

Ray Blanken

“Anything Is A Good Experience If You Make It A Good Experience”

Introducing~ A high school junior aspiring to become an actor on the streets of Broadway! A comedic actor at the age of seventeen who dreamed of becoming the youngest director in the entertainment industry! A young student who “loves writing down things for all types of art projects. I love making, like, comics. I love drawing. I love singing. I love writing songs. I don’t really have that much time to expand into an entire musical but before I die, I want to make at least one musical, if not several.” Give it up for Ray Blanken!



Q: How did you get into Musical Theater?

A: I got into Musical Theater mostly from my mom and dad, they definitely encouraged my drive for performing, I’ve been in choir for as long as I can remember. I did a lot of stuff with my Church as well. I was in the Handbell Choir and any opportunity I had to perform, I took it. Starting in middle school, I got more into school plays and local plays and eventually, I was doing more professional theater things like Park Playhouse in Cohoes and more things like that. I would like to do a lot more professional theater.

Q: Mr. Berman has told me that you have played in fifteen professional musicals outside of school.

A: That, unfortunately, is incorrect. I’ve done fifteen musicals total, like school and outside of school. Actually, it’s seventeen now but it was fifteen a while ago which I put on my resume, and now I only put musicals from the past four years or high school which I will probably be using for college applications as well. I’m aiming for 5 more in my senior year.

Q: Has there been a musical out of those seventeen that has left a great impact on you? Some that are positive and some that are negative?

A: I’d say that the most positive experience I’ve had with a musical would be “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”. The overall cast was, just, one of the best I could choose from. They’re so kind and it was such a fun experience, backstage and on stage, and I felt like it was probably the most fun that I’ve ever had in a musical. There was also “Young Frankenstein” which really let me play an emotional, funny but emotional, character which I typically only play funny characters in school. But this was a different opportunity and that

cast was also really kind but there were a few people who just didn't really care about the production so I'd say Spelling Bee would probably be the best. Throwing candy at people as Chip was quite fun though.

Q: About "Young Frankenstein", you said that you mostly play comical characters rather than deep characters. How would you say that that musical in particular kinda helped shape your acting career?

A: I would say that it was one of the first roles that had a few scenes or songs that were a little bit more emotional and that I was able to act in different ways on stage and I think it also changed my perspective on what acting is. Like, rather than trying to convey an emotion, you try to convey what the character is feeling. So not playing to the emotion but playing to the character's story. It's also the first full lead I've had.

Q: Out of all the professions in theater, what made you want to be a director?

A: I really love acting. Like, I will never not want to perform and create art and I have always been intimidated at auditions. I thought that being behind in the director's seat, I would be able to not only control what I would like to see on stage but be able to calm my nerves about everything. So it's really just perspective and getting to know all the different types of perspectives. I've been in Tech before. I've lights and sounds for shows. I've done costumes. I've helped build sets and paint sets and take them down. I love working on all aspects of theater and directing was just the next thing to do.

Q: What was the first musical that you performed in?

A: My first musical that I performed in was "Pirates". I also performed in a couple small plays at my Church but musical wise, it was "Pirates the Musical" and I played the stowaway. He had a solo song so I was super excited about it. Definitely started my attention seeking phase. I mean, I had always been an attention seeking child but like, this was maximum. Like, once you're on stage, there's no going back.

Q: Is there a musical that you wished to direct yourself?

A: At the moment, probably "Tommy", not because it's my favorite musical. I really love the music but all the interpretations I've seen of it, I haven't liked. I feel like there's stuff that I could add to it to make it translate better into a newer age.

Q: I'm gonna make an assumption about your long term goals because you said that you wanted to make a couple musicals before you die. I will ask the question regardless; do you have any other long term or short term goals?

A: For short term goals, I wanna go to college in New York for musical theater and I want to probably be on Broadway. And I know that, I only say probably because there are a ton of different factors that go into it and it's very unlikely, so many amazing actors get turned down and I just have to come to terms with that possibility. If I had the opportunity to do anything in my life and it was 100 percent guaranteed, like "you're gonna be able to do that" then, yes! I would choose to go on Broadway. My goals mostly just include being happy and working in the art industry, and hopefully having a roof over my head.

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