

Season 2 Episode 1:

H: Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs, I'm Hannah.

Z: And I'm Zoe and we're your hosts. On this podcast will talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We will also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

H: Welcome back for Season Two! To start this season we interviewed Austin Adams a recent FSU grand, first generation college student and IP Scholarship recipient. Austin, a theatre major, studied abroad in London on our Theater Academy London program.

H: Good morning Austin! How are you?

Austin (A): I'm good, how are y'all?

H: So good, very excited for today. First up, can you just introduce yourself to our listeners? Let us know what your name is, where home is for you, where and when you studied abroad, and what you studied at FSU.

A: Yeah yeah yeah well my name is Austin Adams and where I'm from that's like a long story, I was born in Indiana, I moved to Orlando, FL around the time I was 14. And I did middle school through high school there and then I eventually went to Florida State University but it's funny because right as I went to college my mom decided to move back to Indiana. So it's a bit of an odd situation in that regard, so I kind of consider myself more from Orlando, a Floridian at heart, if you will. At Florida State University I studied Theater with a minor in Editing, Writing and Media and I studied in the Theater Academy London program in the Fall of 2018 at our London study center.

Z: Can you give us a brief overview of the Theater Academy London program or TAL program and why you decided to do that program?

A: Yeah yeah yeah. Okay so Theater Academy London as far as I know, and as far as my experience goes, I've know that they divided up into two semesters essentially I mean obviously we have our academic fall and our academic spring. The fall is definitely focused on performance, whereas I've heard the spring is a little bit more on the production side like there's playwriting opportunities that sort of thing. And like I said I did the fall so I was doing a lot of performance. So TAL, you're, you know you're in London which is a rich city full of theater culture like there's just there's so much of it, both mainstream and sort of you know not mainstream, the indie sort of stuff, and so when you're there you're really like taking all of that up, taking all of that in experiencing that. They really I mean every course at the London study center, at all the study centers, focuses on using the city location as the classroom and TAL is no different in that sense, we went to theaters all the time. So yeah it's it's giving you a worldly perspective on what theater is possible outside of the United States. So why did i decide to do it? Well when i went to FSU, when I first got there the theater program, the SOT, the School Theater was really gung ho on advertising the fact that we have such an awesome, you know, Theatre Academy London program. And so they tell us all about that and I just remember when I was a freshman hearing about it and being so excited and thinking it was so cool but I initially didn't know if it was something that I could accomplish financially so I kind of just like left it alone for awhile. But when time came around a bunch of my really close friends were like you know I think I want to do it and I was like okay that's great I don't want to be

left alone! And so um I remember going home for Christmas break, that was my sophomore year and talking to my cousin and she was like "Why don't you like try? Like why don't you just like try for any scholarship opportunities possible?" and I remember like seeing that there are scholarships through International Programs but I was like "I don't know, like what if it doesn't work out?" and she's like "Well what if it does?" and so from there I came back in the spring of my sophomore year you know just full force trying to get all my ducks in a row, all the resources I possibly can to get myself going and everything planned out and I was able to go in the fall of my junior year and it was absolutely amazing and life changing. I, I mean come on like experiencing theater learning about theater in London that in of itself is you know amazing and cool so yeah that's that's why I did it. I just, it was a it was an experience that I knew would be life changing it was a matter of like "Is this something that can happen?" and it did!

H: As a Theatre major, what would you say was the best part of living in London for a semester?

A: Oh my gosh so many things about living in London for a semester is prime for theater. I mean first of all the study center, is to walk away from the West End like it's so close it's so close, it's unreal. Like you can just like casually walk by even if you're not going to see a show necessarily. And even just like feeding off that energy on a day when you're not necessarily going to see a show, is just so exciting it's like it's, it's electric like the city is electric with energy and vibrance and it's so artistically like inspiring just in general. But outside of that I mean one of my favorite classes was Intro to London theater which kind of functioned like a play analysis class, in the sense that like, in a classic play analysis class let's say Tallahassee campus you're reading a play and you're discussing it in class. Well take that to London we're just going to go see the show, and then afterward the next day we're going to come back, discusses a group, very like Socratic circle style. Like just talk it out, share our opinions what we thought. And it was just really cool because we were also in classes with students from other universities and so we got to get to know them and explore like what they thought was good theater versus what we think is good theater and just you know have that really good dialogue with each other. Yeah so that's awesome, and also like I said, I mean viewing theater just like highlight that a little more. There's just so, so much like there is the West End which is like the more mainstream Broadway-esque theater but there's also a variety of devised works which are pieces basically that are built from the ground up, ususally with very little budget by theater companies of longtime friends and I saw some amazing shows that I have since tried to find online see if anyone's got a recording anywhere of them but I can't but, that's okay because you know the vaule of theater is the fact that it is a live experience, so yeah.

Z: What was your favorite show you saw while you were there?

A: That, oh that's oh actually I was about to say is so hard, that is not so hard at all, that is a lie I can't believe I almost said that. So my favorite show I saw a while over there was this play called The Inheritance and it's by playwright named Matthew Lopez. It actually transferred to Broadway pretty soon after we got back which was really exciting and cool because it felt like a success knowing that it was coming from the UK to the US and people here could see it. But it was this was this two part show, so it was very lengthy, it was a 6 hour experience in total, so quite long. However they give you the option to like split it up into multiple, like a multiple day experience or you could do it all in one day if that was your if that was your mission. I did it over multiple days, I could have done it in one but friends were apprehensive, so we split up over two different days. And it was the show about like queer man in contemporary New York sort of grappling with like the history of gay culture and like how that informs

how we live our lives now and like what it means for the future generations and it literally just like it blew me away it blew me away. My professor for Contemporary Voice while I was there she was actually the dialect coach for one of the actresses there, and I am slipping right now because she is a big actress, she is from the original *Howards End* movie and I can't believe I'm forgetting her name, I'm sorry Jennie Wiltsie, anyway she was the voice coach for her and she was also like our professor, amazing, brilliant woman, still works at the study centers, so glad I got to experience her class. But yeah, I saw that show and essentially changed my life, in a few different ways we can talk about that a little bit.

Z: Speaking of changing your life, were curious, how did study abroad influence your future academic and career goals and kind of what's next for you?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, well there it is,, there's the question there's the follow up. So seeing that show sort of redirected me, but to give a little bit of context, I told you about the fact that um sophomore year was the year I was figuring it all out how to get a broad. Sophomore year I was also kind of in a rut artistically, personally, for quite a few different reasons. I just didn't I didn't know what I was doing anymore like essentially. Freshman year I was able to, freshman year was focused on you know getting my feet wet collegiately like that was the goal, so you don't have a lot of time to really reflect too much. But then sophomore year you're a little more comfortable, you have a little more time to think and obviously I was a theater major from the get-go which is awesome and beautiful but even within that realm I didn't know if I was satisfied. I had been a performer for so long but for some reason it just wasn't serving me anymore artistically. It didn't feel like the home it used to feel like, in that sense of like acting itself. Theater still was you know super important to me but acting just felt like a stress like something that was causing me heart ache to be quite honest. And so with that the opportunity to go to London even before I went I saw as like a like a chance like it was this like it was vague at the time obviously because I don't know what's going to happen in the future but like I felt this this pull to go to London. I thought this could be my chance to figure everything out for myself. So I went there and actually to be honest I took an acting class it was that contemporary voice class with Jenny and she really just she pulled the best performing out of me that I've ever had, ever. It was crazy. And from there I had this epiphany, this major realization that I, there were moments when I felt like I was giving up on acting and I was quitting and I was throwing in the towel and that made me feel really bad and kind of weak but having that experience in that class where I got to give my best performance and realize no I'm not quitting, I just don't want to do it anymore and that's okay. That's okay, it's okay to have redirect. It's hard and it's scary, it's really scary but then I had that experience and now I'm fully on the path to being a playwright. It's what I love to do. Seeing that show *The Inheritance* inspired me immensely. Making me realize that there are so many queer narratives that still need to be told and people want to hear and that's what I want to do. So I've been writing ever since, writing as much as I possibly can. That's what I'm what I'm trying to do you know putting my best foot forward in that area. And now I mean I'm on my journey to moving out of Tallahassee officially, hopefully getting into Chicago which has a great like startup theater scene really good for new voices and I'm just really excited to see where my life goes from here. And it was all 'cause of London truly, truly.

H: That's so wonderful to hear that you had such an impactful experience and that it really is having a kind of a continuing affect in your life and really pointing you in the direction that you want to go. It's so obvious your passion for theater and just for the performance space, the writing space, all of that but what do you love most about theater?

A: Oh gosh, oh wait I just got chills. Cause that's such a, that's such a big question that's like I mean for a lot, it's going to be different for different people. But I think, I think theater is such a human art and let me just like parse that out because it's very vague. It's storytelling which is the most one of the most I mean it's communicating you know what I mean? It's as old as humanity. You know it's what we do, it's how we survive, it's how we thrive, it's how we get better. And so, theater is that condensed in a space and it's something that we get to share with each other. I know for a fact that anyone was seen a show of any type with an audience of other people around them will tell you that there's something electric about being in a room where you're seeing a story unfold in front of you, where you're seeing someone belt this big beautiful ballad,, or you're seeing someone give a lengthy monologue discussing their heart aches and their triumphs there's even times when people onstage will like have a moment with you, they look you in the eye and you'll just have that connection. I think theater is all about connection and I just that's all I want in my life is to be able to connect with others, to make others feel seen, to make them feel heard, to make them feel loved. I think I think theater is a form of love because it proves that we're all more connected than we think like it truly is a communal experience in every sense and that's why I love it.

Z: That's so beautiful. H: That's really beautiful.

Z: Jinx.

A: Thank you!

Z: Our last question for you is what advice would you give to students who are interested in studying abroad?

A: Yeah okay, what advice would I give someone that's trying to study abroad? I mean there are lots of things that you can say for when you get there, when you get to your location, um take advantage of it as much as possible. But don't stress yourself out, please don't stress yourself out, I feel like people do that too much they're like "I'm in, I'm on the other side of the world I'm in a new city I have to do every single thing, every day!" Don't do that, you also have classes to focus on so please work on that. Definitely take advantage of it. But even before all of that I think it's really important, to speak to the students that don't even think studying abroad is for them, on a variety of levels. Because like I said, I heard about it and I was like I don't know if that's financially something that I can accomplish. And everyone is into finance a different financial situation, so in that sense definitely like try your best to figure out what you can and can't do. But don't be afraid to go into the IP office, at the stadium the office is so welcoming and warm. They will talk to you about whatever it is you need to talk about. It's also an office of listening, you know what I mean? Like I think it's one of the best spaces to go discover what's possible for you in terms of studying abroad. They want to hear what your interests are so that you can have the best experience possible. And there's so many resources, you can talk to the financial aid coordinator and he can help you figure out what is possible, what you might need to seek out in terms of scholarships and other funds. But yeah, I think I would say just make that first step into communicating with International Programs at home campus if you're even vaguely interested. Like I think studying abroad is something everyone uh would benefit from, you know becoming more worldly in general is an amazing and beautiful experience. So I think just you know taking that first step go into that office if you have even the smallest inkling of you that's like "you know what, I would like to explore the world" it's possible, it is so possible. Coming from me, I'm telling you it is possible.

H: Thank you so much Austin, that is great advice. And just thank you so much for sharing your heart for theater, your experience studying abroad, and I really look forward to the day when I get to see one of your plays performed.

Z: Me too!

A: Oh thank you so much! Yah I'm super excited! Yeah, yeah and congratulations on season two of the podcast!

Z: Thank you! Thanks for kicking us off!

A: Yeah of course, of course thank you!

H: Before we disembark, we want to share a few ways that you can enjoy London's theater scene from home. There are few theaters offering virtual experiences for you to watch their productions including the Old Vic theater and even Shakespeare's Globe. Websites and YouTube channels for these theaters offer full length shows that you can watch. Some sites offer free productions, while others are paid which is a great opportunity to support the arts! of course you can also check out Hamilton on Disney+.

Z: COVID-19 has kept people away from the theater this year but, it's not the first time this has happened. In the 16th and 17th centuries the plague was rampant in London and theaters suffered. Theaters in London today are threatened again by closures and subsequent loss of profit. We hope that theaters in London and around the globe will soon recover and be able to provide in person experiences again. In the meantime you can support the theaters we mentioned by watching a few of their shows online. We'll post links to their websites in the show notes and on our blog.

H: Be sure to subscribe to Noles Abroad where ever you get your podcasts so you can catch all of our upcoming episodes this season. If you haven't listened to season one, you can binge listen now!

Z: Thanks for listening! And thanks to Austin for taking the time to speak with us today.

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