

JORDAN THOMAS BURNETT – PERSONAL STATEMENT



I'm determined, I always have been. When you are the youngest person in your class each school year, you have to be to keep up with the rest of the students. I was born four weeks premature; I guess I just couldn't wait any longer to introduce myself to the world. Although when I arrived, I decided to take the laid-back approach and reach milestones at my own pace. What was the rush right, the world was my stage and I had my whole life in front of me! Mom and Dad would just have to wait until I was ready to crawl, walk and talk. At that point, I was just taking it all in like a sponge. I learned early on about the advantages of the watch and observe approach to childhood. I can proudly say that I didn't stress my parents out as a child with Emergency Room visits unlike my older daredevil brother Jesse who served our country as a United States Marine. Concussions, broken bones, no thanks! I gave football a try, but found I was an athlete who needed to be involved in a more non-contact sport. After a few tackles that was painfully clear, so I poured my energy into basketball.

By the time I was getting close to graduating pre-kindergarten, it became apparent that teachers were bothered by my end of September birthdate. My local school districts kindergarten cut-off just happened to be my birthday. It was always the same response after a quick glance at my file "Oh, that's why". I wish I had a dollar for every time that happened, it would have greatly added to my college fund and decrease my private student loan totals! Mid way through kindergarten, it was recommended that I stay back and repeat the grade. No way, not a chance, so my little five-year-old self approached the teacher and asked, "Why are you going to hold me back?" From that point on my parent's realized I was determined and going to prove people wrong.

Most of my elementary school career was spent the same way, teachers concerned I wasn't progressing on target and me kicking my butt in gear to succeed. Being tutored was the norm for me; I had to delay getting involved in boy scouts because it didn't fit into my busy schedule of being tutored and attending coping strategy classes for my ADHD. I found comedy as a way to make up for any academic shortcomings and quickly became the class clown. It took me awhile to learn to filter what came out of my mouth so I have given my parents multiple stories to tell family and friends. My mother's personal favorite, crawl under a rock moment happened at a funeral in 2006. Upon standing at the casket, paying our respects to my Aunt's Mother-in-Law, I turned to my parents and asked "Is she stuffed?" That mortified look on my mother's face was classic. Note to self; work on my filter!

As I got older, my parents noticed my continued fascination with music. I was always quick to turn my focus to anyone singing or playing an instrument, so they got me involved in a local choir and I began to take piano lessons. I enjoyed the interaction with other musicians and was excited to find that unlike school, this came easy to me. The most impactful shift in direction in my life occurred when I

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didn't make my high school freshman basketball team. As devastated as I was, it allowed me to concentrate on the school's upcoming musical and I haven't looked back since. I anxiously await each theatrical performance and the opportunity to transform into a new character. I've had the honor early in my career to take on the legendary role of Don "Singin' in the Rain", a dream role for me! From my earliest role as Scarecrow "The Wizard of Oz", to the challenge of taking the stage as an understudy for the demanding role of Charlie "Kinky Boots" and Tony "West Side Story", to stepping out of my comfort zone with the goal of increasing my guitar skills by playing Tully "Escape to Margaritaville", I continue to evolve and expand my depth as an actor. I moved further out of my safety net during my six-month cruise contract with Norwegian, singing genres outside of musical theatre with songs that didn't always sit well in my vocal range which is a huge fear for a singer. During my time studying at Wagner College, I worked hard to take my skills to the next level and advanced as a musical theatre performer. I continue to be inspired by a comment I received from one of my Acting professors, "You're a talented actor, don't give up". I take that to heart each day and drown out the negativity in the world! While a Senior I had the distinct honor of learning from the best, Tony award winner Michele Pawk!

Many people would have never imagined that the three-year-old boy who used to hide behind his parent's when spoken to, would one day enjoy being on a stage to entertain others. Who would have thought that the boy who struggled to read would devour a script and effortlessly memorize his lines? Could anyone ever dream that the child, who lived and breathed basketball, would replace that passion with music and theatre. That he would take up dance as a teenager to work towards being a triple threat and travel to exciting destinations as a lead singer with Norwegian Cruise Line. As a Wagner College alumnus who double majored and holds a BA in Theatre Performance and Design, Technology and Management, I get asked the standard question "What is your Plan B"? My crafted response, I have learned that adversity is a part of my life, but I am determined to continue to prove people wrong as I write the next chapter. I am an Eagle Scout and my Trail to Eagle has shown me that there are endless possibilities, but it first starts with a goal, then a plan and a firm belief in yourself. Bring it on!

Jordan Thomas Burnett
Actor_Dancer_Singer
Wagner College Theatre – Class of 2021

"Jordan is an old-fashioned triple threat. When onstage his enthusiasm, passion, and talent compel you to watch him. When offstage his curious spirit and generous heart simply make you want to be around him." Michelle Pawk (Wagner College Performing Arts Faculty - 2003 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a play - Hollywood Arms).