



Miranda Higgins
Missouri, USA



Bringing drama into community service

Diploma Programme (DP) graduate Miranda Higgins fused her passion for dramatic arts and psychology to produce social work that empowers those in need.

As part of her undergraduate studies at New York University (NYU), Miranda Higgins worked at a school run by Riker's Island Correctional Facility, where she helped incarcerated youth explore their arts-related interests and skills through workshops she created and offered.

"I was required to create my own concentration at NYU," she says. "If I had not completed the DP, I do not believe I would have had the confidence necessary to create an interdisciplinary degree." Hers was called "Dramatic Play as Performative Pedagogy and Praxis."

Following her passion for dramatic arts as social medicine, Miranda accepted a place in a Master's program at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. There, she will hone her abilities in using drama as a tool in educational and community settings. Applied theatre is inherently an interdisciplinary field, Miranda explains. Her experiences in the Diploma Programme led her to it, she says, noting that the DP is "innately interdisciplinary."

"I had known for a while that these were the subjects I was interested in, but I didn't know a viable career option existed that would fuse my interests." Reflecting on her career development, she says "I was introduced to the term 'applied theatre' in high school after creating a theatre piece with my peers." That experience led her to realize new ways in which she could use drama to make a positive difference in overcoming difficulties in other people's lives.

"It was structured in such a way that I was able to fuse my academic and artistic pursuits," Miranda recalls. She wrote her extended essay as an analysis of performance anxiety and its relationship to optimal performance. This was one of the first thresholds she crossed in combining her interests in theatre and psychology.

An IB arts show provided further encouragement to combine her two passions. "My school—Central High School in Springfield, Missouri—had each group use another field's work as a stimulus," she explains. The DP assessment model also encouraged her passions.

"Much of our assessment was open-ended, and I found greater success when I investigated my work through a dramatic lens," Miranda says. "I was able to explore other subjects more deeply because I was [given] opportunity to view the work across disciplines."

Miranda's experiences in the field are eye-opening. She has completed an internship at a local arts council where she helped facilitate, document, and analyze the success of an arts programme that promoted literacy and goal-oriented mindsets for at-risk youth. Projects like this allow her to express her passion for theatre in a way that contributes to positive community action.

Miranda also works with adults in Brooklyn, New York's senior centers, teaching storytelling and drama in both English and Spanish. This is part of 'creative aging,' she says. "We focus on social engagement, sharing memories and written and spoken storytelling."

"The DP was extremely useful for obtaining balance between academics and arts," she says. "I learned how to be academic about art and how to think about other subjects through the lens of the arts."

Happily, Miranda has found helpful ways in which to integrate her passion for dramatic arts into her career, as well as into the social fabric of her community—without tears, comedy or high drama.