

SETTING THE STAGE

Former East student Elliott Daggett is enrolled in the University of North Carolina's School of Arts to pursue dance

DANCING through the decade

A gallery of photos from Elliott's past shows



MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, AGE 17



YAGP, AGE 13



THE NUTCRACKER, AGE 11

From the very first applause that echoed throughout the Kauffman Center during then-fourth-grade Elliott Daggett's Nutcracker performance, something clicked. The spotlights, the applause, the energy — it all combined into an undeniable realization as he danced around the stage dressed up like party boy: performing was what he wanted to do.

"Hearing the applause on stage for the first time is something that blew me away," Elliott said. "That was the moment I was like, 'This is what I want to do, this is what I'm meant to do.'"

After that moment, he started dedicating all of his time to his craft. Classes ramped up to five days and 25 hours a week, he chose to say goodbye to his other sports — baseball and soccer — to fully embrace dance.

But this was a trade-off he was willing to accept. According to his father Mark, what Elliott loved the most about dancing was the physical storytelling aspect. Over time, now-senior Elliott has

shifted away from taking strictly ballet classes and involved himself in other types of performing, like acting and singing.

Mark noticed that Elliott was interested in theatre when their family went to see Kansas City Repertory Theater's "Around the World in 80 Days" when he was in kindergarten.

"The lady in front of us was sort of rolling her eyes at the idea of sitting in front of a kindergartener," Mark said. "But [Elliott] was completely obsessed with the show going on in front of him. And I think at that moment, I was like, 'Oh, he gets this at a much deeper level.'"

As he involved himself more in theater, Elliott was performing with seasoned actors in shows like "The Wizard of Oz" with Starlight Theatre and "Christmas Carol" with KC Rep when he was in middle school.

Suited up as a petite, well-dressed "Wizard of Oz" munchkin, Elliot realized he wasn't completely immersing himself into his characters. It was while observing an actor portray the scarecrow effortlessly that Elliott recognized an opportunity to learn authenticity

from the performance he was witnessing.

"Being able to sit there and watch him in the way he acted, it just felt so fluid and natural," Elliott said. "I was able to use him as a foundation, something to compare myself to, to make sure that I was performing in a way that the audience truly believed me. Over time, I kind of turned it into my own thing."

Eventually Elliott's approach to embodying characters evolved from simply putting on a costume to fully inhabiting the character. This evolution was particularly evident when he tackled the role of Angel as a junior, a flamboyant drag queen in the show "Rent" with Spinning Tree Theatre.

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MARK DAGGETT
FATHER

For Elliott, Angel was uncharted territory — a character far removed from his own reality. After numerous rewatches of the movie "Rent" and working with his directors, Elliott learned how to leave himself and his mannerisms behind while playing another character.

"If he wasn't totally committed to the role, then it'll just look like Elliott onstage wearing makeup and dresses," Mark said. "This character was the furthest thing from Elliott, but he really gave himself fully to that role."

Now, Elliott is completing his senior year of high school at University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Since there are no performing arts high schools in Kansas, UNCASA was the next step in furthering his performing career.

Along with taking normal classes like math and english, he will work among college students who attend the school and faculty members who have worked in the performing industry.

Out of around 500 applicants, only 20 were accepted — Elliott being one of the few lucky ones.

Since he is a triple threat — actor, singer and dancer — he believes this earned him a spot into the highly competitive program.

"I'm just really here to learn and absorb all that I can," Elliott said. "I hope to pick and choose what works for me and apply it to myself moving forward."