

Puzzle pieces and memories.

Chayton's Newsletter January 2023

Starting this past summer, I worked full-time for Stacey Abrams and her gubernatorial campaign. This race and this work was beautiful and utterly exhausting.

For two seasons my life was a blur-I met so many wonderful people, all together for a common goal and mission of positive change for my home state. We underwent massive voter outreach, broke early voting turnout records and we uplifted Georgians who had never before been asked to use their voice. We worked everyday to create generational change and set the foundation for a future we dreamed of.

And on the night of November 8th, we lost.

In the weeks after, I doubted whether it was worth it-I put my acting career on pause for a political dream that didn't happen. I stepped away from the art-form I've sworn my life to again and again. After everything, I was back where I started.

Then, for Christmas, I was given a puzzle.

My sister wanted to give me something unique as a recollection of my time on the campaign. So, she had this gorgeous 500+ piece photo collage printed and cut by a jigsaw.

The pictures are some of the most memorable for me throughout the campaign, meeting President Obama and Lin-Manuel Miranda, marching in Atlanta Pride, and some great shots of me and Stacey together on the campaign trail.

My favorite picture, however, is one taken on Election night, 11:04pm. I'm standing in a purple blazer in front of a floral sign bearing my candidate's name. The results haven't been officially announced yet, but we all know in a few minutes my candidate will stand on that stage and deliver her concession speech.

I love that photo because in it I'm smiling and I'm crying too. I know that this beautiful wild journey that took a third of my year is over, and I know that we lost. In spite of this, I am so damn proud of the work that we did.

I've finally started to put the memories back together and recognize the full picture of myself.

I am an actor. I am an artist who cares.

In many ways 2022 was a success. I said my first lines in a movie! My on-screen debut was in Off The Rails Productions' feature film, Jesse's Gift (released later this year). And I was privileged to play Orlando in Rome Shakespeare Festival's production of AS YOU LIKE IT.

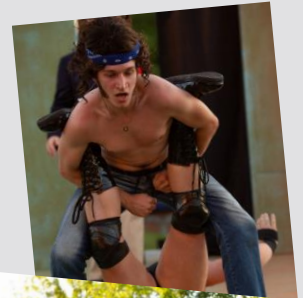
There exists a special magic in taking this artform and stripping it of pay-walls and power structures, and that was what I loved most about this production. We made theatre for the public: free live performance in the middle of a city park. We performed to a loud (and sometimes bawdy) audience in June's summer heat. One night a hot, wet storm chose to speak truth to words and join the acting company. Another evening, a hungry falcon upstaged our warmer by landing itself squarely in the audience. Beautiful unpredictability in ephemerality.

This past year, I had my first professional headshot appointment here in Atlanta. I'm still so happy with how they turned out, I've been sending them everywhere. Those pictures put me in talks with multiple agencies here in the Southeast, and I hope this year they will bring me representation for both NY and LA.

Finally, this year I met my partner. Time with him has flown by in a way I thought was reserved for YA novels or old love songs. I'm incredibly happy. This week, we went to see HadesTown at the fabulous Fox Theater here in Atlanta. The show has changed in too many ways since I first skipped my Junior Prom and AP tests to see New York Theatre Workshop's world premiere. I suppose we all have changed in the past seven years.

Auld lang syne.

As for where I am now? Sitting at the same desk I was last year, blinking too quickly at a year that passed too suddenly, but I'm hopeful for 2023. My friends and I have made commitments to honor our creative processes. This is often as simple as just following up on ideas and pursuing our impulses (read: lots of phone calls and sticky notes). And it works. I will create more this year.



Thank you everyone who helped create my 2022. Bless you all.

To all you I've known, and to all those I've yet to meet, Happy New Year!

All my heart,
Chayton



Keep in touch!

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