

Tim Braselton
TIP Performer

My first show at TIP was "The Sound of Music" in 2004. I was a college student who had given up theatre to focus on more "serious" music. I got a call from a friend who was desperate. They needed a pianist for the show and I didn't have anything better to do. I came in at the final dress rehearsal to sight-read the score, most decidedly overwhelmed at what I'd gotten myself into, but the cast, crew, orchestra and staff were so appreciative and loving that I fell in love with theatre all over again. I got hired that same first weekend to play for "Fame" later that summer (TIP), "The Sound of Music" again that fall (Olathe Northwest), and to direct music for "Oklahoma" (Blue Valley Youth Players) and "The Robber Bridegroom" (The Barn Players) the next spring. It was a busy, wild, first experience, and I wouldn't change it for the world.

I'd played piano and cello for various productions at TIP, but "Singing In The Rain" I made my stage debut without setting foot on stage! I, as well as the rest of the staff, were in the filmed portions of the show. I got big laughs every night without ever uttering a word. I then broke my several year hiatus from being on stage in "Titanic." It was a score that I desperately wanted to sing again, so I hoped to be in the chorus, but ended up with a lead as Charles Clarke. I will forever be grateful for that experience. The bug bit again with that show and I performed as an actor several more times in the next few years in between directing and playing for other shows.

Shawnee Mission Theatre in the Park and the remarkable music directors I worked with there – principally Marsha Canaday – instilled in me the reality that an ensemble can greatly enhance the action and mood of any piece if they will execute their parts with clarity and intentionality. In other words: Sing the page, but tell the story, too. This has become one of my mantras, not only in my approach to directing, rehearsing and performing music, but also in my daily life.

Though it has been some years since I have been involved with TIP (I have this strong affinity for air conditioning, but now TIP has an indoor space, so I'm sure it's only a matter of time), I have continued to work with schools and other community and professional theaters. Because of my work in the theatre I was even hired as artistic director by a Kansas City arts program for at-risk LGBT youth. I've also been called upon to aid in other artistic endeavors, in planning events with dramatic emphasis, speaking and presenting or performing at various arts events, and just about anything you can imagine where a guy with a piano, a cello, half a brain and a passion for music might be used. I have performed original compositions for Leewood's "Tea with Shakespeare", conducted the choir and orchestra at Church of the Resurrection on Christmas Eve for a congregation of thousands, been commissioned to arrange and orchestrate several pieces for area churches, shared the stage with the likes of Diana Krall and Itzak Perlman, accompanied Sally Struthers, sung backup for Janelle Monae, and while Renee Fleming told me I was cute and asked me where I got my sweater, Alan Cumming simply asked me to take my sweater off. I didn't. I'll let you interpret that how you will.

TIP is where I saw my first live theatrical production. My baby sitter took me to a production of Oklahoma when I was quite young, and I was so entranced by the whole ordeal that when it was over, I was jumping, clapping and cheering... that is, until during one jumping flail-about I accidentally smacked my baby sitter in the face and split her lip. Theatre can be dangerous sometimes, but I think it's supposed to be sometimes. Maybe just not that way.