A proposal by Sam Alper to direct:

THE SOUND

[a play by Sam Alper]
310-963-4034
THE STORY

Two brothers [Lyle and Lyle 2] and their cousin Chris are on their way to stay with their mysterious uncle Claude for the summer at his mansion in North Dakota. Their parents have all recently died, their mothers in car crashes and their fathers from heart attacks. On arriving they meet Creature, their uncle’s strange, animal like assistant, his question-averse daughter Laurel and find a lot of pieces of wood that look suspiciously like wands lying around the house. That night Laurel and Lyle start up a flirtation [she’s adopted]. Claude watches them, while working on magical potions and getting high with Creature. In the morning the boys confront Claude with their suspicion that he is a wizard. Claude admits that he is, but his annoyance with their subsequent questioning leads him to remove himself, casting a spell that takes him out of the play and into the theater, allowing him to talk to the audience. He vents. When he comes back Lyle asks him about his suspicion that, because they are a family of wizards, their parents deaths might not have been accidents. Claude gives them a tip, telling them that a witch in town might have had something to do with it. Back in their room, the boys fight about whether or not to go after her. Lyle 2 decides to hang back and Chris and Lyle go after her. Lyle 2 discovers Claude’s talk-to-the-audience spell and also starts a flirtation with a strange woman, Joan 2, who he meets deep in the mansion. When she starts calling him Claude and biting him he casts the spell and removes himself to the theater. In town, Lyle and Chris confront the witch, Joan, who turns out to be Claude’s ex-wife [and she looks exactly like Joan 2]. Lyle refuses to believe her when she says she had nothing to do with their parents’ deaths and gets into a fight with her boyfriend, Eric. Things are getting out of hand and Chris casts the spell, taking all of them out of the play. They are shocked and confused, but Lyle 2, having been hanging out in the theater by himself, is there to guide them safely back. In the end the accidents were just accidents and the magic turned out not to make life very magical. Lyle and Chris decide to go back to school. Lyle 2, who has a natural aptitude for wizard work and no other interests, gets a recommendation for a wizard school from Claude. And Claude decides to try a spell he’s been working on that will allow him to leave this life, which he is now all too painfully aware is a play. He disappears. Just like magic.

Note: The plot looks really wacky when you write it out like this. Don’t let it scare you. It doesn’t scare me. The play is partially about the artificiality of fantasy narratives.
WHAT I'M TRYING TO COMMUNICATE

This production is all about fantasy. At the heart of the fantasy genre is a dream of ease and belonging. We read it when we want to indulge the fantasy that life is not only more magical than it seems, but also simpler. In the real world we spend years figuring out what to do with our lives, doubting ourselves, trying to translate our general passions into specific activities, never knowing if we are improving ourselves or just swimming in place. In fantasy worlds our progress in life is measurable. We learn new spells, save kingdoms, gain treasures. Villains and monsters personify every niggling inconvenience and random piece of bad luck in our lives, and we slay them! In fantasy we have a mission, a set of spells and maybe a faithful companion or two. I love fantasy and I want to share the joy of participating in a fantasy universe. However, I also want to confront that it does not tell us the truth. THE SOUND is an attempt to talk about the desires fantasy plays to, without simply giving in and satisfying them. It is non-escapist fantasy, giving with one hand and taking with the other. I believe a key part of growing up is confronting our fantasies of what adult life was going to be. Hopefully THE SOUND makes feel less alone in this struggle and reminds them that we are all trying just trying to bridge the gap between the world we live in and the fantasy world in our heads.
This play could be called a comedy, or a dramedy, or an existential tragedy. I prefer not to call it any of these things. It’s just a play, with funny parts and angry parts and sad parts and romantic parts all sitting side by side. Like the play, my process will be a hodgepodge of techniques I’ve learned from other people (Kym Moore, Kerry Whigham, Jess Goldschmidt, Sophie Shackleton, Dan Rogers, to name a few) mixed with discoveries of my own. The process will begin with breath work and contact reads, doing close scene work to get the actors present and communicating each other, organically discovering their blocking, relationships and objectives. As we continue to work I will start to shape the piece with very specific physical direction (clean head turns and double takes, for example. I’m big on the precise timing and physicality of sketch comedy). I also will start working designers as early as possible, so that the design elements can be extra tools that the actors work with from early on, not surprises late in the process. Every day will start off with some breathing and spine curling up and down, a short physical improv (Skip Around The Space or Follow Me Follow Me, followed by some guided imagery/imagination play). I will also include some group bonding games in the first few days of the process. Everyone will write and cast their own magical spells, talk about their experiences with fantasy, and make up their own magical world.

I will draw up specific rehearsal schedules depending on which slot I get, but to speak generally:

**Week one** will be a mix of full cast reads, simultaneous contact reads supervised by me and my AD, and individual scene work. Creature and Joan 2 will start working with Lizzie on the physicality of their performances early in order to give them time to develop ways of moving that are unique to them. With all the actors I will try to tailor their parts and my direction to the specific performer, emphasizing their natural strengths. **Week two** will be more individual scene work, in which I take in the blocking the actors have discovered together and shape it, keeping what works and finding solutions for what doesn’t. **Week three** will be the beginning of runs and tech, stopping to work moments that remain vague or messy. **Week four** is runs, tech and show.
WHY NOW, AT BROWN?
I first started writing a version of this play called ELDRITCH in Lisa D’Amour’s Music playwriting workshop last year. The Indy then published an excerpt from the play later that semester. So the play has a history here and it came out of my participation in the Brown writing community. I think it’s always great when writing produced at Brown is actually produced at Brown.

I also think we’re nearing the end of the fantasy moment in pop culture. We’re waiting on the final two Harry Potter films and the books have run their course. We’re mid-run on the Narnia films. Vampires and werewolves are beginning to “eclipse” the wizards. We’re in the “twilight” of our magical day. Right now Brown is full of people who grew up with wizards and this is the perfect moment to look back at what they meant to us, and what they continue to mean. There is a visceral connection to this content that I have faith will bring people into the theater in large numbers, ready to engage with a genre that was a shared pop culture experience for us in a way few other things were.

In terms of roles, this is a play written to be performed by people our age. The only two characters not of college age are magically frozen looking like they did in their early twenties. I think it’s exciting for actors at Brown to play parts for which they are the ideal candidates. If this play were being done professionally, the Brown acting community would still be the ideal one to audition. That doesn’t happen all that often here. I am also currently running a SPACE workshop on sci fi and fantasy world building, so there’s some nice synergy there for me.

WAY PW?
Directing a full length for the first time is a big challenge. That it is my own play makes the challenge even larger. It is a challenge I am very excited and ready to take on, but I want to do it at home, at PW. I have participated in PW, given to PW, loved PW since freshman year and I want to take my first steps as a director, and as a writer/director, here. I’m not saying this in order to make the board feel that I have some special right to do this show. I don’t. I have as much or as little right as anyone else at Brown, that’s what makes PW so baller. Rather I say this to let you know that I can do this show better here than I could anywhere else. PW makes me my best self, teaches me how to be my best self. PW is a home and a family to me and I want to take these first baby-steps on the writer/director path (a path I’ve been moving toward for a long time) where there are people to catch me if I fall and warn me when I’m about to bump into a wall.

Also, the show is meta-theatrical; it takes place on a set in a black box theater. All the magic, save the last trick, is meant to look rag-tag. The play is in part a conversation about making Rag-tag Theater. You know who else makes Rag-tag Theater? PW!

Clarification: I don’t mean rag-tag in terms of poorly produced, I mean rag-tag in terms of creative, exciting and economically produced. The joy of live theater can too easily disappear under layers of polish and funding. The restrictions that working with the resources of student theater can be viewed as an advantage, an invitation to make inventive work, to surprise yourself with the solutions you find to bridge the gap between vision and realization, between fantasy and reality.
LEADER
(My role as)

THE SOUND is a play I’m excited to explore as a director and to learn about as a writer. I am not a playwright who thinks they have all the answers about their own work, I don’t. That’s why I want to see what it becomes in production rather than just read it aloud to myself. I feel confident that I can navigate the duality successfully. I’ve been thinking a lot about the idea of the writer/director, looking at examples like Young Jean Lee, and it very well may be something I want to continue doing after Brown. My interest in both sides of the process is too strong to not want to see what happens when I mix them. And it has its advantages, such as being able to just change a line if it’s really not working. That’s nice.

[For more about rewrites, see my note on rewrites at the end of the design section.]

I do have some trepidation about the production. I have never directed a full-length play before. I have never been present for the production of a full-length play I wrote (THE SOUND is the only full length of mine to receive production and, as I’ve mentioned, I was in Buenos Aires). These are scary things, but also things I can’t wait to do. Directing in the downspace is a huge amount of work. But I will do the work. I will do the work I have to do and then the work I know I could get away with not doing. I get very focused when I am responsible for putting on a show. As the leader of the project I will consider it my responsibility to communicate what I see and want to my actors and designers and staff, and create an environment where they are comfortable communicating how things look from their end. I see it as my duty to help build the ensemble and get the cast and designers thinking as teams whose success depends on working together. And lastly, it will be my job as leader to make sure that everything gets done in a timely fashion and that rehearsals are efficient. Balancing keeping a tight ship with fostering a space where the cast feels comfortable experimenting and pushing themselves requires me to be the most present person in the room. Every once in a while, directing Orlando I have caught myself getting lost in my thoughts about the piece and what I want it to be rather than focusing on the actors. Whenever this happens I make myself snap back into the present moment and focus on what is actually happening in the room. If I am going to ask my actors to be present, I need to be so myself.
I am hugely excited to work with designers, both those I already have on board, and those who are soon to be discovered. I have a concept for this play that I’ve been calling **integrated design**. I want all my designers to be working closely together. I am planning on having all my designers over for dinner before the process starts and fostering a discussion on how the different design elements of the show can be developed to complement each other. I want the set to be constructed so that it interacts strongly with the lighting and vice versa [a good example to think of is Dan Rogers’ production of RECKLESS a couple years ago. Alana Jacoby’s color block lighting on the white back wall and set felt very integrated to me]. I want the costumes to suit the space and the lighting to bring out hidden qualities of the material. I want the sound and lighting to work together cinematically, emphasizing each other. I know by giving this concept a fancy name I may seem like I think no one has ever thought of this before. And I know people have, all shows integrate their design to some degree. But by giving this mission a name and emphasizing it from day one I’m hoping to create a climate where designers collaborate creatively with each other as much as they do with me.

I will also be meeting individually with designers, of course. I expect to be surprised and challenged by my designers’ vision for the play, and I expect them to feel the same way about me and I expect us to put our visions together and make them mate and have a baby vision which has qualities of both its vision parents but is ultimately its own wonderful vision being.

**The Sound is Enticing**

Hopefully the idea of integrated design is enticing. Also, I have my own preliminary ideas for the design of the play, but am also planning on altering them or even throwing them out when my designers are bringing exciting ideas of their own to the table. So I think that mixture of freedom and guidance is enticing.

I have some initial ideas for the design of the show. These are them:
LIGHTS
Strong choices, judiciously employed. The moonlight in the nighttime conversation scenes should be sharp and cold and bright. The sunlight on the initial car trip should be dreamy and summery. I’ve been thinking about practicals too, unexpected things glowing in the workshop. I’m super excited to have Megan onboard, and though we have not had a chance to meet much yet, I know she will bring a lot to the table.

SOUND
I’m interested in having a score, or maybe live music. It all depends on whom I get to do it. But at the moment I’m not very interested in a pastiche of popular songs playing between scenes. It feels distracting.

SET
The stage could easily be left very bare, with only some moveable furniture, which would be whisked off in the moments when characters step outside of the play. However, I’ve also thought a lot about a raised stage and some platforms, creating a more detailed space for the mansion, car trip and Joan’s house. Duv could drop in front of it whenever characters step out, or the action could simply freeze.

COSTUMES
Claude’s suit should be as nice as possible. I want everyone’s suit looking good except for Lyle 2s. For Joan 2 I’m interested in the way costume works with the wife in Solaris (an awesome movie by Andrei Tarkovsky). In Solaris a man’s wife comes back as a sort of clone/projection of his memories, and her clothing is the same with small differences, no zipper, a hole somewhere, a slight difference in color. I like the idea of small eerie differences in Joan and Joan 2’s outfits. There are a lot of possibilities for Creature, and I will flip through some of my Dunes as and Dragons monster manuals for inspiration with Kirstin or possibly Alex, if he signs on.

PROPS
I want the magical items to look very magical. The sword, the bag of herbs, the cauldron, the godseye. The fantasy world needs to fill rich and seductive, so that it matters when we take it away. Just like everyone else, I’ve been thinking a bit about David Cromer’s Our Town.

NOTE ON REWRITES
I plan on doing some rewrites, but that these will be finished before rehearsals begin. In the case of 1st slot, that means by November 9th, and in the case of 2nd, by January 17th.
DESIGNER/STAFF TABLE

Brackets [ ] indicate that someone is not yet confirmed but has expressed interest. Unbracketed names are confirmed.

Although I have included no assistant positions on the table, I intend to get as many as I can. Let’s bring some new young people into the theater, or old people into new parts of the theater.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIGNERS / STAFF</th>
<th>1st Slot</th>
<th>2nd Slot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Abby Colella ‘12</td>
<td>Miriam Joelsson ‘11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Manager</td>
<td>[Helen Diagama]</td>
<td>James Flynn ‘11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting Designer</td>
<td>Megan Estes ‘12</td>
<td>Megan Estes ‘12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sound Designer</td>
<td>[Doug Poole ‘11]</td>
<td>[Caleb Townsend ‘11]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set Designer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adam Wyron ‘13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costume Designer</td>
<td>Kirstin Purtich ‘12</td>
<td>[Alex Crane ‘12]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Props Designer</td>
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<td>Technical Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master Electrician</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dramaturges</td>
<td>Max Posner ’11 / Justin Kuritzkes ‘12</td>
<td>Max Posner ’11 / Justin Kuritzkes ‘12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement Coach</td>
<td>Lizzie Feidelson’11.5</td>
<td>Lizzie Feidelson’11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publicity</td>
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BUDGET BREAKDOWN TABLE

I have applied for a CAC grant of $400. So here are my two potential preliminary budgets:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With CAC Grant.</th>
<th>Without CAC Grant</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>$600</td>
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THANKS FOR READING!
Production Workshop
Application for the Downstairs Space

NAME: Sam Alper
CLASS YEAR: ‘11.5
PHONE NUMBER: 310-963-4034

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE SOUND
AUTHOR (if applicable): Sam Alper

PROPOSAL BOARD BUDDY: Deepali Gupta

SLOT PREFERENCE: No preference between 1st and 2nd.
(*note: you are only proposing for one of the below seasons)
Fall: 
1st slot is in late September, returns early from Summer Break
2nd slot is in mid-October
Winter: 
1st slot is in early December, right before Reading Period
2nd slot is in early February, returns early from Winter Break
3rd slot is in early March
Spring: 
1st slot is in mid-April
2nd slot is over Commencement

IS THERE A SLOT YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO ACCEPT?
I have been thinking I would not accept third... but maybe I would. It would involve a radical reorganizing of my semester but, if it comes down to having third or not being passed, I might take third. So please ask me if it comes down to that, but I hope it doesn't come down to that. I also have no staff attached for third slot.

REQUIRED STAFF (include name and year):
• Set Designer: Adam Wyron ‘13 (2nd slot)
• Lighting Designer: Megan Estes ‘12
• Sound Designer: None yet but in conversations.
• Costume Designer: Kirstin Purtich ’12 (1st slot)

ADDITIONAL STAFF:
AD: 1st slot – Abby Colella ‘12 / 2nd slot – Miriam Joelson ‘11
PM: 1st slot – James Flynn ‘11
Dramaturgs: Max Posner ‘11 and Justin Kuritzkes ‘12
Movement Coach: Lizzie Feidelson ‘11.5
PLEASE NOTE – By submitting this application it is understood that you have acquired rights by contacting a board member.

PROPOSAL: Please attach proposal and any other appendices.