

Trailblazer: Lauren Barton '13

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When Lauren Barton quietly delivers the play's last line, "I love you, too," the whole drama is upended. Her character's steely will, which has flashed off and on throughout this one-act drama about bulimia, has now faced down her disease. Not with anger, but with insight.

As she exits, we're pretty sure she'll make it. She will get out of rehab and live. But we suspect that her cheerful, insatiable, and monstrous boyfriend/disease, aka, "Ed," played masterfully by Jon Constable '13, probably won't.

From the moment Barton steps onto stage until delivering that final line, her performance is electrifying, vulnerable, and true.

The play, "A Love Story" by Jessica Miller '13, is one of three one-acts featured in this year's Undergraduate Prize Plays (UPPs). The UPPs, produced this year thanks to the sponsorship of Professor John Edwards and renowned alumnus, Mike O'Malley of *Yes, Dear* and *Glee*, are completely student-produced.

"The play's a roller coaster," says Barton, "But it's been a wonderful experience."

Barton came to UNH from Florida on a swim scholarship to be on the dive team. Already she had achieved a stellar championship athletic background along with a matching academic performance. But after a year at UNH, she just wanted to focus on what really mattered to her—theatre and theatre education.

Barton really connected with Associate Professor Raina Ames, whose specialty is theatre education. "Raina really supported and inspired me," says Barton.

And then, Barton took Acting II with Professor David Kaye. "People said, 'you have to take Acting II with Kaye. It will change your life.' So, I did. And it did."

What she identifies with is Kaye's passion for theatre. "Recently he called and asked me to help out with WildACTS [a student-run social justice theatre troupe]," says Barton.

Clearly a pressure-player, Barton just stepped in. As she puts it: “In theatre, the answer is always yes—‘You need a purple elephant by 6 p.m.? Can do.’”

Still her passion for acting also stems from her love of teaching. “I come from a family of teachers,” she says. “I’ve seen how rewarding it is. For a teacher, it’s always those small moments like when someone who is ordinarily shy and nervous will volunteer to participate... Moments like that are so worthwhile for me.”

Her theatrical imagination is already engaged in teaching. For example, she can quickly translate *Spoon River Anthology*, which she acted in this past year, into a high school production. “I had eight monologues, but actually there are sixty acting parts,” says Barton. “So lots of students could be in the production.”

Barton plans to pursue a graduate degree in theatre education and then a job teaching high school. During the summers, she’ll be acting.

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