Following in Big Footsteps
Actor. Writer. Director. Producer. Teacher. John Plough ’05 is a man of many talents who found his calling, and a mentor, at Assumption College.

“Brian Tivnan is the kind of teacher I hope to be one day,” Plough says. “He uses theatre as an elaborate ruse. On the one hand he cultivates acting skills in his students, and brings exciting stories to life on stage. But on the other hand – and this, I would argue, is much more vital – he supports his students as they build confidence and communication skills.

“He builds community on campus. And he insists that the unique experiences of each and every one of his students is important, interesting and worthy to be shared. That’s the kind of artist/educator I strive to become.”

The son of Tom Plough, who served as Assumption’s president from 1998 to 2007, John chose to attend Assumption because it allowed him to have “real ownership” of his education. He majored in electronic communication and multimedia, an individualized academic program that the faculty helped him shape.

“John Plough was one of the most talented students I’ve ever had at Assumption,” says Tivnan, who has seen hundreds of aspiring performers, writers and directors in his 11 years as director of Assumption’s Theatre program.

“I learned so much at Assumption,” says Plough, “But I think the most valuable experiences were the opportunities to create so consistently. In both my theatre and television courses I was given the freedom to write, record, design, and rehearse – every week. It’s incredibly empowering to learn and build your skills using self-generated material.”

After graduating from Assumption, Plough dabbled in television and film production, acting and education, before ultimately deciding on the latter. “I’ve always wanted to become a better teacher as much as I have wanted to become a better artist,” Plough explains. “I’ve sought out opportunities to experience a variety of teaching modes and models – both out of intellectual curiosity and a desire to figure out where I fit best.”

Plough earned a MA in theatre education at Emerson College in Boston, and then applied to the University of Georgia for a Master of Fine Arts degree. While there, he was awarded three grants to finance his own projects: a film (which he both wrote and directed), a play and a multimedia stage performance. He is completing his master’s thesis this summer to graduate from Georgia, and will begin teaching theatre to middle and high school students at the Darlington School in Rome, GA, this fall.

“I’ll be able to do a bit of everything [at Darlington]. I’m so excited to get started, and so grateful to get a job teaching in the arts in the current economic climate. I’ll continue writing screenplays … mostly buddy comedies starring me and Will Ferrell,” he jokes.

“One of the exciting parts about the performing arts is the inability to master the content,” he says. “The skill sets are too vast, and one can always improve. I’ll always be looking for professional development opportunities and projects outside of teaching to keep creatively challenged.”

Plough also looks forward to the continuing challenge of honing his teaching skills. “Assumption gave me a front row seat to watch great teachers teaching,” he states. “The faculty members I interacted with were selfless, talented and incredibly generous. I’m a better teacher today because of them.”

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