

College Alumni Bring Talent to the Stage and Screen in New York and Beyond

The College's Department of Theatre and Dance and School of Music have long received regional and national acclaim for the talented performers they produce. Three young alumni — **JAKE BOYD**, **KATIE BURTON**, and **KRISTA ADAMS SANTILLI** — through their work on both the stage and the screen are enhancing that reputation.



Jake Boyd

JAKE BOYD (musical theatre, 2010)

His current work as an understudy with *Rock of Ages* gives Boyd continuous employment, a rare situation for young actors.

"It gives me the freedom to have an awesome job and do something that I love but also the ability to go out and audition for other things without conflict," he said.

With credits on the stage, including the 2012 production of *The Last Smoker in America*, and television, such as playing a young Jack Donaghy on NBC's *30 Rock*, Boyd says he has developed flexibility in his craft. He credits the emphasis put on preparing for roles in college with helping him prepare for different opportunities.

Looking forward, Boyd said he is still trying to find his place in New York. He hasn't decided whether he will do more stage or screen acting, but he knows that he has come to the right place for the job he loves to do.

"As long as I'm staying busy and working on things that I'm passionate about—whether it is acting on stage, doing a web series, or writing a book —t hen I'm doing great."

You can follow Jake on Twitter @JaykeBoid.

KATIE BURTON (musical theatre, 2010)

Katie Burton, also a 2010 graduate of the Department of Theatre and Dance, performed with

minute audition format prepared her for grueling professional auditions. Although the audition was intimidating, it allowed her to get her feet wet before making the big move to New York, she said.

One of her first acting jobs after college was the result of work she did with Associate Professor Raphe Crystal, director of the College's musical theatre program. Crystal was working on a musical version of William Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* with director Deloss Brown. Although Burton's involvement in the show was small, it would later lead to more opportunities.

"I tell everyone, do every tiny little thing you have the opportunity to do," she said. "You're not too big for anything because all these things I have done have turned into something else."

Her "say yes" attitude has led to a variety of roles, including short films and television. Also, she has put her 10 years of competitive gymnastics training to good use in stunt work. Recently, she worked with the Upright Citizen's Brigade, whose alumni include Amy Poehler of *Saturday Night Live* fame, doing improvisational comedy.

Burton says she has really enjoyed finding her niche in comedy. Her dream job would be to land a steady role on a sitcom like *Modern Family*.

"That would be the end all, be all, for me," she said. "But right now I am just seeing where things go, and it has taken me to some pretty cool places so far."

Her most substantial stage role has been as Elisa in *The Red and the Black*, a world premiere

A Tuscaloosa native and 2010 graduate of the Department of Theatre and Dance, Jake Boyd has been featured in the off-Broadway production of *Carrie* and *Oklahoma!*, has played in a recurring role on TBS's comedy *Are We There Yet?*, and most recently has worked with the Broadway musical *Rock of Ages*.

A talented singer, Boyd always wanted to be a performer. A summer production of *Hello Dolly* with Theatre Tuscaloosa was the final push he needed to pursue acting. Even after he made his decision, Boyd faced some unexpected challenges in college.

"When I got to UA, I was clueless," Boyd said. "I had never had an acting class before, and I had always just done musical theater because I sang."

Under the tutelage of Associate Professor Seth Panitch and now-Professor Emeritus Ed Williams, both in the Department of Theatre and Dance, Boyd's acting flourished. He received solid training, and was given the freedom to explore different aspects of each role and create unique characters. Some of his most memorable roles at UA include Jack in *Into the Woods* and Paul in *Moon over Buffalo*.

Another formative experience for Boyd was performing in "Bama on Broadway," the Department of Theatre and Dance's musical theater showcase in New York. As part of the performance, musical theater students audition for professional agents and casting directors. As a result of that performance, Boyd landed a role in *Carrie*, which earned him membership in the Actors' Equity Association.

Boyd in several UA productions including *Into the Woods*, where she played Cinderella. Because of her success in this role and her generally pleasant demeanor, Burton was often cast as "the sweet girl." She challenged that persona by auditioning



Katie Burton

for the part of a "woman of disrepute" in UA's production of *The Wild Party*.

"I told them not to discount me because of Cinderella," she said. "It was a learning experience because it brought out a part of me that I didn't know was there."

Burton, a Trussville native, used this experience to show a versatile range during UA's "Bama on Broadway" showcase. The two-

off-Broadway production based on the 1830 novel of the same name written by Stendahl. She was called in to audition because of her previous work with the director, Deloss Brown.

She said the best part of the experience was actually creating the show, since it was the first time it was being performed.

Burton says her family and friends have been a huge support in her transition from Alabama to the hustle and bustle of New York.

"They know that this is what makes me happy," she said. "I love being creative. I wouldn't have been happy doing something that wasn't creative."

You can find more information about Katie Burton at www.katieaburton.com.

KRISTA ADAMS SANTILLI (vocal performance, 2001)

Burton costarred in *The Red and the Black* in New York with Krista Adams Santilli, a 2001 graduate of the College's School of Music. For Santilli, whose background is in vocal performance and opera, the play was her first experience with a nonmusical play.

For most of Santilli's career, she has performed in musicals. She has appeared in *The Pirates of Penzance* with the Young Victorian Theatre Company, *Rigoletto* for Cheju-do Opera in South Korea, and *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Opera Birmingham.

Santilli, a Birmingham native, remembers watching *Annie* and being inspired to become a performer. But it wasn't until she was given a

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