survey and data analysis system will help schools strengthen their programs of study by tracking what young artists need to advance in their fields. In addition, the information will allow institutions to compare their performance against other schools in order to identify areas where improvements are needed. "SNAAP will allow arts education institutions to assess their effectiveness and help them better prepare their students for the careers they enter in the arts or not," says Mary Schmidt Campbell, Dean, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

The Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research will administer the annual survey in cooperation with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. Steven J. Tepper, Curb Center associate director, says, "SNAAP is a milestone for cultural policy research, because it will go beyond profiles of individual artists and provide a comprehensive look at the creative workforce in America and the critical role of training institutions in preparing artists and creative workers." The project will be guided by a National Advisory Board comprised of leaders from all types and levels of arts training institutions, visual and performing artists, and arts and community development leaders from the nonprofit and commercial sectors.

Artists often don't end up working in the exact fields in which they trained. Instead, they may work at the boundaries between disciplines. They frequently move between the nonprofit and commercial sectors and hold multiple jobs. Moreover, there is a growing demand for arts training, from both students and the rising number of employers in the creative economy. Arts training institutions and civic policy makers need good data to respond and plan effectively. "More than any arts education project in the past few decades, SNAAP has the potential to guide needed change in

the curriculum,” says James Undercofler, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Orchestra.⁶

This thesis recommends that students should be offered a well designed “Interdisciplinary” study that provides a broader spectrum and exposure to theatre, film, and television as a profession. Furthermore, setup programs seeking the assistance from professional entities to develop internship opportunities for students. The internship approach provides students with a clearer picture of the working profession at various levels and can provide a student with a first hand look.

Conclusion

Some in academia may not agree that a change is required. However, if further in-depth studies were conducted presenting positive facts for change an argument could be made that revamping some portions of theatre and film studies would improve students awareness of what is expected in the varied industries of entertainment. Therefore, students that are best prepared by their academic curriculum will give them a “leg up” in the competitive industry that they are about to enter upon graduation.

The result of this thesis study concludes that the issue is “theory vs. practice” and the debate is a question of change in the curriculum to enhance a broader knowledge of the actual business. This thesis has proven that there is a gap between academia and the “real-world” and that change to correct that gap

⁶ <http://snaap.indiana.edu/pdf/SNAAP_Press_Release.pdf> 1 May 2008.

can only occur through the cooperation of academics and professional entities working together.

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APPENDIX I

BIOGRAHIES OF INTERVIEWEES

MR. JAMES MOODY

Bio

Mr. Moody is currently is the Head of Technical Theatre and Design at The Theatre Academy at Los Angeles City College. Considered one of the founders of concert lighting he received the first Concert Lighting Designer of the Year Award. Early in his career he moved into Las Vegas venues along with many of his touring artists even winning the Las Vegas Designer of the Year in 1982 for "Dream Street", a production show.

Active also in television his work has been recognized with two Emmy nominations and one team win. He served for 10 years as Director of Photography on *Entertainment Tonight* and then switched to *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune* for 12 years. He has written two books; *The Business of Theatrical Design* and his first that is in its 2nd edition *Concert Lighting; Techniques, Art, and Business*.

Recently he was awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award in Lighting Design from the USITT.

.... His academic background includes degrees from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in English Education with a Theatre minor and an M.F.A. degree from U.C.L.A. in Theatre Design.

He has taught as adjunct faculty and been at several universities as an Artist-in-Residence including U.S.C., San Diego State University, and the University of Colorado

For "fun" he is a member of TEAM Coast Guard assigned to Coast Guard Station Channel Islands Harbor about 50 miles north west of Los Angeles where he serves as a communications watch stander and Coxswain on rescue boats.

MR. THOMAS KEEGAN

Network Television and Media Executive seeking position with a company specializing in multi-level marketing developing strategies in television internet and digital space. High level managerial experience in capturing financing from investment banking institutions and leading multi-million dollar negotiations. Maturity and experience easily adaptable to any media or corporate structure where increasing sales, managing people and understanding the bottom line are required.

TK Consulting Group 1988 to Present

President

- NFL Seattle Seahawks advertising sales and distribution strategy for Seahawks syndicated television series and associated print as well as electronic media
- Marine Channel Television Network - Founder
- Strategic Planning – Starbucks, Bayliner, Qwest Communications, IBM
- Golden Karma Awards – Executive Producer , sold, package and produced one hour TV special broadcasted nationally over superstation WGN starring Jessica Biel, Jane Seymour, Marlee Matlin and Mark Stienes
- Ensequence - Initiated the sales process for interactive television products and services to Television Networks and advertising agencies`

Westwood One/Metro Networks 2007

National Director of Marketing

- Developed and sold new business with national brands such as NASCAR, Great Clips and Toyota

FamilyNet Television Network 2003-2005

Vice-President General Sales Manager

- Implemented strategic guidelines for operations and revenue streams for 32 million subscriber network, increased advertising revenue by 750%
- Negotiated and executed agreements with : Turner Media Group, FOX News Corp., Salem broadcasting and Initiative Media

Storer Cable Communications/ (COMCAST)/ Group W Cable 1980- 1988

VP Advertising and Programming Sales

- Managed and motivated staff of over 100 people increasing advertising sales revenue 125% first year. Negotiated and organized joint venture between Group W Cable and Viacom
- Created cable advertising sales, management procedures, computer software, insertion and research as founder of Northwest Cable.

Personal

- BA, Villanova University – Philosophy and Theater
- Who's Who in American Universities
- Member of CAB, NCTA, NATPE

DIANE SNYDER-RAMIREZ

Bio

Diane Snyder-Ramirez has over 14 years of experience with copyright administration and royalties. She is currently Vice President, Royalty Accounting and Administration for Royalty Review Council, an independent music royalty administration organization. Diane is responsible for managing a number of record label and music publishing royalty accounts. Prior to her current position, Diane was a music consultant as well as an advocate for digital music rights issues. She was a key team member in the development of a rights administration and royalty system for one of the largest online US music service providers. Additionally, Diane worked closely with her clientele to prepare for the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearings on digital rights presenting extensive research and documentation. Previously, Diane was Director of Member Relations for ASCAP (NY), and played a role in furthering several of the department's outreach programs, increased membership and handling high-profile clientele. She began her music career at CMJ and was responsible for the launch of CMJ Canada, the first weekly college radio trade publication in the Canadian market. A graduate of California State University, Long Beach and Diane holds a BA in radio, television and film. She is currently a board member and the assistant secretary for the California Copyright Conference (CCC), and member of the CCC membership committee.

VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Thomas V. Grasso

Home Address:

10677 Sapphire Vista Ave.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89144

Degree:

Bachelor of University Studies, 2007
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Special Honors and Awards:

Phi Theta Kappa
Magna Cum Laude
Awarded University College Alumnus of the Year 2007-2008
by the University of Nevada Alumni

Thesis Title: Academic Gap Between the "Real-World" of Theatre and Film

Thesis Examination Committee:

Chair Person, Dean Jeffrey Koep, Ph.D.
Advisory Committee Member, Patrick "Sean" Clark, MFA
Advisory Committee Member, Brackley Frayer, MFA
Additional Committee Member, KC Davis, MFA