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Alumna Gets Front Seat to Regional Theater Awarded a Tony

May 3, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Chicago may be miles away from the Great White Way, but Illinois Wesleyan University alumna Marti Lyons learned on Tuesday that Tony can still come calling to the Windy City.

The 2008 alumna and theater major is the literary manager and dramaturg for the Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago, which was bestowed a Tony Award® for Regional Theatre. The Tony was announced Tuesday morning, along with the **Tony nominations** for Broadway shows.

“Everyone here is ecstatic. There’s no other way to put it,” said Lyons, who has worked for the theater since August of 2010. “There is such a value on collaborative work here, and respect for each other’s work, that it really feels as though we can all celebrate.”

This isn’t the first Tony-award winning regional theater for which Lyons has worked. In the past, she has worked with the Steppenwolf Theatre and the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where she was an assistant director for a production of *As You Like It* last year. She remains active in directing, taking the helm of the Chicago premiere of José Rivera’s *Brainpeople* last November for the Urban Theater Company in Chicago.



Marti Lyons '08 (left) with another worker from the Lookingglass Theatre.



The Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago

The work has left her little time for the **Tooth and Nail Ensemble**, a group of Illinois Wesleyan graduates who performed together in 2009. “We’re all so busy, it’s tough to find another project together,” said Lyons, adding with a laugh, “It’s a lucky problem to have.”

Lyons said her studies at Illinois Wesleyan served her well for her current job at Lookingglass. As dramaturg, Lyons is responsible for gathering the background contextual research for each script, helping to put together everything from lobby displays to 100-page packets for the actors. “The background information comes in handy in so many ways I hadn’t imagined,” said Lyons. “It can help an actor understand a time period or

work of literature, or add to the work the costume designers have assembled. Thanks to Illinois Wesleyan, I have a good background in history and English literature that carries on every time I crack open an old book and explore another time.”

The Tonys will be handed out in June, and Lyons said she will be watching from her dorm room in New York, where she will be attending the Lincoln Center Directors Lab. “This was a complete surprise to all of us,” said Lyons. “I’m glad I could be part of it.”

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