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## From UA to Broadway, Tuscaloosa Native's Acting Career Has Soared

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Jake Boyd playing Fiyero in "Wicked"

Like many boys growing up in Tuscaloosa where football is integral to the cultural identity of the city, Jake Boyd's parents encouraged him make his mark on the gridiron.

But he didn't love it.

"I remember the schools would take classes on field trips to see shows with Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre," he said. "I remember being fascinated by it and thinking, 'I really want to do that.'"

After a couple of failed auditions, Boyd made the cut. And though he wasn't very good at acting initially, it was fun and he loved it.

That love and passion for theatre, as well as the training he's received in it, has carried the 2010 University of Alabama theatre graduate into many big-production plays and musicals, including working on Broadway in "Rock of Ages" and off-Broadway in "Carrie" and "The Last Smoker in America."

"Definitely the first really big breakthrough I had was as an understudy in a new off-Broadway show 'Carrie' the musical at the Lucille Lortel Theatre in New York City in 2011," he said. "... That project led to 'Rock of Ages on Broadway.'"

"My work has been steady. I've been fortunate in that area. It's definitely been tough sometimes, no doubt."

Boyd said the highlight of his career thus far was playing Fiyero in the musical "Wicked" from August 2015 to August 2016.

"'Wicked' came out when I was 14 years old and I loved the show," he said. "There's a character I loved, and I got to play that role. It just felt full circle playing a character I liked in a show in my own career."

Seth Panitch (<https://theatre.ua.edu/profiles/seth-panitch/>), a theatre professor and director of the University's master of fine arts program, directed Boyd in shows from his sophomore to senior year at UA. He said Boyd was a true professional.

"I specifically cast Jake because of his professionalism and his ability to support his fellow artists in the most trying of circumstances," Panitch said. "Jake has done it all. I used him as an example in class sometimes as a model of a ravenous student."

"It is rare for a young actor to check their ego at the door. The problem with young actors is they feel that every exercise is a statement on their ability to make it. Jake didn't have that. It was so palpable that he could understand a new concept and grow and blossom. ... He is a genuinely kind soul as well."

Boyd said the experience and training he received at UA and Hillcrest High School were vital to his success.

"UA was a fun place where I met many of my best friends and the department was great in guiding me into the real life business of this," he said. "They have turned out a lot of great actors from the department."

"Seth Panitch was very vital to my success. I had taken dance and voice classes my whole life and had not taken a proper acting class until I got to college and he was very integral in sculpting me. Also in the musical theatre department, Raphael Crystal, who was head of the department, had a lot of influence."

"Likewise, my high school teacher played a big part in me pursuing this field in general. Linda Bonds let her students have a lot of hands-on experience even at a public high school."

