

STUDENT LIFE

Student's directing career begins

By Lori DeFabio
student life editor

Is it possible to begin a career as a freshman? It is for Behrend student Aaron Amendola, THEA/EDU 02, who was rewarded the role of director for the theater troupe "United We Stand's" performance of Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple."

Amendola has been interested in theater since high school, which helped him land his first directing role with United We Stand. One of his high school theatre teachers introduced him to Cathi Mitchell of the theater troupe and, after numerous interviews, Amendola was awarded the job.

As a director, Amendola has already 40 hours at rehearsals and a lot of added time outside of the theater since he became director in late February. He needed to cast all the roles and is continuously helping the cast with the set, sound and lights, in addition to his job of directing the actors and interpreting the show.

"The actors in it all are experienced and in most cases, a little older than me, so it was fun directing people even though I was a little younger," said Amendola. "I knew a few of [the actors] from shows around the Erie area but if they weren't so experienced and well-rounded, this show probably wouldn't be getting off the ground by Friday."

United We Stand's performance of "The Odd Couple" has the same premise as Neil Simon's, but the leading roles' gender is changed. The performance under direction of Amendola has female leads, so instead of Oscar and Felix, the characters are Olive and Florence. Because most of the cast is female, Amendola decided to ask a fel-

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student/director

low female Behrend Theater student, Tanaz Balaporia, DUS 04, to be his assistant.

"Aaron needed a girl to help him with an all girl cast (minus 2 men) so he figured that I would be the best fitted to help since I am a girl going into Theater Arts," said Balaporia. "He asked me to assistant direct with him and naturally I said 'of course.' We have put a lot of hours in. I would have to say nine hours every week plus we are in the musical, so that's another nine."

Even though directing is taking up a lot of time for a college student, Amendola does not plan to stop any time soon. "It's my first time directing and I've learned a ton from it already," said Amendola. "And I want to keep on directing. I'd love to go back and do another show for them. It may be stressful and as long as it is fun, I'll keep doing it. I'm directing a one-act for the Matchbox Players here when 'Working' is done."

United We Stand's female version of "The Odd Couple," under direction of Amendola, will begin tonight and will be presented every Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. at St. Patrick's Cauley Center until April 23. For tickets to see Amendola's first directed show, call the troupe's box office at 814-459-5084.

Volunteers needed for Battle

By Stobhan Conway
staff writer

Keeping with tradition, Battle of the Bands will be on April 29, the last day of regular classes. The event will be held in Erie Hall and will begin at 2 p.m. and go on until 11 p.m.

There will be a committee meeting Tuesday in Reed 114. The meeting is at 5:15 p.m. and anyone who is interested in helping out with Battle of the Bands is encouraged to stop by.

Rob Frank, COMBA 08, head of the Battle of the Bands committee, said, "I would like as many students to get involved as possible. The more the merrier. It's going to be a lot of work and also a lot of fun."

Frank went on to explain that the committee needs volunteers to help with setup, production, hospitality and public relations for the event. SGA is very enthusiastic about Battle of the Bands and wants to get the word out as much as possible.

"We would like to get in touch with local newspapers, radio stations and retail stores to promote this event," said Frank.

Most of the volunteer work will take place on the day of the event.

There will be multiple committees for Battle of the Bands, so if you are interested in helping you can go to the meeting on Tuesday and sign up. If you feel motivated you can sign up for more than one committee.

Everyone who volunteers to help plan and run the Battle of the Bands will receive a free T-shirt for their efforts. There will also be free food at the event. This is the third year in a row that Battle of the Bands will occur on the last Friday of the school year. It is sponsored by the SGA.

This year's Battle of the Bands will be headlined by Rufio. The support bands are Chronic Future and Crosby's American Dream.

Twelve bands will be battling from Erie, Pittsburgh and other areas, and the bands include Deception Point, The Liberty Spikes and Praying for Cadence.

Even if you don't sign up to help with Battle of the Bands, make sure to show your support by attending on April 29. Admission is free.



EARNIEBALL.COM
Rufio is the Battle of Bands headliner this year.

Cultures are lurking in your yogurt

By Janet Helm
Chicago Tribune
(KRT)

Bacteria in your food are a bad thing, usually: Think of E. coli or other harmful bugs. But a whole other world of "friendly" bacteria lurks out there. Called "probiotics" and found in such products as yogurt and yogurt drinks, they provide health benefits beyond the regular live cultures found in those foods.

Probiotics are among the fastest-growing category of functional foods, according to the market research firm Mintel, which cites a 140 percent increase last year in the launch of new probiotic-fortified products.

So far, the strongest evidence on probiotics has focused on digestive-tract problems such as lactose intolerance and diarrhea, including infectious diarrhea among children and the type that develops after a person has taken antibiotics (which wipe out both good and bad bacteria in their path, altering the natural balance of the digestive tract).

Additional studies suggest probiotics may help decrease the risk of colon cancer and ease symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome and the more serious inflammatory bowel disease, which includes Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Researchers also are beginning to see signs that probiotics may help lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels.

Europeans have long embraced the concept of probiotics (which is derived from the Greek word meaning "for life"), but Americans haven't fully warmed up to the idea of downing a drink swimming with billions of live microorganisms.

"We've done a good job in this country of scaring people to death of microbes," said Mary Ellen Sanders, president of the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics, a non-profit scientific organization. "People don't understand the important role microbes can play in our health."

Unlike antibiotics, which kill harmful microbes in the body, probiotics simply take up temporary residence and neutralize the negative effects of the "bad" bacteria living there. Some of the benefits of probiotics appear to be their feisty aggression toward these nasty bugs in our bodies, Sanders said.

TRACKING DOWN 'GOOD BUGS'

Some foods may be made with microbes, everything from sourdough bread to pickles, sauerkraut, kim chi, miso and fermented meats like salami. But it doesn't mean all the "good bugs" survived the processing or that

the strains used provide actual health benefits, which is required before it would qualify as a probiotic, Sanders said.

You also can't assume that all yogurts contain probiotics (although not all experts agree on where you draw the line). Though many of the national brands contain "live active cultures," the typical strains used to make yogurt don't make it the full ride through our digestive tract.

These starter bacteria produce lactic acid and are used to give yogurt its tart flavor, but they don't seem to have the same types of health benefits as probiotics, which do survive the digestive tract, Sanders said (although they still might help folks with lactose intolerance).

If you want a yogurt with the gut-friendly, friendly bugs, you need to scour the label to see if the manufacturer supplemented the standard strains with probiotic bacteria. The two most common are Lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidobacteria (or bifidus). You won't necessarily see the word "probiotics" on the label.

These bacteria (and their probiotic cousins L. casei, L. reuteri and others) also are being added to fermented milks like acidophilus milk, kefir and soy beverages.

New to the market is Dannon's DanActive, a probiotic dairy drink that contains 10 billion live cultures per serving, or 10 times more cultures than yogurt, according to the label. DanActive also appears to be the first product to use the immunity claim to try and sell Americans on the benefits of live microorganisms. The label touts its ability to "naturally strengthen your body's defense system."

Companies are exploring adding the cultures to a wide range of non-dairy products, including breakfast cereal, energy bars, juices and other beverages, and even candy. Capsules of probiotics also are available in health food stores, but experts believe there may be additional benefits of getting your bacteria in a food form, especially through dairy products.

To take care of the "good" bacteria you buy, don't let your probiotic products linger at room temperature, and don't heat them or you'll kill the live cultures. Also, it's best to consume probiotics before the use-by date on the label (or within the week following the sell-by date). Otherwise, the live cultures begin to die off.

To reap the full benefits, you need to consume probiotics on a regular basis. The friendly bacteria only persist in your gut as long as there's a steady supply. So if you don't eat any foods or supplements containing probiotics, after about a month they will be gone.

EMERGING HEALTH BENEFITS

Some of the most exciting research on probiotics involves its potential to boost immunity, according to Allan Walker, a professor of nutrition and pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, who is studying how exposure to good bacteria could help children decrease their susceptibility to infections and allergies.

Probiotics appear to communicate with the cells in our intestines to turn on antibodies to fight infections, Walker said. This "cross-talk" helps rev up our immune response so we're better prepared to deal with invading bacteria and viruses that could make us sick, he said.

Though research is preliminary, scientists are revealing some promising immune function benefits, particularly among children:

Finnish researchers cut in half a baby's risk of developing allergies early in life by giving probiotics to expectant mothers and their newborns who were predisposed to asthma, hay fever and eczema.

A recent study published in Pediatrics found that infants fed formula containing probiotics had less diarrhea and fever, and fewer clinic visits and absences from child care centers, compared to those who consumed a formula without probiotics.

A seven-month study of more than 570 children in day care centers found that intake of a probiotic milk reduced the number and severity of respiratory infections and the need for antibiotics.

Ask ASCII: Why can I not change file extensions?

By Logan Stack
staff writer

Dear ASCII,

Why can I change some file types by changing the extension (a .jpeg picture to a .gif picture), but not other file types (a Word .doc to an Adobe Acrobat .pdf)?
Conversion Error

Dear Conversion,

Changing the file extension doesn't actually change the file. A file extension (the ".doc" at the end of "my_story.doc", or the ".jpeg" at the end of "Pie_in_Bill_Gates_face.jpeg") is just a part of the name of the file; it doesn't actually mean anything. Unfortunately, instead of figuring out what a file really is, Windows just believes whatever the file extension says. It's a lot faster to do it this way, but not very accurate.

So why does changing a .jpeg to a .gif work? When Windows opens both of these file types, it will open them in some sort of image viewer (probably the same one for both types.) When the image viewer opens it, it reads the file and notices that it's a JPEG file and the program knows how to dis-

play a JPEG, so it does. However, when Adobe Acrobat (or any other PDF reader for that matter) opens up a Word document, it doesn't know how to display it, so you get an error.

If you want to actually change file types, the easiest way is to open the file in whatever program can read its current form, and go to "Save As" in the File Menu to save it as a different file type. You choose the file type from a drop-down list that appears in a box just below where you type in the name of your file.

If you can't find the file type you want to convert to in the drop down list, then the program you're using doesn't support converting to that file type. For instance, Word cannot save to a PDF format. In a case like this, you may be able to find another program which understands both types. If no such program exists, you will need to get special converting software, like you do for converting a Word document to PDF.

Do you have a computer question? Then ask ASCII! Send an e-mail to lws118@psu.edu with "Ask ASCII" in the subject line, and you may see your question in next week's paper.

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