

Tim McDonald

Advice He Still Follows: Musical theater became a career because I have parents who always told me “Follow your passion – remember, there are doctors and lawyers who are out of work.”

On His Bookshelf: I love Roald Dahl anything, and I’m a huge Anne Rice fan. I’m also addicted to Lemony Snicketts and the Artemis Fowl series.

Quit Your Day Job: I worked as a sawdust sweeper and a lumber grader. These jobs were both great motivators to go to college!

Taking the Show on the Road: When I was at MTI Education, I saw a “My Child is a Broadway Junior Star” bumper sticker on a minivan in Lewisville, Texas. It was pretty outstanding, because it made it clear that our Broadway Junior division had grown into something with impact beyond the isle of Manhattan.

Write Place, Write Time: I do my best writing early in the morning. The place doesn’t matter. Of course I’d like to be writing while overlooking a gorgeous beach or mountainscape. But let’s face it, if you’re staring at the mountains, you’re probably not writing much.

Staying Positive: On days when I’m not feeling the mojo, I remember the energy the kids and teachers exuded during The Junior Theater Festivals. It’s better than the Energizer bunny!

These Teachers Get Gold Stars: I’m dyslexic and really hated reading until my third grade teacher, Mrs. Spencer, introduced me to reading via Roald Dahl.

Mrs. Bowman, my choir teacher in middle school, taught me self-worth and instilled a love of choral music and performing that I still carry with me.

I had two great professors in college: Gwen Curatilo, who introduced me to opera and instilled in me a love for culture and civility, and Dr. Sharon Paul, who taught me how to be charming and lead with grace.

Getcha Head in the Game: There was a middle school musical in Charlotte that was directed by the Phys Ed teacher. He ran his rehearsals like basketball practice! It made me realize how close athletics and the arts are, and that there are some sport techniques that work very nicely in a theatrical setting and vice versa.

First Things First: I see no reason to get out of bed unless I’m going to try,

in some way, to make the day ahead of me better than the day before.

Giving Your All: I'm impressed by anyone in politics: blue state or red state. The sacrifices one has to make in order to guide and lead are rarely fun. I also look up to anyone who serves on the hundreds of thousands of our nation's volunteer boards. They are the backbone of philanthropy.

Rocks Out To: Anything from the 80s. I am also fond of the band They Might Be Giants.

Budget Directing: Whatever resources you have – whether they are time, money, or people – manage them well. Delegate with grace. Embrace some tough-love techniques.

Excused From His Rehearsal: Anyone who uses the word “can't.” It shouldn't be in the vocabulary.

Working Within Someone Else's Constraints: Adapting an existing piece into a format suitable for students can sometimes be more difficult than writing a new musical from scratch. It certainly informed me as a writer by forcing me to analyze the structure of really well-crafted musicals. When you start with someone else's work, you have to understand why certain things are there, without the benefit of being there for the birth. For example, is this song completely necessary to the show or was it written to cover a quick costume change? You have to respect the architecture of the piece and figure out the creators' intentions. Starting from scratch is also hugely challenging, but in many ways it can be a bit easier. Is that scene shift not working? No problem, we'll write a scene to cover it!

Dealing With Writer's Block: Roald Dahl has a great technique that I use all the time. He would write until he knew exactly what was going to come next and then walk away. When he returned, he knew exactly what he needed to write; he wasn't trying to think of something new.

Flowers Aren't Just for Opening Night: I'm madly addicted to gardening. It's getting worse.

Winning the Golden Ticket: Seeing the first performance of *Willy Wonka* at the Kennedy Center was the culmination of 30 years of dreaming. It was truly joyful to hear an audience laugh at lines I had written.