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RWU Graduate Wins Tony Award as a Producer of "The Band's Visit"

Charlie Stone, a principal in Evamere Entertainment, graduated in 2007 with a degree in communications and theater



Charlie Stone at the 2018 Tony Awards at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

June 19, 2018 | Edward Fitzpatrick

BRISTOL, R.I. – Roger Williams University alumnus Charlie Stone received a Tony Award on June 10 as a producer of "The Band's Visit," which swept the Radio City Music Hall ceremonies with 10 awards, including best new musical.

Stone, who graduated from RWU in 2007 with a degree in communications and theater, is one of two principals in Evamere Entertainment, which produced the musical about an Egyptian police orchestra stranded for a night in Israel.

"It was pretty wild," Stone said of the show's 10 Tony Awards. "We were in the unusual position of being a smaller show that was perceived as a front-runner this season. We were fairly confident we would do OK, but we weren't expecting this."

Stone said it was very satisfying to see the talented artists who created the show recognized in such a significant way.

"It was a long road to get to this point," he said. "The Tonys can have a tangible impact on the financial side of a show. We had pretty much been holding our breath and hoping for some awards attention since the fall. So it also felt like one big exhale – with a better result than we could have hoped for."

Stone, 33, attended the awards ceremony along with his wife, fellow RWU graduate Rebecca (Cornell) Stone and another RWU theater friend, Adam Maust, who invested in the play.

During his freshman year, Stone met his future wife in a theater design class at the RWU Performing Arts Center (The Barn), and during their sophomore year, they performed in a play called "Time Flies," playing the parts of two mayflies who fall in love.

But their love lasted a lot longer than a mayfly's 24-hour lifespan: They got married six years ago and now live in South Orange, N.J., with their two sons: Lincoln, 3, and Roman, 18 months.

Stone, who grew up in Bernardsville, N.J., said he hadn't decided on a major when he first stepped foot on the Bristol campus. "I spent a lot of time hanging around The Barn," he recalled. "I was interested in theater in high school but wasn't sure I wanted to continue on and thought I needed to get serious."

He ended up performing in about 25 plays on campus, and one of the main highlights of his time at RWU was studying theater in the London Study Abroad Program. "It was just incredible," he said. "We would see a show, a musical, a dance piece almost every night and then meet the next morning to talk about it."

He recalled RWU Professor of Theater Robin Stone: "He was hilarious, with fresh exciting ideas about what theater could and should be." He recalled RWU Professor of Theater Peter Wright (who has since retired): "I remember his cool confidence and knowledge just sort of oozing out of him."

And he recalled the advice that actor Joseph Fiennes offered to a RWU class in London: "He said, 'Don't be an actor unless there is absolutely nothing else in the world you can do.' What he meant was you have to be so passionate for it, you have to live and breathe it – if you don't do monologues in subways for tips, if you don't have that burning passion that you absolutely have to do it – it might eat you up and drive you crazy."

Stone concluded that he lacked the passion and drive needed to be a successful actor. But he was equally certain that he loved theater and film and wanted to be part of a team that creates such performances.

During his senior year at RWU, he landed an internship as a production assistant on the 2007 movie "Evening," which was filmed (in part) in Rhode Island and which included stars such as Meryl Streep, Claire Danes and Vanessa Redgrave. He went on to serve as associate producer for plays such as "Once," which won eight Tony Awards in 2012, and he served as a producer on plays such as "The Glass Menagerie" and "A Bronx Tale: The Musical."

"I hope to keep doing more of this for as long as I can," Stone said. "I just wanted to do something in theater and film, the creative world, and make enough money to be OK. That kind of remains the goal."

He said RWU helped to solidify his passion for theater and film. And he said RWU can help current students prepare to pursue their own interests and passions.

"One piece of advice I took away was that with an undergraduate education at a liberal arts school like Roger Williams, the main goal is to encourage natural curiosity, the ability to teach yourself and to problem-solve," Stone said. "As long as you're pushing your comfort zone and still learning, you're probably on the right track."

"The Band's Visit" opened at Broadway's Ethel Barrymore Theatre, in New York City, in November 2017. The North American tour of "The Band's Visit" will launch in Providence, R.I., in June 2019. Exact dates and additional cities will be announced at a later date.

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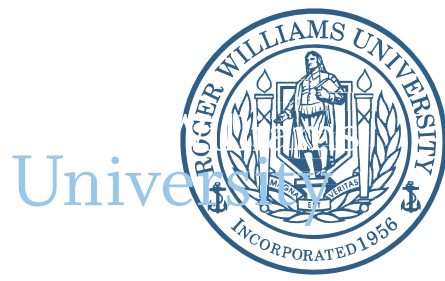
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