

Students and community members find magic on London theater tour



Thirteen travelers on eight tours enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

If you spot Kira Renkas on campus with a faraway look in her eyes, her thoughts might have drifted to the Globe Theater. Or perhaps she's picturing herself walking out of her hotel onto the streets of London. Or maybe she's just thinking once again of the big world beyond Waukesha.

The 20-year-old [University of Wisconsin-Waukesha](#) [1] student was one of 13 travelers participating in [Continuing Education's](#) [2] nine-day London theater tour in January 2012. The large impact the experience has had on her is difficult to explain but undeniable, Kira says.

"I think about London every day, all the time, and I even dream about it still," she admits. "I really love and cherish every moment of it."

The trip, for which participants could earn one to three course credits through Continuing Education, was led by Steve and Candy Decker Jan. 2 to 11, 2012. It featured eight tours including the Tower of London, the British Museum and Millennium Dome, seven performances including "Blood Brothers," "Billy Elliot" and "Woman in Black," two interactive workshops at the Fortune and Globe theaters and many more activities.

Kira, who has performed in plays at UW-Waukesha and in the Windy Hill Vocal Jazz Ensemble, transferred to UW-Milwaukee in fall 2012 to pursue a bachelor of fine arts degree in acting. An interest in British culture along with her acting aspirations led her to sign up for the trip. Her expectations were more than fulfilled.

"It revealed to me that there is so much more out there than this little place we call Waukesha," she says. "There are real people there, just not the huge collective mass that we occasionally read about in the newspaper."

Kira has already talked of making a return trip to London with one of her fellow travelers, Ryan Cappleman, a former UW-Waukesha student who graduated in December 2011 from UW-Milwaukee with a BFA in inter-arts musical theater performance.

The experience in London offered him the chance to greatly expand his knowledge of theater and acting, Ryan says.

"I've seen a lot of theater, many shows on Broadway, and though I love New York and Broadway,

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London is the mecca for theater," he says. "The performances were so honest, believable and really took the audience on a journey. I was moved by every performance. I've set new goals with my life just from going on this trip."

Another traveler, Amy Overby, is a mid-career professional who works in fundraising for a Madison-based nonprofit organization. Like others on the trip, Amy praises the quality of interaction among those on the trip.

"I loved the mix of 'traditionally-aged' students and adults of many ages," she says. "I enjoyed hearing the perspectives and knowledge of everyone including Steve and Candy's experiences."

Steve says Continuing Education's role in organizing educational-based trips is very important.

"You're promoting a lifelong engagement," he says. "Don't be satisfied, keep trying new things. Keep exploring your life."

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