

I used to want nothing but the spotlight. Throughout elementary school, I acted, sang, and danced for various local production companies. Each time I stood on the stage and spoke my lines or belted out a song, something felt off. Eventually, I realized that there was another side to theater, one that I would grow to love more than anything.

In 4th grade, I was cast in a leading role in an original musical about the Revolutionary War. Our drama teacher sat us all down and said that we were going to pick who would work on the crew. I volunteered but she didn't want me to have an additional role as I was already the lead from my section. Someone else ended up getting picked so I forgot about it until the next year rolled around and it was time for the 5th grade play. Once again, I was cast in a leading role, and, once again, I offered to help with the crew and was not selected. My friend David got picked to run the board; I followed him around the entire time we were doing dress rehearsals just to catch a glimpse of what he was doing. That's when it clicked.

I continued to audition and perform in school and at community theaters. I had a few parts in various local theater productions: a chorus member in *The Music Man*, the king of the elves in *The Storytellers*, and a few other small roles. I remember being in one play performed in an old rundown house, and even though it should have been absolutely terrifying for a 10-year-old surrounded by strangers in a makeshift theater, I walked up to the man behind the light board and asked if he could show me what he was doing. He did, and I finally learned about something I had been interested in for over two years.

I continued to perform, but my attention was never on the song or the audience. It was on the gel in the light that was the wrong color, the fade-in that started too late, the microphone that wouldn't stop crackling. The last production I performed was *Beauty and The Beast* in seventh grade. I was leaving the stage, but not the theatre. I knew where my place was: the lighting booth.

The first time I actually was able to participate in stage crew was at the beginning of Freshman year. At the activities fair I made a beeline to sign up for stage crew and went to my first focus a week later. Because I had learned the basics of light control earlier in the year, I got to run the light board while the crew focused the lights. After that I went on to be a stagehand during my school's performance of *Noises Off*, ran the light board during our *Chicago* production, and during covid we produced a full length movie where I designed and ran the lights the whole time. I served as club President my Junior and Senior years. I helped plan Tech Week, designed the lighting for the plays, and communicated with underclassmen in order to galvanize the club for build days and other events.

I love the technical side of theater because a theater production is the result of hours and days of technical effort. Unlike a flawless acting performance, a perfect tech production goes completely unnoticed and that's okay with me. The satisfaction comes from creating, understanding the guts of the process. Knowing how things work and making it happen. I love being the collaborator, I'm the support. I'm the guy who knows why things happen the way they do and I wouldn't have it any other way.