

### PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

When I started thinking about this script, I knew I wanted to write something that its primary audience – college students – could relate to. Though the characters in the play are a little younger, they're facing challenges that are common to most young people. They're preparing for a new and more independent phase of their lives, and the uncertainties that come with it... what the future will be like, how their relationships will change, and what their place in the world will be.

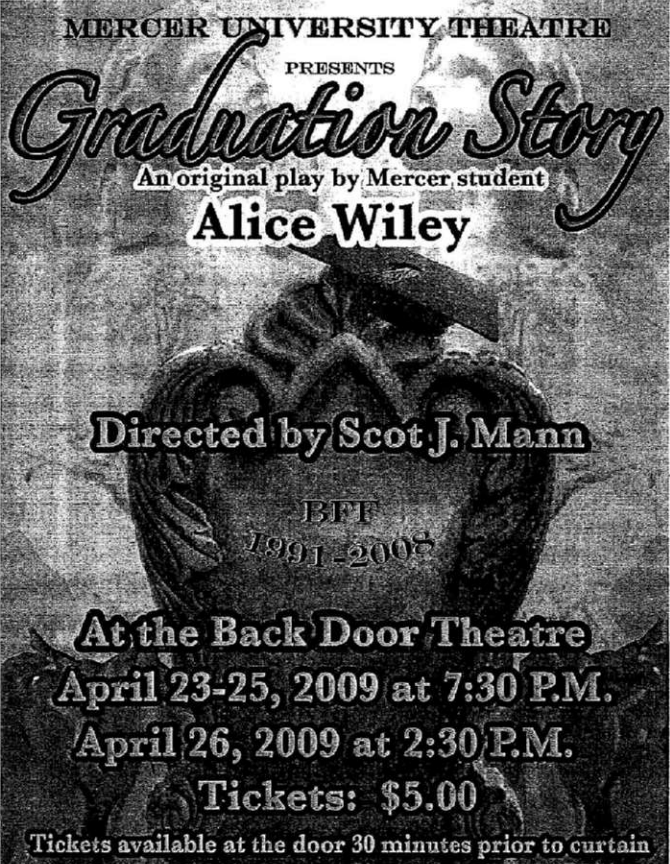
However, for these characters, this transition period is rockier, as they must deal with a new reality of grief and loss. Having experienced the death of a loved one when I was in high school, I wanted to explore this subject in "Graduation Story." Not only because I believe that I write best when I'm writing from experience, but because grief is such a powerful source of conflict. Though a group of people may lose the same person, they all experience that loss differently, and they all react differently. Grief can bring out the best in people, and the worst, but it always changes them.

And I think that's what this story is ultimately about – change. Whether it's graduation from high school or college, the loss of a friend, or some other event... change is always going to come. My question is, how do we deal with it? How do we allow it to affect our relationships; how do we know when to hold on and when to let go? The play's finished, but I'm still working on that.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The Theatre program's Playwriting class in the spring of '08 presented several evenings of original one acts. The energy of the performances and the enthusiastic participation of the audience reminded me that Theatre is at its most effective when it directly reflects the community in which it is presented. I think it imperative that the voices of our students are heard on our stage, and it has been a privilege to direct the contemporary work that Alice Wiley has developed over the last year. Mercer's Theater students, and members of the broader Mercer community, represent a multidimensional pool of talent and skills. Tonight's performance is student written, student performed, student designed from lights to sound, student run from the stage manager's booth to backstage, and represents many long hours of hard work and dedication to the craft. I think you'll agree that the Mercer community is richer for it, and I'd like to thank everyone for sharing their gifts!

Scot J. Mann  
Assistant Professor/Theatre Director, Mercer University  
Fight Director, Society of American Fight Directors  
Certified Teacher, British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat



MERCER UNIVERSITY THEATRE  
PRESENTS  
*Graduation Story*  
An original play by Mercer student  
**Alice Wiley**  
Directed by **Scot J. Mann**  
BFF  
1991-2008  
**At the Back Door Theatre**  
**April 23-25, 2009 at 7:30 P.M.**  
**April 26, 2009 at 2:30 P.M.**  
**Tickets: \$5.00**  
Tickets available at the door 30 minutes prior to curtain

# Graduation Story

An original play by Mercer Student

## Alice Wiley

Directed by Scot J. Mann

### CAST of CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

Kyle.....Meredith Ellis  
Amber.....Cari Hipp  
Kelly.....Whitney Bembry  
Jade.....Shannon Johnson  
Jason.....Samuel Bazemore  
Devin.....Matt Roche

As Kyle and her friends start life after high school, coming of age takes on new meaning as they must face challenges they could never have planned for... in love, friendship, and loss.

### MERCER THEATRE PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Scot J. Mann  
Technical Director..... Zach Broome  
House Manager.....Tory Johnson  
Stage Manager.....Kelly Flemister  
Assistant Stage Manager..... Ian Van Sice  
Lighting Designer..... Ian Van Sice  
Lighting Crew.....Ellie Butler, Ian Van Sice  
Sound Designer and Operator..... Ian Van Sice  
Costume Designer.....Shelley Kuhen  
Costume Crew.....Evelyn Funderburk, Lauren Parris  
Props Crew.....Zach Broome, Phillip Banze,  
Ian Van Sice, Kelly Flemister  
Running Crew..... Lauren Lunsford, Chad Sliger  
Set Crew.....Phillip Banze, Matt Bird, Kelly Flemister,  
Marcella Murray, Ian Van Sice  
Graphic Design.....Darlene Murphy  
Playwright.....Alice Wiley

## WHO'S WHO

**Phillip Banze** (Props Crew) will graduate in May with a Sociology major and Theatre minor. He has performed in numerous shows and has worked on the set crew for over 13 shows. Thanks to Zach, Matt, Marcella, and Laura for being an amazing team!

**Samuel R. Bazemore** (Jason), is a senior here at Mercer University. He has been a part of more than nine productions, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Theseus), *Comedy of Errors* (Antipholus of Ephesus), *A Lesson Before Dying* (Reverend Ambrose), and *Stop Kiss* (George). *Graduation Story* holds a very special place in his heart as this is his final Mercer play before finally graduating in May. (THANK YOU ALICE!) Samuel would like to thank Scot Mann for taking the crazy/goofy kid and showing him that being a professional actor is much MORE than just acting. He would also like to thank his family and friends for all of their continued support through the years, and he finally has the courage to say it... He is a *Thespian*! He will surely miss everyone, Backstage rocks like Guitar Hero!

**Whitney Bembrly** (Kelly) is a senior Biology major on the Pre-medical track and a very pretty member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. This will be her sixth production at the Backdoor Theatre. Her performances include a Reveler in *Celebration: The Musical*, Pinch in Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors*, vocal soloist in *A Player's Cabaret*, a character actor in *An Evening of One Acts*, and Mustardseed in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Whitney thoroughly enjoys the performing arts and has been active since childhood. After graduation, she plans to pursue a medical degree and work in underserved areas. She would like to thank her friends and family for all of their support.

**Zach Broome** (Technical Director) is a graduate of Mercer University who is proud to work for the Theatre Department of his alma mater. He wishes to dedicate this production to his hard-working shop staff and dedicated volunteers.

**Ellie Butler** (Lighting) is a freshman Biomedical Engineering major. This is her second production with Mercer Theatre, having appeared as Moth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She is very excited to be working in the theater again and would like to thank the whole cast and crew for their hard work on this show.

**Meredith Ellis** (Kyle) is thrilled to be working alongside such a quality cast in showcasing this very special production! She is about to complete her junior year here at Mercer, and her involvement with the Mercer theatre department continues to be a blessing during her college experience! She hopes to graduate next year with a Psychology degree, with a Spanish and Theatre minor. Until then, she is investing energy into a new

on-campus dance organization, "The Mercer Dance Revolution", enjoying her Phi Mu sisters and continuing her commitment to incoming freshman students as a Peer Advisor. She'd like to thank her friends and family for all of their support, love and patience. She'd also like to give special thanks to the playwright, Alice Wiley, for creating this experience for all of us.

**Kelly Flemister** (Stage Manager) is a rising sophomore majoring in Art History. She has been involved in theatre for many years, and cannot imagine a version of her life in which theatre would not play a huge role. Recently she appeared as Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and as Doris in *Degas C'est Moi*. She would like to thank the cast, crew, director, and playwright of *Graduation Story* for their hard work and patience. This has been, she feels, a wonderful experience which she will never forget. She would also like to thank her family, friends, and Bryan for their continual support.

**Cari Hipp** (Amber) is a rising senior majoring in Sociology with minors in Criminal Justice and Women's and Gender Studies. She has been in several productions at Mercer, most recently *Fiddler on the Roof*, and always enjoys working with Mercer Theatre. She thanks the cast, the crew, and, of course, Alice, for making this a wonderful experience.

**Shannon Johnson** (Jade) is a senior Theatre major. *Graduation Story* will be the last show of her college career and she is happy that she got to be a part of it for her friend Alice before graduating in May. Shannon has had a great run with Mercer Theatre including performing in eleven shows, Assistant Directing last year's *Stop Kiss*, and working with the tech crew throughout her four years here. Some of her favorite roles include the Voice-Over in *Hot n' Throbbing*, Natalya in *Three Sisters*, the Courtesan in *A Comedy of Errors*, Nicole in *Not Waving*, the Interpreter in *Arabian Nights*, and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To the brilliant and wonderfully talented Marian "the Pineapple" Zielinski she would like to say, "Thank you a million times for the undying support and friendship that you have given me. You are truly an amazing woman and I am proud to have not only known you for these past four years, but have also been able to acquire just a tiny bit of your wealth of knowledge." To the crazy but loveable Scot Mann she would like to say, "Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to learn from you both as an actor and as a director. I am truly grateful that we were lucky enough to get you back to this University not only for what you have done for me but also for what you have done for the program with your incessant stalking of those in power to get us what we need and deserve. I love you and will miss you greatly." To the rest of her crazy theatre family, she would like you to know that this year has been the best year of her life, 100% due to you guys. And finally, thanks to all of the support she has received from her friends and family outside of the department. "I love you all and am eternally grateful."

**Tory Johnson** (House Manager) is a sophomore at Mercer. She has worked on several theatre productions in the community and here at Mercer, including her most recent work as stage manager for Mercer's production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

**Shelley Kuhlen** (Costume Director) has designed over fifty productions at Mercer during the last twelve years. She also designs costumes for Mercer Opera and Theatre Macon. Many thanks to her amazing family and costume crew for their love and support.

**Lauren Lunsford** (Running Crew) is a sophomore studying Theatre and Music at Mercer. A quick breakdown of her roles this year include: a creepy fairy; a creepy stalker of Degas; and Chava, the Aryan Jew. As for her fourth Mercer production, *Graduation Story*, she is excited about playing the role of the Viking stagehand. She is also a master procrastinator, and would like to thank those in charge for giving her yet another outlet for her craft, Chad for being her partner in crime and pretty much... everything, and the Seniors for being awesome in general. We'll miss you guys!

**Scot J. Mann** (Director) is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Mercer. *Graduation Story* marks Scot's tenth directing effort at Mercer in three years. As a director, he received a Meritorious Achievement Award for his direction of *Scapin*, by the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival in 2005. Scot is also an internationally recognized and award winning Fight Director, certified through the Society of American Fight Directors and the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat. He has choreographed, performed and coached theatrical violence with such companies as The Steppenwolf Theatre, The Alliance Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Georgia Shakespeare Festival, The Asolo Conservatory, and The North Carolina School of the Arts. He has also served as an instructor for the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat in London, and Stage Combat Deutschland in Freiberg, Germany. As an actor, Scot has appeared with the Georgia Shakespeare Festival, New American Theater, New American Shakespeare Theatre, Atlanta Opera, motion capture talent for digital media, and various voice-over recordings for radio, T.V. and the Internet. Most recently, Scot appeared as a stunt-player and served as tactical choreographer and gun wrangler for the upcoming Sci-Fi movie, *Eyeborgs*, as well as on-set Swordmaster and stunt double for the "Bollywood" epic, *Drona*. Scot is an alumnus of the MFA/PAT program at The Alabama Shakespeare Festival and holds a BA in Communications and Theatre from Mercer University. He thanks Kelly, for her understanding and support, and his magical daughter, Madelyn!

**Marcella Murray** (Light Crew) is a sophomore Biology major at Mercer. She plans to be a Physical Therapist. This is her second year helping make sets for Mercer's plays.

**Matt Roche** (Devin) has been on stage since the age of 8, when he took the role of a young street urchin in the musical *Ebenezer!* at Theatre Macon. Turned on to stage work by the prospect of having people's attention and acting like a complete lunatic, he has been in love with theatre ever since. He's now a junior Psychology major here and is super excited to graduate and get started waiting tables in Macon restaurants with his degree. He'd like to thank everybody who's had anything to do with his history as a young actor: he hasn't loved every minute of it, but he's needed it more than he can express on or off stage.

**Ian Van Sice** (Assistant Stage Manager, Lighting Designer/Crew, Sound Designer/Operator, Props Crew, Shop Crew) is a senior Theatre major. This is the tenth theatrical production at Mercer of which he has been a part. This is his first time as part of the creative team and he has learned more working on this show than any other. He is thankful for his last opportunity to work with such a talented group of artists and technicians. You guys are like family to me. Thanks for some of the best years of my life! Finally, Ian dedicates his work on this show to those who deal with depression. Help is out there. Things will get better.

**Chad Sliger** (Running Crew) Yay Techies! This is Chad's first technical position in a production at Mercer University. He has performed, however, in several productions including *The Disciples* as John Birch, *Times Flies* as the Eunuch and Horace the Mayfly, and in the recent production of *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Grand Opera House in which he played Perchik. He would like to thank God, Mom, Dad, John; and all of his wonderful friends who have helped him and encouraged him. Thanks guys for all of your support. Love ya!

**Alice Wiley** (Playwright) is a senior theatre major at Mercer University. Her favorite role was Callie in *Stop Kiss*, and she has appeared in six other Mercer productions as well. When not in rehearsal, she can often be found in the music building, where she will be performing a solo piano recital in May. Alice has been writing since before high school, and in addition to *Graduation Story*, has completed two other plays and more than seventy songs. She's currently working on a novel (in her spare time).