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Curiosity Has Been His Inspiration

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Curiosity has been his inspiration



Oliver Ogden '06, left, gives direction to Matthew (Matt) Hall '07, center, and Keegan Basset '09 for a scene in *Woyzeck*, a play Ogden directed in the fall.

Oliver Ogden '06 is a Renaissance Man.

He has managed to combine his interests in photography, history, anthropology, film, literature, Spanish and drama into two majors – English and theatre.

“What makes Linfield unique is that it offers students an enormous amount of opportunity to explore what they are interested in,” Ogden said.

He has worked for the *Linfield Review*, has acted, directed and worked in every aspect of theatre, and has traveled abroad. He is fascinated with the great American troubadour, exemplified by people such as Walt Whitman and Jack Kerouac who made a living traveling and writing about their experiences. He is working on a research project on how life on the road has evolved and changed, and he would like to someday produce a documentary film on the topic.

He chose Linfield partly because of a family connection – his father and uncle attended and his grandmother worked in the library for many years. “I saw a lot of opportunity here, a lot of interesting things I could do and learn,” he said.

In his freshman year, Ogden’s skill and interest in photography earned him the position of photo editor of the *Review* just two months after he enrolled. By his sophomore year, he was cast in *Waiting for Godot*, the final production in the Pioneer Theatre.

“Theatre seemed like it might be a good path for me with my interest in film,” he said.

Since then, he has acted in four productions and assisted with nearly every other play. This fall he directed *Woyzeck*, a dark 19th century German play that serves as a commentary on the aftermath of war and its effect on its soldiers.

Although *Woyzeck* was the first full-length production that Ogden directed, he had directed one-act Icebreaker plays and served as assistant director of *Scapino* under the tutelage of Janet Gupton, assistant professor of theatre arts. In addition, each of the four plays in which he performed featured a different director, which provided insight into how different people approach that role.

“Directing *Woyzeck* was rewarding because it is a reflection of everything I have done and accomplished at Linfield,” Ogden said.

Ogden was attracted to theatre in part for the visual aspects, and scenic and costume design. He enjoys performing, but also finds directing interesting because the director is the inspiration for all aspects of the production.

“A lot of art is very individualistic,” he said. “In theatre, it is ultimately collaborative and it goes beyond the artists involved. It’s about communicating with an audience and communicating with each other.”

Ogden is curious about all aspects of theatre and is creative and talented, said Gupton.

“He raises intelligent questions and engages in the materials well beyond the average student,” she said. “He loves the collaborative nature of theatre and sees the potential theatre has to raise issues and generate discussion.”

Although he has had many great professors, Ogden said Gupton has been his greatest inspiration.

“She has such passion for the theatre and it’s easy for her to get excited about what her students are doing,” Ogden said. “She is very patient, encouraging and dedicated and has been a profound teacher for me. She continues to push the envelope in her own art and it’s fun to be involved.”

Ogden had planned to graduate with a theatre arts degree in December. But after learning he was just a few credits shy of an English major, he opted to stay one more semester.

“I have a fascination with history, and both theatre and English allowed me to explore history and the words of people who were seeing the world at a different time,” he said. He’s unsure of his plans after graduation, but is considering work in the theatre or film industry.

– Mardi Mileham