Speaker 1: You thought you were going to do theater when you arrived at college?

Speaker 2: I didn't, actually. I really enjoyed it in high school and elementary school and middle school. It was a hobby for me, and I didn't really think about doing it professionally, in part because I think before college, my academic interests actually felt very separate from theater. I would go to classes and then go to drama club, and it was exciting and fun, but it wasn't stimulating to me in any kind of intellectual way. I think I may have told this story that at my high school, the director would actually at call-backs line us up by height next to the boys she was also calling back in order to determine who would get what part. That's sort of what the art-making classes looked like.

When I got to Swarthmore and took Quinn Bauriedel's Acting 1 class, then his movement theater classes as well as many other classes in that department, I realized that there's a whole different way of thinking about it and being authors of the work and creating something new and exciting that had never been done before and was built from the people in the room and the ideas they were exploring in their lives. That was really new and really exciting and on an intellectual level as well. It was sort of the first time I realized, okay, there's a way of being in this field that actually gets at all of the questions that I'm interested in and isn't just a hobby or something that feels good because people clap for you, but there's a way of really using this as a medium to question certain views and create community.

Speaker 1: That's a really big leap in terms of what you liked about or were drawn to when you thought about drama and theater. Now that you're working professionally in the field on the other end of things, have you discovered a third reason or a different reason yet again to like it or feel drawn to it?

Speaker 2: Yeah. I think that's an ongoing process. I think in the arts especially because there's a lot of frequency of transition. There's many moments where I finish one project and sort of have this moment of breath before starting another. Often, in those moments you kind of have to ask yourself, "Okay, do I want to keep going with this?" just because you're often confronted with instability and lack of financial certainty. I think a lot of artists have to ask themselves those questions all the time, "What is my commitment to it? Why am I doing this? Am I any good at this?" all of those questions that I think anyone asks themselves, but I think because there's breaks in our work, perhaps we do more frequently.

I've been thinking about that a lot. I knew I loved being in a rehearsal room and making the work and creating a community and sharing ideas with an audience. Then, when working at the Wilma Theater, which is a pretty large regional theater, I realized I was also interested in exploring purpose in theater and how an organization as a whole is creating a mission or serving the city and community that they're in. Both in terms of the art-making, but also in what are the dynamics with the staff? Who's part of this conversation in terms of inclusion and diversity and equity? Why are we making this work and who is it for? I became really interested in those questions, which is why now I'm exploring this path of artistic leadership, because I realized I both liked the art-making part and also thinking about our field as a whole and how theater can really be a mode of creative and community.