Reagan Chesnut ‘08 is onstage as a student as country of green valleys and leprechauns. to which she’d been accustomed, and it also be a departure from the lighthearted theatre winning play by Irish playwright Martin the family’s heart was their Irish heritage. numerous plays and musicals. Also close to singing group, she’d accompanied him to a vocational path.

meld her passions for theatre and Ireland into she had a specific goal in mind: to being a co-director carried with it more everyone, especially to the younger actors who venture and communicating that idea to without Reagan,” said Professor Tammi. “I’ve never had a student who worked so closely with us go on to continue pursuing her interests the way Reagan has,” said Professor Tammi. “As a Hope student, she was always serious and grounded and took a lot of initiative, and, because of our liberal arts approach, we were in a position to encourage her in her goals.

As a student, she took advantage of every opportunity to nurture her interest in Irish theatre, discovering in Hope a community that helped her personalize her education around her passion.

“Being able to stay everything I did toward Irish drama has prepared me very well for grad school, because it made me very strong in a particular area,” she said. “The faculty strongly encourage students to strike out and find their own paths and help to cultivate students’ interests in whatever ways they can.”

During her junior year, Chesnut collaborated with theatre professor John K.V. Tammi on an independent study course about Irish drama. The same year, she joined his May Term in Ireland, touring the country and learning about Irish culture. Later that summer, she took a course at Queen’s University in Belfast on Northern Ireland’s history, politics, and culture.

Upon returning to Hope to begin her senior year, Chesnut undertook a major project: co-directing with Tammi a main-stage production of By the Bag of Cats, a play by Irish playwright Marina Carr. Chesnut had read the script two years earlier on the recommendation of theatre professor Dr. Damia Rohner, who knew of her fascination with Irish drama. Captivated by the play, Chesnut proposed to Professor Tammi that he direct the play at Hope that fall. He agreed on the condition she be assistant director. Only a few weeks into preparations, though, he promoted her to co-director.

“I couldn’t have done the production without you by my side,” said Tammi.

“Collaborating with faculty on a director I could chime in and give my opinions and thoughts far more freely,” Chesnut explained. “As a Hope student, she was one of the ways they could have shared the same vision, and that was amazing – it really prepared you for the real world.”

Chesnut spent her last semester taking classes on Irish history and drama at Trinity College, where she is currently pursuing her master’s. One highlight of the past year is that Carr, who wrote By the Bag of Cats, has been teaching at Trinity. In fact, she led a playwriting course Chesnut took that included a trip to London to see the premiere of her play The Cordelia Dream.

As Chesnut looks to the future, she hopes to teach playwriting hereafter after earning her Ph.D. For now, though, she’s focused on completing her master’s degree. Recently, she submitted for an assessment a full-length play titled Aye, which tells the story of a couple eloping out their relational problems whilst caught in an ice storm in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

Although I’m happy where I am, I’ve really missed Michigan and Hope and my mentors there,” Chesnut admits, “and that’s manifested itself very strongly in my creative work.”

As she continues to make her art and interests, Chesnut demonstrates the same focus and vision that marked and shaped her time at Hope. Professor Tammi, in turn, is pleased that the opportunities available at Hope helped prepare her for the journey.

“I’m always happy where I am. I’ve been happy here,” Chesnut said. “I care about it, and I care about making it a cooperative venture and communicating that idea to everyone, especially to the younger actors who had never been part of a project like it before.”

While Chesnut had worked previously as a stage manager and completed an internship with the Hope Summer Repertory Theatre, being a co-director carried with it more prestige and responsibility.

“When I think about the knowledge I gained in classes and the great drama faculty who gave me gems of wisdom from their own careers, I can’t imagine how my life would have been different had I not gone to Hope,” she said. “I can’t imagine how my life would have been different had I not gone to Hope.”

“I was the one who initiated it, so she had ownership simply because of that. She was also very good about making it a collaborative venture and communicating that idea to everyone, especially to the younger actors who had never been part of a project like it before.”

Although I’ve never been a student who worked so closely with us go on to continue pursuing her interests the way Reagan has,” said Professor Tammi. “As a Hope student, she was always serious and grounded and took a lot of initiative, and, because of our liberal arts approach, we were in a position to encourage her in her goals.”

As a Hope student, Reagan Chesnut ‘08 had the opportunity to co-direct the college’s production of By the Bag of Cats by playwright Marina Carr, pictured at right. This year Carr has been among her instructors during her graduate work at Trinity College.