

AN EXAMINATION OF THE *RUDOLPH*
NATIONAL TOUR

by

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ABSTRACT

My honors project is an examination of the experience of actors on the national tour of *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* from two specific perspectives: an objective lens derived from tangible data and a subjective view of the experience exploring anecdotal data. My project will have two main components: 1) who I was, what I was doing, and how the tour related to the TCU experience and 2) information about the touring experience itself.

Last winter I had the privilege of being cast in the National Tour of *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. This experience provided an inside perspective of national touring, as well as the opportunity to live in a closed community. I thought a structured analysis of this experience would create a unique honors project. Over the course of a month and a half of this tour, I was able to collect both subjective and anecdotal data of a closed group of individuals sharing the same experiences but reacting to them differently. I was also able to experience the “Hawthorne Effect” and the “Observer Expectancy Effect,” as I myself was a part of the experimental group.

I will present my experiences chronologically, augmented by a multimedia presentation that will include photos, videos, surveys, interviews, and additional forms of documentation. I will also examine how the touring experience compares to a “normal” 9:00-5:00 office job and use this project to create a resource for other students that are considering touring. (Within the last five years alone, there has been a substantial increase in the number of TCU alumni on national tours.) It is my hope that my research, analysis, and presentation can provide insight into the touring experience that cannot be taught in a traditional classroom.

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Who I Am and What I'm Doing

At the age of twenty-one, as a junior in college, I was cast in the national tour of *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*, the musical. Many professional actors and actresses spend years training and auditioning for such opportunities, and I was fortunate to have such an honor so early in my professional career.

My name is Samantha McHenry, and I am now a current senior BFA musical theatre major at Texas Christian University. I have been studying musical theatre — specifically singing, dancing, and acting — since I was in middle school. I have a fiery passion for the performing, am currently a professional working actress while finishing my degree at TCU. I have recently taken my equity card, as I became a member of the Actor's Equity Association (AEA) Union. I am extremely fortunate to have had many professional experiences and extensive training at TCU to prepare me for the experience of a National Tour.

When I was seventeen years old, I auditioned for twenty-one different universities and conservatories to be a musical theatre major. When a young individual decides to go into Musical Theatre, the process is long and complicated. Not only must potential students apply to the theatre department, they must also pass through an audition for that department, as well as apply and pass through admissions for the university academically. This requires a two-part acceptance, and a student cannot attain a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree without this two-part acceptance. I had been accepted to eleven different universities' theatre departments, and thirteen different schools. I choose TCU after many prayers and visits and have always been confident in my choice to be a horned frog.

I chose TCU not only for its strong theatre department, but also for its bountiful professional theatre community. TCU is unique in its location — not many people know what a “hidden gem” TCU is for its theatre location. DFW is one of the largest cities for theatre in the United States, with over forty theatre companies — with fifteen plus being Equity. (Equity Theatres are a higher level of professional theatres that can hire union actors, usually having higher budgets and production values with more trained and professional actors.) This provides students with hundreds of professional opportunities that can further their professional careers after graduation.

As a junior, I was a TCU student with an opportunity to audition for a national tour. This is an opportunity most students are never presented with. I thrilled at the audition opportunity alone — an experience that would blend two of my biggest passions: traveling and performing. With this opportunity came a great amount of hard work, but also great reward.

Training Received

TCU & DFW

At TCU, I am a BFA musical theatre student training to make a living in the theatre. We theatre majors train for nearly twelve hours per day with classes, rehearsals, and more. Our school days look unlike many college students', and most theatre students are enrolled in eighteen hours every semester.

To get a BFA in theatre, emphasis in musical theatre degree at TCU, a student must audition for the program, which takes place in the spring of the student's senior year of high school. Potential TCU theatre students must sing two sixteen-bar cuts of contrasting musical theatre songs that are appropriate for the student's age range and character type, as well as present two contrasting monologues by either style or time period, also appropriate to the student's age range and character type. They will then go through a short interview with the TCU theatre faculty, in which the faculty can get to know the potential student personally, as well in performance. The faculty can also ask to see extra songs and/or monologues or give coaching/direction on the material that the student presented.

Once accepted, the students in the program have a rigorous training schedule over four years. The TCU musical theatre curriculum holds a minimum of eighty-five required major hours. This includes theatre history courses, Stagecraft, Stage Make-Up, Practical Costuming, Theatre Design, Acting Courses, Voice and Speech, Script Analysis, Stage Lighting, Directing, Professional Seminar, Religious Drama, Auditioning, and dance classes. The TCU theatre

department also offers other theatre courses that are not required through the major, such as Stage Movement, Shakespeare, Non-Realism, Dialects, Stage Combat, and others.

TCU produces four shows each semester: two MainStage shows (one musical and one play — each directed by a faculty member), one Studio show (which is both student directed and designed), and one staged reading. The staged reading performance is sometimes a handful of one-act plays, sometimes a kaleidoscope musical performance, and sometimes a full-length play reading. This fourth “new work” slot in the TCU Theatre season is also where many student-written plays are developed and read publicly for the first time. The department also encourages students to audition for local Dallas-Fort Worth theatres while at TCU, if their semester schedule and TCU commitments allow time for outside work. In rotation with our co-productions with local professional theatres every other year, Theatre TCU also produces a musical at the 500-seat Scott Theatre, located in the Fort Worth Cultural District, on the alternate year of the co-production.

With DFW being one of the biggest cities in the United States for theatre, and housing over forty theatre companies, the students at TCU have a myriad professional opportunities. Professionally, I have been fortunate in beginning my professional career at a young age in the DFW Theatre community. I became an Equity Membership candidate (EMC) at the age of 19 when I was cast in my first paid theatre job: the ensemble of *South Pacific* at Lyric Stage. I auditioned as a freshman in college and was cast as a nurse with one spoken line. (You can only imagine how thrilled I was to have had a speaking line as the youngest paid actress in the show!) I also was cast in the regional premiere of *Catch Me If You Can* at Dallas Uptown Players’ Kalita

Humphreys Theatre that same summer. There I played Jane, as well as was in the dancing ensemble — adding more EMC weeks to my resume.

In the fall of my sophomore year, after my summer at Lyric Stage and the Kalita Humphreys Theatre, I received an email from the producer of the *Rudolph* national tour. He had seen me in Lyric Stage's production of *South Pacific*, and had many kind things to say about my performance. He said that they were producing a local, state-touring production of *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* and that they were looking for a replacement for one of the girl elves. I was the size they were looking for to fit the costume and take over her “track” in the show, and I had ZFX (a professional theatre flight rigging company) experience on my resume — which was also included in the track they were considering me for. A few days after our initial email exchange and audition videos had been submitted, I was thrilled to be cast in the local touring production of *Rudolph* for the Christmas season in 2015.

The summer after sophomore year I had the opportunity to expand my talents to Holland, Michigan, where I played Penny Lou Pingleton in a production of *Hairspray* for twelve weeks at Hope Summer Repertory Theatre. *Hairspray* added twelve more weeks to my EMC week count. This was now the longest run of any show I had done and taught me a lot about running a show for such a long time.

Upon my return to DFW in the fall, I was cast as Diana Devereaux in Lyric Stage's *Of Thee I Sing*, where I had my first lead role in a DFW theatre. I was thrilled for the opportunity to keep working with such a prestigious theatre.

After *Of Thee I Sing*, I was absolutely found that I was asked to return to the *Rudolph* tour for their 2016 show, and that the tour would now become a national tour. This was a game-

changer: the tour would no longer be a show that traveled a few hours from city to city in Texas but would now be traveling across thousands of miles across twenty-eight different cities across America! Thus began my adventure with the 2016 national tour of *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*.

Preparing for the Tour

When I got the call that I was cast in the 2016 *Rudolph* National Tour, I was hit with an intense flood of conflicting feelings. The first two were pure joy and excitement, elated for this huge professional opportunity. On the flip side, I was also filled with determination and the understanding that I would have many ramifications with this opportunity: What did I need to do to make this happen?

The tour would begin on Thanksgiving and last until Christmas Eve. Knowing this meant I would have to miss three weeks of class, I began by contacting my professors. I emailed them one by one to begin a discussion about the fall semester, and to see how I could make this work. I promised my professors that I would have all semester work completed before school was out for Thanksgiving break and then would have to miss the three weeks of class between Thanksgiving and Christmas, including finals week. I promised that leading up to Thanksgiving I would never miss a class and that for any work due, tests taken, and finals to be had after Thanksgiving, I would complete it beforehand. I would have to teach myself via the course's textbook in order to learn the material that would be covered while I would be on the road.

I had immensely understanding and supportive professors who kindly worked around my schedule and made it possible for me to take all of my finals three weeks early and complete all necessary projects. This presented a huge workload for me to complete, but I was up for the task if it meant that I could pursue my professional career on a national tour.

Thanks to an organized planner, and learning some strict time-management skills, I completed the semester three weeks early and was cleared to go on the tour! (The only exception

being one digital learning course that had me take the final online while I was out on tour.) I cannot express in words the feeling of achievement that I possessed after completing such a difficult semester under such a time crunch.

While I was working diligently throughout the short semester, I had an epiphany; This experience would make for a unique opportunity for an honors project. A person can only go on their first national tour once, and experiencing touring for the first time brings something special to the table — a fresh eye on something intense and noteworthy. While I have been training for this experience for a majority of my life, touring is something that cannot be fully prepared for by any classroom education. It is an experience that cannot be taught. I thought that while the tour is happening, it would provide me with great opportunity to analyze the experience to better prepare others. I wanted to give others an in-depth analysis of the tour, something different from what is usually taught in a classroom setting. This experience would provide an opportunity for research and analysis, and while my analysis cannot fully prepare another student to go on tour, it can give an extreme in-depth analysis, both with tangible data and a subjective view of the experience exploring anecdotal data.

I also realized that with this type of honors project, total objectivity would not be possible. I would be a part of the experiment and process. I would take into account the “Hawthorne Effect,” and the “Observer Expectancy Effect”. Essentially what the two of these effects are saying is that when I am a part of the experiment, it changes the experiment. However, this gave me specific insight and an inside perspective to fully understand key aspects of the tour — without this point of view, a total understanding of a National Tour would not be

possible. Most of the time, scientific thought discounts anecdotal evidence, but here both exist with equal weight because I am part of the experiment.

Thus, deciding that the *Rudolph* Tour would be the subject of my honors project, I began preparing for the tour in the months leading up to the departure date. I met with my honors advisor, Alan Shorter, who aided me in brainstorming ways to analyze the tour and keep track of everything that would be going on while I was a part of it. I decided to write a blog and prepare surveys to send out to my castmates and company members about the touring experience. I began interviewing friends and role models who had gone on tours before me and prepared for the experience that lay ahead.

On Tour
Contract

Our contract was considered a non-equity national touring contract. This meant that the tour was not protected by the Actor's Equity Association, and the actors were not hired on Equity contracts. Essentially this means that it was not a union tour, and therefore there were no strict rules as to where, when, and how much actors can rehearse, perform, travel, be housed, or get paid.

Sometimes that can pose a problem in some non-equity tours. Because of the vagueness in rules, or lack thereof, many non-equity tour producers try to take advantage of actors in this situation. However, I was quite fortunate to have had producers that treated us similarly to that of an equity touring agreements, with the only difference in our pay scale.

In our contract, the actors were paid \$50.00 US per rehearsal day with twelve rehearsal days. This was \$600.00 US for the rehearsal process. In the event that an actor would not attend a rehearsal due to an excused absence, \$50.00 US would be deducted from the actor's fee per occurrence. The Producer's General Manager of production (or, the Stage Manager, as they are informally called) shall have sole discretion in determining excused absence(s) and subsequent fee reduction.

Actors were paid \$50.00 US Per performance with twenty-four performances, which equaled \$1,200.00 US. An excused absence would not be permitted for a performance of the production. In the event of an unexcused absence from a performance, the actor may be subject to immediate termination and shall forfeit any unpaid salary/fee and shall not receive any further

applicable travel or housing benefits. The Stage Manager shall have sole discretion in determining and executing this provision.

On travel days, actors were paid \$50.00 US per travel day with eight travel days, which equaled \$400.00 US. Travel days shall not be paid when travel falls on same day as performance and/or when actor has been paid for a performance on the same day. Paid travel days ensured that the actor could still receive pay on a day that they were not “working,” as they were still not able to be back at their home city to work a job there on that day between performances.

In addition to this payment, actors received a *per diem*, which was \$30.00 US per day of the contract. This was to pay for meals while on tour. If an actor did not use all thirty dollars on food that day, they got to keep the rest as an addition to their paycheck. The touring company would be paying for all lodging and transportation, so nothing was being taken out of the actor’s paycheck for living expenses while on tour.

Many actors love national tours because of the opportunity to make money and save it immediately — food, lodging, and travel is paid for, so the actor’s paycheck can go directly to savings or something that they are paying for outside of the tour, such as rent back home. This makes touring very attractive for actors that are looking to save up some money while performing. It is also attractive for the appeal of getting to travel and see the country, and get paid to do so. Some international tours are also produced, giving an actor the opportunity to travel globally while getting paid to perform.

On Tour

Cast & Crew

It takes a village to put on a show, and it takes an even stronger village to put on a National Tour. Our entire *Rudolph* touring company consisted of thirty-two touring company members, and around fifteen or twenty more that joined us at each venue.

We had twenty-two actors in the cast, who took on roles of elves, reindeers, Santa and Mrs. Claus, Snowman, puppeteers, and more. Some actors played multiple roles throughout the show — one actor even playing both an elf and a reindeer, which are the most involved tracks and costumes in the show. The actors that played reindeer were typically taller, and the actors playing elves were typically shorter in height and more petite in build. Being that each role had such specific costumes, none of the roles were understudied. This was particularly challenging on tour, as none of the actors had the option to call out of the show for sickness, tardiness, or any other last-minute reason for absences. Thankfully, we never had any instances where any actors needed to call out of the show, but this definitely created a stress on the tour to stay healthy and not get hurt so that the show could go on.

The actors traveled separately from the crew, and lived a much more comfortable lifestyle. The cast traveled with a company manager that would coordinate with hotels, the bus driver, and theatres about arrival times, reservations, and more. Essentially it was the company manager's job to make sure that the actors were taken care of and that the logistics of traveling were ready when all twenty-two actors arrived.

The crew had a much less glamorous experience than the actors, and worked twice as hard. (They also were paid twice as much! Rightfully so!) The touring crew consisted of ten technicians that ranged from Production Stage Manager [who called the cues of the show for lighting, sound, special effects, and more], the ZFX flight operator [who set up and manned the ropes on stage left that lifted the actors when they “fly” on stage], the Production Company Manager [like the actor’s company manger, but coordinated and organized reservations and arrival times for crew members], Light Booth Operator [programmed and operated the lighting], Costume Run Head [who was in charge of setting up/caring for costumes, fixing any costume issues, and laundry between shows and cities], Sound Crew Head and Operator [dealt with all of the microphones and sound cues], Props Crew [who handled the puppets and props used in the show — Properties are hand-held items or small items that sit on the set that actors can touch, hold, and use in a scene], and Wigs-and-Makeup [who handled wigs, makeup, and prosthetics for actors]. The crew had their own tour bus, that was very different from our actor tour bus. The crew tour bus mostly consisted of beds, where every touring crew member had their own bed. The crew would not sleep in hotels each night — the tour bus was their home for the month and a half.

Following a performance, the crew’s tour bus would drive all night to the next city after the performance the night before, so that they would be at the next city bright and early. Their day would also begin around 7:00am, after they would get to the theatre. Upon their arrival to the theatre, the crew would shower and get ready for the day in the dressing rooms of the theatre. They would then begin the load in process of the entire set, costumes, and props — they would unload two giant eighteen-wheeler trucks that carried all of these materials. The eighteen-

wheeler trucks would have been driven all night to get to the next city for load-in, after loading out from the previous theatre the night before. Load-in usually took around five to six hours. The actors would then arrive around 3:00pm or 4:00pm, where then the preparations would begin for that night's performance. (If it was a two show-day with a matinee, the load-in process would need to begin even earlier, so that a performance could take place at 2:00pm. This made matinee performance days even earlier for the crew, unless the previous day was a travel day and the crew was able to load in the night before.) After the day's performance, the cast will go back to their hotel rooms, and the crew would begin the five or six hour process of loading out the set, props, and costumes. After they would finish load-out of that theatre, they would board their tour bus to sleep overnight while they are driven to the next city.

The crew was supplemented by around twenty additional crew members at each city. These would be local stagehands, who would serve as technicians, dressers, spotlight operators, and other helping hands to the crew backstage. Backstage was where they would build wardrobe teams, props teams, and others. The ten touring crew members would then assume positions as crew heads, and would instruct local stagehands how they could help.

Because of the nature of this traveling, loading, and unloading process, the only times that the actors and crew cross paths are in performances in the theatre. On travel days and other times of day, the actors and crew members would never have any contact. This effected relationships between actors and crew, as the two groups really never interacted other than performance times.

On Tour Process

The theatrical process of preparing for a national tour began with a rehearsal processes. This rehearsal process, however, looked very different from a typical National Tour. With the exception of three actors, all of the cast members were returning from the previous year's local tour. This made the rehearsal process very efficient, as essentially the creative team was just plugging the new actors into the old actors' tracks. Because of the ease of that process, we only had twelve rehearsals until we hit the road and opened our show in Columbia, Missouri.

Although I had been a part of the show the year prior, a twelve-day rehearsal process is not typical for most musical theatre productions. Some regional theatre or summerstock productions will have these expedited rehearsal processes, but this is not the norm. At TCU, we rehearse productions for an average of six weeks, with one week of tech and dress rehearsals. In the Dallas/Fort Worth theatre community, shows tend to rehearse for three weeks with five days of tech and dress rehearsals. Given these histories, one could say that my personal professional and educational experiences had not been quite as vigorous as this rehearsal process was.

Another factor that influenced our rehearsal process was the immediate re-casting of one of our cast members four days into the rehearsal process. One of the new additions to the cast, who was playing one of the male elves, was not picking up material as fast as the rest of the cast. He had agreed to come into the rehearsal processes already being "off-book" (which means that your material is memorized) for all choreography, vocal harmonies, songs, and lines. However, even after four full days of rehearsals, this cast member was not learning his material. He had to

be terminated from the company, and our producers and directors began to search for an immediate replacement for one of our male elves. This was very difficult as the replacement needed to fit the style, be available to leave town for a month, and be talented enough to learn the material for the show in 8 days before we left for the tour.

Thankfully the producer found a local DFW professional actor who was able to pick up the show in a matter of days, and we were set to go! I was pulled into a few private rehearsals to teach choreography to the new cast member, and aided in some extra rehearsals to teach choreography.

Our rehearsals for the first eight days were in the evenings from 5:00pm to 11:00pm. They took place at WaterTower Regional Theatre, a professional theatre in Addison, Texas, just north of Dallas. After those eight rehearsals, we rehearsed for the last four days at the Will Rogers Theatre in Fort Worth, Texas, where we had technical and dress rehearsals. Technical rehearsals are when the lights, sounds, actors, costumes, technicians, and creative team come together. This was where the crew joined our rehearsal processes, and began the process of loading in and out the set.

On our first day of tech, the crew and local stagehands had a problem with unloading and setting up the set for the first time. They installed the set backward, and two feet to the right, a *very* big problem. This mistake cost the production company over \$100,000 US to pay actors, technicians, crew, and the creative team for overtime (as it took an additional twelve hours to unload and reload it), and overtime to pay the theatre for using the space. I cannot even begin to express how angry our director and producer were for this costly mistake.

The mistake caused the actors to miss a day of tech rehearsal; We could not rehearse on the stage since the set was being built. Because of this, we had to fit tech and dress rehearsals into three days instead of four. This made an already fast and furious rehearsal process even faster.

Once we began traveling, we began our performances in a different city, on a different stage, in a different theatre every night. What helped the company stay consistent in our shows when we were in a different theatre each night was to have a consistent stage floor. There was a set of boards that the crew would load into each theatre, keeping the same tape “spike” marks on the ground for us to mark where the set pieces go, and we were supposed to stand in dance numbers. This floor was nailed down into each theatre stage, so that the actors always had the same floor to know where to stand, where to place set pieces, and where to put props.

We had a typical show protocol before each performance at every location as well. We were called to the theatre at least an hour before every performance. During that hour, we would meet on stage for notes from the touring dance captain about choreography, from the touring music director about vocal notes, and production stage manager about staging or any other notes on the show. This is where the entire cast and crew would check in for any alerts on that day’s performance. This is also when actors would pick up their microphones.

We would then begin to do a quick run through of the big dance numbers to make sure that the floor was nailed down correctly and that the cast got one run through in this theatre before the performance. This is when the sound crew would also check microphones, as each theatre house requires different levels for balance and echoes.

The most important pre-show check of all was the ZFX flight call. The two actors that flew in the performance (me and the actor playing Rudolph) would get into our flight harnesses and run through the entire production's flight tracks. This is where we could check the slack of the ropes, the height of this theatre's proscenium, and the safety of the harnesses.

After the flight call, I would begin my personal preparation for the performance. I usually shared a dressing room with the other actresses playing female elves, and occasionally some of the actresses playing reindeer. As an actress playing an elf, I had a greater amount of preparation than the actresses playing reindeer had before performances. I would begin by putting on stage makeup, which was quite bright for this style of show. This included bright pink rosy cheeks and a hot pink lip. I would then begin pin-curling my hair so that it was completely up, pinned tightly against my scalp. Then I would put on a wig cap, which is essentially a mesh head cap that would cover my hair. This is what the wig sits on top of, and what the wig can be pinned to. I would then glue on my pointy elf ears using spirit gum to attach the prosthetics over my own ears. I would have to wait for the glue to dry before I could put on my bright yellow curly wig, which I would then pin into the wig cap. The wig had a pink elf hat attached, so that I could put all of the pieces on more efficiently.

After my wig was secured, I would get into costume. This costume was elaborate, consisting of pink tights, a white leotard, my ZFX flight harness, a pink elf dress, curly-toed shoes, and a jingle-bell belt. The ZFX flight harness was something that I could step into, and wear around my waist and legs like a belt kind of underwear. It had one strap around each thigh that connected to the adjustable strap around my waist. On each side of the harness, right above my hips, were hook that would hook onto the ropes that would hoist me up. I had an opening on

each side of my dress where with little zippers that would open to allow the ropes to hook onto the harness. The zippers were shut for a majority of the performance, and only opened for the scene that I flew. The curly-toed shoes were also fascinating — they were a pair of black “Keds” tennis shoes that had a thick cotton attachment over them that made the curly look of the elf shoes. This attachment was sewn to the tennis shoe, and Velcro closed at the heel for easy access taking them on and off.

Once I was ready for the performance, I would waddle down to the stage level to make sure that my props were set before the show. I began the show with a stack of presents from Santa’s workshop, which were boxes wrapped with bright wrapping paper on our props shelf. These presents were my main props throughout the show.

Throughout the show, my track (or what my character does throughout the performance) was one of the most exciting tracks. I had a few breaks backstage when I had time to get water and touch up any makeup, stray hairs in the wig, or ears that might have not been glued on as well. (The second we started sweating under the hot stage lights, the glue that kept our prosthetic ears on would begin to melt; We were always reapplying glue to our ears between numbers during performances!) During performances, it was extremely important to stay hydrated, given how much we were sweating under the stage lights under our heavy costumes. Although the elf costume was quite thick and heavy, it was nothing compared to the giant furry reindeer suits that other actors had to wear. It was very important for the reindeer to stay as hydrated as possible in order to maintain their endurance to complete the show.

After the performances, the cast would take their microphones off, return them to the sound crew head, and proceed to the dressing rooms. Actors would then take off all costumes and

return those to the costume racks for the costume crew to start laundry and checking-in costumes so that they could start loading them onto the bus for the next venue. We would return wigs and prosthetic ears to the wig and makeup crew, who would start cleaning them and packing them up to load for the next theatre. I would then take out my pin curls, wipe off the cake-y stage makeup, and pack up my makeup to bring it to the next venue. After so many shows on the road, no matter how much I scrubbed I would always have a bit of glue behind my ears from the prosthetics. By the end December I had bald spots behind my ears where the glue had ripped out so much of my hair after so many performances.

We would all usually report back on the tour bus within a half hour after the performance. This gave time to company members who may have had family or friends at any given city that we might be performing in. This gave time to those company members to say hello after the show. Sometimes, even if we didn't know anyone who came to see the show, we would go to the lobby or stage door to find children who wanted our autographs or photos with the performers. These are some of my favorite memories, as it was many children's first experience at the theatre.

After loading back on the bus, we would be transported to our local hotel for the night. Usually some cast members would go to find food at a local restaurant that would still be open. We were always struggling to find places close enough to walk to from our hotels and places that were still open and serving food so late at night. If we were desperate we would "uber" (an app-based taxi service) to a place to eat, but walking was definitely preferable. Many actors would also try to find a bar for a post-performance drink, but I was not yet twenty-one on this tour. That was not an option for me.

On Tour

Tour Vs. A “Normal” Job

While I am analyzing the *Rudolph* National Tour through an academic research and analysis lens, I often have to remind myself that it is also a professional tour — I was one of two touring members that were students, the rest were adults in their mid to late twenties, and older. This is an occupation, and a job that I am training for in my education to continue pursuing and performing after I graduate. Most students would never have the opportunity to audition for such an opportunity while still being in college, much less be cast and be able to accept the contract.

It is important to note that a career in musical theatre performance is not your average, “normal” career. The typical nine-to-five work day does not exist for a performer, unless they have a “survival job” that keeps them busy during the day, to make money, in order to rehearse and perform at night. The absence of a typical work day is essential to the life of the performer, as our jobs take place at night, when performances are held. However, this is even more extreme for touring. A “normal” job allows workers to keep their personal and professional lives separate. co-workers might hang out after work, but unless they are close friends outside of work, it might be post-workday drinks, at most. This is not true for touring companies. In a touring company, professional friends also become personal friends. All time is spent together, especially on a non-equity bus-and-truck tour such as *Rudolph*. (A bus-and-truck tour is what they call non-equity tours because the show is loaded onto buses and trucks and driven to the next city, with typically one-night-only performances in each city. This is much more taxing on the entire company of cast and crew, which is why it is only done on non-equity tours. This is because the AEA Union

protects actors from this demanding schedule, which is taxing on both an actor's physical and mental health) The nature of this specific type of tour allows for NO free time. Actors do not usually have much of a social life outside of the touring community, as they are with these touring company members in new cities every week. This means that this "job" takes over any sort of stability that a permanent home offers, as well as cultivating a life in a city that you are living in. It is a nomadic lifestyle, and creates a unique social life of its own to go along with it. You can't go "home", every moment of your day revolves around the tour. There is little to no opportunity to make choices or have personal freedom while touring. Company members are either on a bus, dressing room, stage, or shared hotel room. That is it. There is little to no interaction with anyone outside of the community of touring members, as the vast majority of interaction is with the same people. This also blurs the lines of professional life, personal life, colleagues, and friends. This closed society made for a fascinating honors project. While a BFA theatre degree and TCU theatre training can prepare a future actor for a lot of things, the social aspect is not one of them. While TCU can teach students a great deal about performance, while being at school a student can always go back to their dorm or home, miss a class, fly home for the weekend, or drive to a nearby city to go to a concert/class/or other social event. While on tour, none of these things are likely to ever happen, or even be possible.

When an actor is performing or working on a national tour, it is not simply their job, but their life. The tour demands for physical, mental, and emotional stamina — something that not many jobs demand. Actors must stay in shape in order to meet the physical demands of performing, as well as maintain a healthy physique in order to look like their characters and fit in their costumes. This dictates what food actors eat, their exercise program, and self-care

maintenance. An actor must remain at their healthiest to keep up with the rigorous schedule of traveling, and cannot miss work when they are ill or he show will not go on, especially if there is no understudy, swing, or standby present.

On Tour

On and Off the Blog - Anecdotal Data

While on the road, I kept a detailed blog (*“Diaries of A Curly Toed Elf”*) with both textual and photographic documentation. I updated the blog daily, with accounts of the day’s travel, performance, and miscellaneous events of the day.

For an actor, a typical day on tour would begin very early, around 7:00 am. We would report to the tour bus, where they would load up the luggage and hit the road to the next destination. Our tour bus was driven by a driver who stayed with us for the duration of the entire tour — starting in Dallas, Texas and ending in West Palm Beach, Florida. The tour bus was complete with a half-row of seating for each actor, four tables for card games and eating, six bunk beds for napping and resting, a bathroom, and a full kitchen. A usual travel morning would consist of four or five hours of driving. (A “travel day” would be ten or twelve hours of driving, with no performance on that day.) We would usually stop for lunch where there were many food options, such as a mall food court or cluster of restaurants, so that everyone could find a food option of their choosing. We would then get back on the bus and continue to the theater. Upon arrival, we would check in, explore the space, and wander all over these huge, gorgeous theatres. We would then find dinner or a pre-show snack before we had to be back for our pre-show checks and preparation for the night’s performance.

I roomed with another actress, Sara Kreski, who also played a female elf. I was very lucky, because my roommate also happens to be my best friend back home in Fort Worth. I had an excellent relationship with my roommate. Other tour members were not as fortunate. I was

also very lucky in that Sara was my age, and we were both under the age of 21. For many actors, going to bars was a popular choice after performances, but since Sara and I were both unable to attend those outings, we enjoyed each other's company in finding other late night activities. Our favorite things to do were watch Hallmark Christmas movies at night, prepare for any lingering online finals we might be taking from our semesters at TCU, or exploring the city that we were currently staying in. If we couldn't find any dinner options within walking distance, our favorite dinner choice was ordering pepperoni and pepper pizzas from Papa John's Pizza — a chain that was always in every city we toured. We also enjoyed making silly videos in different hotel venues, and playing games with castmates in hotel rooms or shared hotel spaces. You can find my blog at: <https://diariesofacurlytoedelf.weebly.com/blog> .

I must note that my blog is public on the web, and could be searched by any internet user. Because of this publicity, and protection on the brand of the show, I could only write/post positive things about tour because of company policies. Being a family show with strict copyright laws, some things were not allowed to be documented on my blog. Our company manager and producer would monitor my posts, because if the *Rudolph* headquarters found it and saw something negative, the tour could be terminated. While our *Rudolph* tour was being produced, there were two other tours that were out across America at the same time. One covered the West Coast, one covered the NorthEast, and we covered the Midwest and South-East. The other two tours were also Equity tours, so in order to maintain the brand our tour was constantly under surveillance to make sure that it was up to standard with the other two.

A second reason why I had to censor some data/observations in my blog posts was due to friendships in the cast. Being that any cast member could search the blog online, I didn't want a

castmate to find any negative observations about themselves and think that I was disrupting the relationships within our cast, crew, and company. This being said, there were many things that I observed that were not mentioned in my anecdotal data on the blog.

One of the most fascinating observations I would record while being on tour were those relationships — friendships, hookups, rivalries, etc. Many relationships started on the road! This surprised me a lot. Social circles grew and changed on tour. However, now in retrospect, I am not all that surprised that so many relationships were formed: we spend every moment together. This made the tour very fascinating for an honors project — the analysis on a closed society. Relationships are integral to the functioning of this group of people. It was fascinating to see who gravitated toward whom, and who started to grow distant. I observed these interpersonal dynamics to notice how groups of people relate with one another. The concentric circles around each individual changed throughout the tour.

It was shocking to see how gossip laid a scientific framework for these relationships. Even in such a closed community of people, gossip was shared and spread among the cast. The action and effect of these occurrences were key in changing dynamics between people and groups.

In analyzing some of my castmates, I also took notice to how important it was for actors to know how to travel well, and have the whole “touring” thing figured out. Those who had toured before were great at this — and others, such as the new members, were horrid. While touring, it is so important to be prompt, organized, and always looking at what’s ahead. Touring is a fast-paced lifestyle that is lived quickly on the go; There is nothing “leisurely” about touring.

The entire of the company was always annoyed when a certain pair of company members were constantly late for bus loading and travel times — it slows down the entire company.

One difference that our tour had that most tours don't, is that it was all cast out of one small city. Our entire tour was cast out of Dallas, and most of us came from the local tour the year before. Normally, touring casts are a melting pot of actors from all over the country, and the tour is cast out of many different cities. Even if it is all cast out of NYC, a tour usually holds people that all did not know each other before the tour began. Our tour, however, was built from people who had worked together before and live in the same metroplex, thus making our tour different in that the people were friends prior to the start of this experience.

Privacy is something that is not often discussed before a touring experience. This is different from an Equity tour, where actors have the opportunity to have their own hotel room, or make different lodging reservations if they so choose. In a non-equity tour, this is not an option. We shared rooms in every hotel room. Our typical day just did not allow room for privacy. We would wake up in the shared hotel room, ride on the bus with the entire acting company, be in the theatre with the entire touring company and local stagehands, then return to a new hotel room with our roommates. Because of the nature of a non-Equity tour, there is not a lot of down time or off time to enjoy time by oneself.

Another observation I had in my notes that was kept off of the blog was that menstrual cycles had begin to sync up by the middle and end of the touring experience. Because all of the women on the tour were sharing such close spaces, we were all in sync by the end of the tour.

As I had mentioned before, one of the most popular post-performance activities among the actors was going to get a drink at a local bar or pub. One travel-day in Bismarck, North

Dakota many of the actors participated in a city-wide bar crawl for entertainment and enjoyment. Being one of the two actors that was under twenty-one, I could not attend many of the cast hang-outs that were had while on the road. This hindered my social setting only slightly, as I spent most of my time with my roommate and friend, Sara Kreski, who was also under twenty-one. This definitely changed my concentric circles. I had my closest friend and roommate, Sara, and then a small group of friends that were TCU Alumni in my second concentric circle. My circles then grew outward from there with other cast members, but I do think that my specific social experiences were changed because I was so much younger than almost everyone else on the tour.

The behavior of going to bars after shows also had a history of getting some actors into trouble. After the specific bar crawl experience that I mentioned previously, our producer caught wind of it via photos on social media, and the following day the company received an email about practicing appropriate behavior when representing a family show with a brand as protected as *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. I was not a part of the group that was being called out, but I was very thankful in that moment for my young age and easy excuse as to why I didn't need to join that activity. The actors who participated in the event were also quite hungover the following day for the 7:00am bus call, and that was another reason I was thrilled to have not participated. I saw so many of my cast members wasting their paychecks at these alcohol establishments. I saved much more money than most all of my castmates because I did not spend money at bars.

Getting sick was a hard obstacle that many actors battled while being on tour for a month and a half. While we had some travel days, we never truly had a day off in the weeks that we were on the road. The constant traveling, sharing such close quarters with everyone, and constant eating-out at restaurants and fast food establishments made for some very weak immune systems

among the company. There was a specific instance in Fargo, North Dakota, on Week Two that everyone seemed to be getting sick. The entire cast had to make a stop at a drugstore to start loading up with vitamin C and other vitamins to try to fight off colds, as we were not traveling with any understudies. If someone gets sick, everyone does. Diarrhea and vomiting on a tour bus is NOT an activity that any person should have to experience, much less when almost twenty-five people are sharing one bathroom on that bus!

Early in our second week, at our ninth performance, we had our ZFX flight crew member fired from the company due to poor behavior and attitude. Having an entirely new company member join our team in the middle of the run on the road was a tough challenge to face. However, the producers hired an excellent replacement who was extremely experienced in ZFX flight protocol and knowledge of the equipment, so it was a smooth transition into his addition to the team.

Something that worked extremely well in the process of our touring experience was an app called Master Tour. This app was downloadable for both iPhone and Android, and worked very smoothly for our company. The app included easy access for the company to our hotel information, daily calls (times we were expected to be at the theatre, bus loadings, etc.) travel route information, and our overall schedule. Our touring company manager would otherwise input all of this information into the app. It alleviated most all questions that we would be running to her to ask. This also gave actors a stress-free state of mind, so that we would all look forward to see where we'd be, what we'd be doing, and when.

When we were in Morganton, North Carolina, we were in quite a large predicament. One of the ZFX Harnesses had a strap rip in the process of transporting from one theatre to another,

and we suddenly only had one working harness. With two of us needing to fly, we had to modify the show so that Leo, the actor playing Rudolph, could wear the working harness. My track as modified as I could not fly in the performance, and we had to change my choreography in the snowstorm number. Thankfully we were able to get a new harness shipped to us within twenty-four hours, and were able to resume the show as set at the remaining performances. However, it made for two very nervous actors as we were now aware of the possibility of harnesses breaking; We are usually lifted around twenty feet in the air.

The ZFX harnesses had interesting legal issues as well. It is illegal to post any images online that contain a bare harness, and I was not allowed to talk about the harnesses in depth on my blog. They are strongly protected by patent, and are kept with upmost privacy.

One last topic that was never shared on my blog was the day that we spent in Orlando, Florida at Walt Disney World. It was a travel day and we had arrived in Daytona Beach, Florida, the city of our next show a day early. Since we had a fully day open in what was meant to be spent traveling, a group of us decided to rent a car and head to Walt Disney World! One of our *Rudolph* cast members had a friend that was a performer at Walt Disney World, and he was able to score all six of us free tickets to the park! This was one of my favorite days of our touring experience. We were not allowed to post anything about it for fear that Producers would be worried about us missing a performance or feeling that we were too far from the company.

On Tour

Survey: Tangible Data

When I asked my fellow company members to complete the survey I created, I was fairly certain I knew the data it would produce. I sent the survey to all company members — actors, crew, and the creative team. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the responses that I received. I received the largest response from actors, a smaller response from crew members, and no response from the creative team. I concluded that part of that reasoning was most likely due to the fact that the creative team did not tour from city to city with us, but remained in Dallas after the show had departed for the tour. The survey included basic questions regarding gender, age range, and how many years they had been with the *Rudolph* touring company. It then asked more pointed questions, such as if they had gone to school for theatre, and how that may or may not have prepared them for this National Tour experience. This section produced the most interesting responses.

When asked if their college education had prepared them for touring, this section provided most responses as yes, but then when prompted with the further question “why?”, most changed their answer. Most all responders recorded that they felt their training in a university setting helped them fundamentally, but not on a day to day basis. Experience in the field and formal training most certainly helped, but when a person is going on a national tour for the first time — nothing can fully prepare them for that experience. I was thrilled to see that this response supported my belief in this very fact, as I had mentioned at the start of my project.

The survey also asked company members what they prioritized on their travel days or times that we were not performing in new cities. Most every response said that they prioritized sightseeing and tourism, with rest and spontaneous events both coming in close second. Other options for survey responders included exercising and working jobs remotely.

When the survey asked responders to share their relationship status, a few had partners that were also on the tour, a great number had a spouse or relationship back home, and the remaining few were dating or single. It was surprising to me how many people had relationships back home while they were out on tour. With our strict schedules, it seemed difficult to maintain relationships back home while being out on tour.

One response that the survey received from a majority of the company members was not too surprising was that people sleep much less on tour than they usually did at home. 83% of responders said that they sleep from six to eight hours per night back home, but were only sleeping from three to five hours per night on tour. Most responders went to bed around midnight or 1:00am back home, but would retire around 2:00am or 3:00am on tour.

A shocking response I received in regard to personal hygiene was that most tour members only did laundry once or twice on tour. This surprised me, as I did laundry around five times on tour. We were all only allowed one suitcase for a month and a half of travel. With the number of cities we visited, we also needed to pack for a wide array of climates and temperatures — spanning from -24° F in Fargo, North Dakota, to 85° F in West Palm Beach, Florida. Because of this great range in temperatures, I packed a great assortment of clothes, when we were in cold cities for a few weeks, I needed to keep doing laundry, and then the same but opposite happened for the warmer states.

Most tour members remained active in their exercise routines on tour, which was to be expected of people in this profession. Most tour members averaged in working out one to three times per week in the hotel gyms and weight rooms. However, all tour members said that they worked out less than they do at home, which averaged from four to six times per week. I would explain this due to the time constraints of touring, where we didn't have much off time to have the opportunity to work out more than three times per week.

Spiritually, touring can be very difficult for religious people. Company members on the *Rudolph* tour said that they were able to attend one or no religious services or meetings while on tour. This is probably due to the fact that there is so little free time, and that weekends are a prime time for matinee shows, and travel days.

I also asked in my survey how many times people went out to eat back home, since we are eating out nearly every meal on tour. Most answered between one and three times per week. This was also true for myself, which made me hyper-aware of how hard it is to stick to a healthy diet while on tour. 66.7% of survey responders said that they had fast food daily while touring.

The survey concluded with an open-ended question: "Why did you go on Tour?" I was astonished with my answers, in that almost every response shared that they accepted the tour for the community. That was eye opening to me, in that touring can be so strenuous on a person's sense of community, being that they are stuck with the same group of people for so long. However, it was surprising to me to see that some people crave that intimate, closed group of people, and love the sense of isolated community that is "all in it together." This was so beautiful to me.

On Tour

Interviews: Tangible Data

To place my research in context, and to supplement my anecdotal data of my experiences on the tour, I needed to hear from other professional actors. I needed to hear what their experiences were like, and analyze what different touring experiences were like. I wanted to know more from people who had similar experiences, situations, and shows, but also from people with very different experiences, situations, and shows.

I chose to interview four different people, with a wide assortment of similarities and differences to my experience. The first was David Corris, a thirty-one year old actor that was also on the Rudolph tour with me. He had been on the *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* National Tour for two years, touring both internationally and nationally. He performed with Disney Cruise Ships for 1 year, which posed a similar situation to touring with a closed environment and closed community of people, but a lot less moving to different places. David is a 2014 graduate of Roosevelt University in Chicago.

I also chose Lindsey Hailes, a twenty-one year old, just like me. Lindsey was just on the Equity National Tour of *Dirty Dancing*, and before that was in the non-equity national tour of *The Wizard of Oz* — both tours in the ensemble. Lindsey went to Point Park University, but left after her third semester to tour.

Next I chose David “Dave” Schoonover, who is thirty-four years old. Dave has three tours under his belt, with the *Cats* National Tour (Non Equity), *Young Frankenstein* National

Tour (Equity), and *White Christmas* National Tour (Equity). Dave is a 2005 graduate of the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point.

I chose these three individuals specifically to focus on, but in addition to these three people, I also spoke informally with many TCU Alumni who are out on National Tours, or who have recently completed National Tours. Alumni included Anthony Fortino (*Fun Home* National Tour — Equity), Sophie Lee Morris (*Dirty Dancing* National Tour — Equity, *Chicago* National Tour — Equity), Shelby Ringdahl (*Abba Mania*), Wyn Delano (*Amazing Grace the Musical* — Non Equity), and John Devereaux (*Rent* 20th Anniversary Tour — Equity). Other interviewees I spoke with outside of TCU were Aramie Peyton (*Flashdance* — Non Equity), and Morgan Harrison (*Flashdance* — Non Equity).

In speaking with all of these actors, I was very interested to hear about the difference between Equity and Non Equity National Tours, what they liked and didn't like on their tours, pay on contracts vs. how much they actually saved, lengths of contracts, and other facts about their specific tours that may have been different or similar to my own.

I learned through my interviews that total compensation on Equity tours includes much more than the paycheck. It includes access to health benefits, pension contributions, and rights that protect Equity members from unreasonable performance and travel schedules or guarantee them paid sick and vacation time. Some producers of non-Equity tours pay the same or even a slightly higher weekly salary than Equity touring productions to try to mask the fact that actors and stage managers aren't getting the benefits and protections. Non-Equity tours can then cut costs by imposing unreasonable schedules that don't allow actors time to rest and recuperate, or by offering inferior benefits (or none at all). They are making money on the back of performers.

In supplementing this research, I learned that by 2004, 40% of the one-week touring market had gone non-Equity. Members demanded the AEA Union “take back the road” and secure that work under Equity contract. Equity’s efforts were successful. Over the past ten years, Equity has recaptured the majority of the work that had gone non-union. The one-week touring market is now predominantly Equity. \$143 million in member earnings has been generated by tiered and Short Engagement Touring Agreement (SETA) tours since 2008. Without tier and SETA productions, Equity members would have suffered \$35 million in lost wages, 20,248 lost health weeks and \$2.8 million in lost pension contributions last year alone. The touring production of a show is separate from the Broadway production, with its own investors, budget and expenses. The tier of a touring production is determined by the guarantees the producer is able to secure from local presenters. Equity’s bargaining agreements for touring productions are with the producers and not with the presenters.

Equity negotiated strong language into the bargaining agreements that requires producers to provide detailed financial information in order to qualify for a tier. The union thoroughly reviews each request and has denied the use of tiers to productions. Improvements have been made to all of the touring contracts with each successive negotiation. For example, wages and per diems for Tier C contract productions have risen 19.5% since tiers were first introduced; wages and per diems for Category two SET tours have risen 18.7% since 2008. Actors share in the success of touring productions through back-end participation. Tier and SET contracts ensure that producers share overage with the Equity members in the company after the guarantee and expenses are met each week. When a production recoups its investment, each Equity

member receives a permanent minimum salary increase of 17% and the percentage share of the weekly overage is increased.

There are more than ten types of Equity touring contracts. The most common for cross-country tours are the Production Contract and its three tiers, and six categories of the Short Engagement Touring Agreement (SETA). Production Contracts can also be tiered at the B, C, and D levels. While the per diem remains stagnant regardless of tier status, the minimum salary decreases on a sliding scale, coinciding with the decreasing average weekly guarantee from the scheduled presenters. This salary increases if and when the show recoups its investment. All Production Contracts and tiered contracts operate on average weekly guarantees of \$308,000 or more with a company of at least forty members. Only musicals can operate under Production Contracts and tiered contracts, and producers apply to Equity in order to run on a specific agreement. This includes projections of cost, average weekly guarantee from presenters, company size, itinerary, etc. In turn, Equity can reject or accept this application based on the overall package.

Between 2000 and 2004, Equity lost 40% of the road in one-week markets. Now, because we've put these tiers in, they've regained 90% of the road in these one-week markets. To compensate for the lesser salaries, the union negotiated overage payments for all tours outside of full Production Contracts. Any actor earning less than three times the Production Contract minimum is eligible to earn a percentage of the show's weekly profit—if it makes one. Post-recoupment, this percentage increases. It's important for actors to note that these are different business models than Broadway. "We work in commercial theater on Broadway," said Somma.

“We’re not necessarily working commercial theater on the road; a lot of these houses are not-for-profits. So when you’re a producer, you’re trying to make this all fit.”

Actors that had been on Non Equity Tours had very similar experiences to my own. Some had one-week stays during their travels, but mostly had shows that did strictly “one-nighters”. These had “Bus-and-Truck” Travel. Rehearsals had no time constraints, and neither did pay. (This sometimes favored the actor and sometimes did not. Sometimes the pay was higher than Equity (but not typically).) The Hotel and your Roommate was chosen for the actor, there is little to no choice in that matter. Travel Days are also (typically) unlimited in travel time. There is little to no privacy on a Non-Equity Bus-and-Truck Tour. However, on many accounts I heard that Laundry was actually easier! Since actors are constantly moving to a new hotel each night, more hotels meant for more laundry options!

Now, in hearing from Actors on Union (Equity) tours, there are many perks to being in a Union Tour, the first being the quality of life is higher. Since runs in cities are generally longer, actors have free time to do what they want to do, have a life outside of the show, and explore the city. They can take classes, join a gym for a week or so, and essentially live in the city for the length of the run. Actors receive health insurance, pension, 401K, and the pay is higher than that of a Non-Equity Tour. Travel is usually done by plane or the actor has the choice of how they'd like to travel — and the production company will pay (up to a plane ticket) for however they'd like to travel, agreeing that the actor will find his or her own way to the next location. With this travel freedom, many union performers can bring family members or pets on the road with them! The hotel situation is also flexible, as they will pay for anything equalling a hotel room that they'd get for the company, and if the actor does choose to stay in that housing, they get their

own room. Actors perform an eight show week, usually with Monday off — but travel days will typically be Monday. Union tours are a great way to earn weeks for health insurance, as well as get paid to travel.

Generally touring notes for both Union and Non Union tours included the struggles of working out — most actors will only have access to a hotel, and if not, they'd really have to get creative. Religious Life is more possible on Equity tours with longer sit-downs, and less possible with Non-Equity one-nighters. There's just no time! However, the biggest difference I heard from others that I didn't experience on my tour was about Understudies & Swings, and how *important* they are! Living life on the road is hard, especially on longer contracts that will be on the road for six, nine, or twelve months! Most swings and understudies would rehearse offstage during shows on the road, and have put in rehearsals every two weeks to keep them fresh. Usually there are four men and four women understudies and swings, but that depends on the tour. All actors said to pack extra underwear and socks — one can never be too sure when the next laundry stop will arise!

The last advice from these interviewees was in regard to choosing how to spend free time, albeit personally, exploring, or with friends. The balance between these three entities is vital to maintaining a positive and healthy lifestyle while being on the road.

After Tour

Frogfolio

In trying to figure out how to share my knowledge, research, and analysis of the *Rudolph* National Tour, I began to think about how my TCU Academic training had prepared me for this musical adventure. A textual document or simple powerpoint simply could not express all that I wanted to within my honors project nor convey all that I needed to convey to my target audience. I would like to use this project as a teaching tool for other students considering touring. Within the last five years, there has been a large uptake of people on national tours from TCU, as more and more TCU alumni are being cast on national tours.

I began to analyze my TCU Academic career and realized that I had the most perfect tool to showcase my discoveries right at my fingertips: TCU Frogfolio. TCU Frogfolio is an ePortfolio learning platform where students reflect on and showcase their learning experiences from inside and outside the classroom. I was introduced to Frogfolio in my freshman Theatre History course, Art of the Theatre, by Harry Parker. Daniel Terry spearheads the Frogfolio department here at TCU, and (over Christmas break of my freshman year) he saw much promise in me as a young Frogfolio user. I had poured hours upon hours of labor into my online ePortfolio, and the Frogfolio department noticed my work. In the spring of 2015, my freshman year, I became one of the first interns, or “eTerns” as we call them, for the TCU Frogfolio Department.

As an eTern, my job is to provide the tools to help students make their learning visible through our online resources and one-on-one assistance in the FrogFolio Lab (Rees Jones Hall,

Room 101). I assist students in building websites and designing how they can best showcase their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. This educational tool is completely free to TCU Students, as it is provided by the University in hopes that students can create websites to showcase their work to future employers, classes, and other students.

Utilizing this academic source seemed to be the most perfect way to showcase all that I had discovered and experienced while on the *Rudolph* tour. This platform would be able to best showcase both my tangible and anecdotal data, as well as other artifacts: photo, video, social media, blogging, diagrams, textual data, and more.

Please enjoy exploring my webpage for my Frogfolio about the Examination of the *Rudolph* National tour at: <https://tcu.digication.com/an-examination-of-the-rudolph-national-tour-honors-project/home-1/published>

After Tour

How *Rudolph* Tour Affects My Future

The effects of the tour have far surpassed any of my wildest dreams. From a professional standpoint, I gained an experience that is unmatched by any other. I gained a credit for my resume that speaks volumes professionally, and can tell a casting director a lot about my talents and strengths as an actress.

Having a National Tour on a resume can tell a casting director that an actor is able to do long runs of a show. It shows that the actor is prompt, and has good time management skills. It shows that an actor can remain healthy and in-shape while being out of their 'normal life' routine. It shows that an actor is flexible in allowing anything to be thrown their way, and that they don't let change affect their performance. Touring tells a director that an actor has stamina, and not only in performing the same show for months, but that they also can perform while traveling and constantly being on the go.

Recently, being a Senior now, my TCU BFA class and I took a trip to New York City to further our professional careers. We auditioned for agents, directors, casting directors, and other industry professionals to establish connections and network for post-graduation. In both our closed and open showcases, I received a combined total of sixteen callbacks these industry professionals. In my follow-up interviews, auditions, and conversations with these agents and casting directors, almost every single one has mentioned how much the National Tour on my resume stood out to them, most specifically for someone as young as I am, still being in college. This spoke volumes to me, as to how much this tour has affected my development as an actor,

and how important National Tours are for a resume. The agents told me that they were particularly impressed, however, that I was able to pull off the tour while still remaining a fully enrolled and full time student, and that I will graduate on time with my class. This speaks to the training and support that TCU has offered me, and not only how much I have learned academically, but also how much I have gained professionally. This tour will continue to impact career and my own development as an actor. I am immensely grateful for the blessing that was this opportunity to analyze, learn, and grow from the lessons I've learned on the *Rudolph* National Tour.

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Survey Responses / Interviews with Actors that have National Touring Experience