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GWU Alumna Praised for Directing Talents on Stage and in Film


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jbridges9

January 24, 2018

Amber McGinnis '04 Featured in Washington Post and Broadway World

Theater critics in Washington, D.C., are taking notice of Amber McGinnis, 2004 alumna of Gardner-Webb University. Recent articles in the Washington Post and Broadway World describe McGinnis as “rising through the directing ranks in DC Theater.” The Bessemer City, N.C., native came to GWU to major in religious studies with a missions focus, but adjusted her plans after discovering her interest in theater arts.




Amber McGinnis directs at Theater J in Washington, D.C.

“I’ve always been interested in service. At the time, I thought that literally meant I had to go into mission work,” McGinnis reflected. “But after I got more involved in my theater courses—which started as a minor then progressed into a second major—I realized that storytelling was my medium for breaking down barriers and creating empathy in the world.”

As she worked on GWU productions and took theater classes, McGinnis began to see theater as a profession, not a hobby. “I can attribute that to the professionalism of Scott Lahaie and Christopher Keene, who were the professors that ran the department during that time. There was a moment when I was being inducted into the Alpha Chi Honors society that Professor Lahaie looked at me and said, ‘You’re a born director’ – and I haven’t looked back since.”

After graduation, McGinnis moved to Charlotte, N.C., to work on building her theater resume. Then, she moved to Texas to attend graduate school at Baylor University. After receiving her



Amber McGinnis works with actors on the set of her film.

Master of Fine Arts in Directing, she moved to the DC area and lives in Takoma Park, Md. “For the last 8 years, I have worked as a theater director at dozens of local theaters and as a screenwriter/director for a production company called WILL Interactive that creates interactive films,” McGinnis related. “I’ve also worked as a producer for the Kennedy Center Honors. Most recently, I started my own production company to support my freelance filmmaking career, and I’m preparing to direct my first feature-length film.”

She believes the liberal arts education she received from Gardner-Webb also contributed to her success. “It gave me a good foundation to begin my professional career and piqued my curiosity in a lot of different areas, such as learning about author Jack Kerouac from Dr. Matt Theado (former English professor), meditation from Dr. Kent Blevins (professor of religious studies), and American history from the great, Dr. Tony Eastman (professor emeritus of history). This foundation helped me grow, not just as a director, but as a well-rounded human being.”

[Click here to read the Washington Post article about McGinnis.](#)

[Click here to read McGinnis' Broadway World profile.](#)

Amber's website: <http://www.amberdirector.com/>

Film website: <https://www.internationalfallsmovie.com/>