

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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Dear School of the Arts Alumni,

Happy Springtime! With the trees blooming and the sun shining, so too are our alumni blossoming all over with news of publications, films, plays, gallery shows and more.

This weekend we have two special events organized in partnership with CAA Arts Access. On **Saturday, April 16**, join us at [Fiddler on the Roof](#) followed by a talkback with Associate Director **Tyne Rafaeli '14** and Lead Producer **Jeffrey Richards '71** JRN. And on **Sunday, April 17** you're invited to the 15th Annual TriBeCa Film Festival for a private screening of **Deb Shoval's '13** film [AWOL](#), with reception before, followed by conversation led by **Maureen Ryan '92**, Chair of the Film Program, with **Deb Shoval**, producers **L.A Teodosio '15**, **Jessica Caldwell '12**, and co-producer **Andrew Hauser '12**.

In this edition of the Alumni Newsletter, we are doing a special profile series on alumni filmmakers featured at this year's TriBeCa Film Festival. See below to read more about **Lawrence Levine '08**, **Ian Olds '06**, **Paul Felten '04**, **Deb Shoval '13**, **L.A Teodosio '15**, **Jessica Caldwell '12**, **Karolina Waclawiak '10** and **Andrew Hauser '12**.

You may have read about the Roundabout@Columbia initiative launched last month at School of the Arts. This new collaboration will give students the opportunity to present work and apprentice at Roundabout Theatre Company. It's a wonderful step forward, connecting current students to the professional theatre landscape. In other theatre news, we have had a handful of alumni nominated for 2016 Lucille Lortel Award:

- **Rachel Chavkin** (Directing '08) - Outstanding Director, *The Royale*
- **Ito Aghayere** (Acting '12) - Outstanding Lead Actress in a Play, *Familiar*
- **Andrew Garman** (Acting '00) - Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play, *The Christians*

- **Jenny Schwartz** (Directing '00) - Wrote Outstanding Musical nominee, *Iowa*

Congrats to all!

We also recently learned that the Visual Arts Program ranked #6 with the 4th highest score on U.S. News and World Report for Best Grad Schools programs for Fine Arts ranking. See the work from top-ranking Visual Arts alumni in Sculpture Center's "Lucky Draw" on April 18, where you might win a piece from **Jesse Greenberg** ('11), **Ben Hagari** ('14), **Lior Shvil** ('10), **Patricia Treib** ('06), or **Tuguldur Yondonjamts** ('14).

We are also very proud to hear that Poetry alumna **Mai Der Vang** ('14) is the winner of the 2016 Walt Whitman Award. Vang's manuscript, *Afterland*, will be published by Graywolf Press in April 2017, and has been granted a residency and \$5,000 prize. And check out Poetry alumna **Camille Rankine** 's ('09) poem titled "Genealogy" which was in the April 1 edition of *The New York Times Magazine*.

As always, please continue to keep in touch. Share news and stories by emailing artsalum@columbia.edu and opportunities with fellow alumni and current students by emailing arc@columbia.edu.

Sincerely,

Laila Maher
Associate Dean, Alumni and Student Affairs

Alumni Spotlight

This edition of the Alumni Spotlight features **xxx**. If you would like to submit your own stories to be included on our [website](#), you can do so at this [link](#).



Deb Shoval '13 Film
AWOL

Deb Shoval (MFA Film, Columbia University) was raised by her Israeli father and American mother in a Pennsylvania coal town, where she now runs an organic vegetable farm. Themes that interest her remain constant as she develops a "house" of film, as Fassbinder called it: land and the landless; diaspora, exile and home; and how human beings transcend apathy. Shoval's short film *AWOL* premiered at Sundance (2011), winning awards from Kodak, Technicolor, and Women in Film, and was featured in The New York Times article "Big Movies Coming in Small Packages." Grants, fellowships and awards for *AWOL* the feature, starring Lola Kirke, include: The

Jerome Foundation, IFP, Film Independent, Frameline, US-in-Progress:Paris, Tiffany & Co./Women In Film Finishing Fund, IWC/Tribeca "For the Love of Cinema," and Columbia University's Faculty Selects. Shoval divides her time between Pennsylvania and NYC, where she lives with her daughter and wife, educator and playwright Tala Manassah.

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

I had some amazing professors at Columbia - I didn't understand the importance of shot selection until I studied with Eric Mendelssohn, or the infinite possibilities to rewrite story through editing until I studied with Susi Korda. Andy Bienen, Ramin Bahrani... they excel at the art of teaching. I learned so much from Brad Barnes about auditioning, casting and directing actors. I believe Barnes credits Adrienne Stern for these techniques- techniques such as contrary expectations, personalization, spoken subtext, the moment before. He taught us these tools for working with actors; I also find them incredibly helpful in the writing process.



Jessica Caldwell '12 Film
AWOL

A graduate of Columbia University's MFA Film program, Jessica Caldwell produced *Electrick Children* which premiered at Berlin and SXSW 2012 and was distributed in 2013. Her short film work has premiered at Sundance, Telluride and Tribeca. Jessica produced Stephen Elliott's *Happy Baby*, which participated in the US Works in Progress lab in Wroclaw, Poland. Jessica participated in IFP's No Borders International Co-Production Market, Narrative Film Lab and was selected for the 2014 Rotterdam Producer's Lab and Cannes Producer's Network. Jessica is currently working on Showtime's new series *Billions* starring Paul Giamatti and Damian Lewis. *AWOL*, premiering in competition at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival is her third feature film production.

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm4055424/>

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

It's impossible not to be completely won over by iconic producer Michael "Buffalo Mike" Hausman within minutes of talking to him. I'm honored to have learned from him. His stories teach you how to operate as a producer, how to act in our business, and try to be a good person at the same time.. He's one of a kind.

How did attending the School of the Arts impact your work and career as an artist?

The network of people I met at Columbia was the foundation of all my original collaborations and projects.

What were the most pressing social/political issues on the minds of the students when you were here?

Women in the industry maybe? I think it's still an important issue! It's getting better slowly but surely. I'm proud to be part of the strong female alumni from CU. We still have a ways to go.

What was your favorite or most memorable class while at the School of the Arts?

If I could take Malia Scotch Marmo's screenwriting workshop once a week for the rest of my life I would.



Karolina Waclawiak '10 Writing
AWOL

Karolina Waclawiak's critically acclaimed first novel, *How To Get Into The Twin Palms*, was published by Two Dollar Radio in 2012. Her second novel, *THE INVADERS*, which was published in July 2015, was recently optioned by ABC Television. *AWOL*, a feature she co-wrote with Deb Shoal, will premiere at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival. Formerly an editor at the *Believer*, she is now

the Deputy Culture Editor at *Buzzfeed*. Waclawiak received her BFA in Screenwriting from USC School of Cinematic Arts and her MFA in Fiction from Columbia University

Website: www.karolinawaclawiak.com

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

Sam Lipsyte and Christine Schutt in the fiction department. They were instrumental in sharpening my writing and dialogue, which helped in my screenwriting as well.

How did attending the School of the Arts impact your work and career as an artist?
I certainly became more focused as an artist while at the School of the Arts. It also helped introduce me to artists in other mediums that I could collaborate with.

What was your favorite or most memorable class while at the School of the Arts?
Actually, it was the interdisciplinary class that chose students in the theater, film, and writing program to work together on screenplay projects.



Andrew Hauser '12 Film
AWOL

A freelance post supervisor in New York, Andrew Hauser has overseen numerous independent films in the past four years, including most recently Mike Birbiglia's *Don't Think Twice*, Joshua Marston's *Complete Unknown* and Rob Burnett's *The Fundamentals of Caring*. He has delivered to major independent distributors, including Netflix, Amazon Studios, Sony, Lionsgate and Cinedigm, and major worldwide sales agents, including Voltage, K5 and Fortitude. Films he has served on have played at such prestigious festivals as Sundance, Toronto and SXSW. He served as Co-Producer on Deb Shoval's *AWOL*, playing in completion at this year's Tribeca Film Festival.

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

The late Richard Brick. He instilled in his students a respect for everyone working with you, no matter what the size or budget of the film, or the size of the role of the crew member. Film is such a collaborative medium, and its important to recognize those around you as colleagues with their own desires, goals and issues. He is sorely missed.

If you could revisit any piece you created during your time at the School of the Arts, which would it be? Why?

I think, with the benefit of hindsight, I would revisit everything I worked on at Columbia! But thats what makes the program such a joy; its gives you opportunities to take risks, learn, develop and sometimes fail. Films are never complete, only abandoned when the time and money runs out. They give you a snapshot into the mindset of their creators at that moment in time.



Paul Felten '04 Film
The Fixer

Paul Felten received his B.A. from The Evergreen State College and his M.F.A. from Columbia University's Film Division. His writing has appeared in *The Brooklyn Rail* and in the anthology *Lost and Found: Stories From New York* (ed. Thomas Beller). A 2011 Sundance Screenwriting Fellow and recipient of the SFFS/Hearst Screenwriting Grant, he is the

author, with Ian Olds, of the scripts for the short film *BOMB*, the experimental feature *Francophrenia*, and the forthcoming *Zeroville*. Felten is currently co-directing (with Joe DeNardo) his script for *Slow Machine*, a microbudget 16mm feature shooting in and around NYC.

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

Do I have to pick just one? Tom Kalin and Nick Proferes encouraged my best impulses and tolerated my aping-Eric-Rohmer phase. Melina Jelinek gave me the single best piece of writing advice I've ever heard ('your main characters are always your least interesting because they're the most like you'). Tom Beller let me crash a prose workshop and offered welcome respite from the screenwriting grind. And Columbia's where I met Ian, of course. One afternoon we stood by the snack machine and bonded over our disdain for a wretched 'prestige' movie that had just screened at the Carla Kuhn series. The rest is history, at least for the two of us.

P.S: I LOVED the Carla Kuhn series.

What were the most pressing social/political issues on the minds of the students when you were here?

9/11 was two weeks after the start of classes. It was a strange time to be a new resident of the city, as most of us were, and we bonded first in surprise and grief and then in collective anxiety about our government's response to the tragedy. This experience informed a lot of the work we did while we were there. It certainly continues to be a part of nearly everything I write.



Ian Olds '06 Film
The Fixer

Ian Olds is a director of both narrative and documentary work. Directing credits include the Iraq war doc *Occupation: Dreamland* (released theatrically by Rumur Releasing, short-listed for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature and winner of a 2006 Independent Spirit Award), *Fixer: The Taking of Ajmal Naqshbandi* (winner of top jury prizes at Tribeca and Madrid, acquired by HBO and nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Investigative Journalism), and the experimental narrative *Francophrenia* (Rotterdam, Tribeca, True/False, Abu-Dhabi, Hot Docs). Olds short narrative films have played numerous festivals including Sundance, Los Angeles and Clermont-Ferrand. He was awarded a 2013 Guggenheim Fellowship, five separate grants from San Francisco Film Society, a Princess Grace Award, and a Media Arts Fellowship sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. Olds

received his MFA from Columbia University's Film Division, was named one of 25 New Faces of Independent Film by Filmmaker Magazine and was a fellow at the Sundance Institute's Screenwriters Lab. Olds was also the editor of the split-screen feature adaptation of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* directed by James Franco (2013 Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain Regard).

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

Eric Mendelsohn's class was a revelation to me. I took it at a moment when I was beginning to formulate my own relationship to directing and his articulation of the way a shot could evoke meaning as opposed to show it was very powerful for me. Essentially he was talking about the poetic possibilities of film language that could be deployed within narrative work. This is something I think about to this day when I'm directing.

He also gave me some very valuable advice when I was struggling with existential questions about my vocation as a filmmaker. He looked me in the eye and said, "Sometimes you just have to shut up and drive." And I said, "okay," and went back to work. And I'm still working.

How did attending the School of the Arts impact your work and career as an artist?

It gave me space to experiment and time to find out what kind of filmmaker I wanted to be. I always knew that going to film school wouldn't make me a filmmaker. It was just one phase of a long journey, but it turned out to be an important one for me. Before School of the Arts I had cinematic instincts; afterward I had those same instincts, but I also had a bunch more tools to go with them.

Crucially, It's also where I met my writing partner Paul Felten. We work together almost daily - he's the artistic comrade that keeps me sane during long periods of mad scribbling.

What were the most pressing social/political issues on the minds of the students when you were here?

September 11th happened two weeks into our first semester. Not only was it a moment of profound re-evaluation, the aftermath of that event (specifically the invasion of Iraq under the banner of preemptive war) led me first to Iraq and then to Afghanistan as a documentary filmmaker. It was an incredibly powerful and formative period in my life. It's also what led to my first narrative feature premiering at Tribeca this year. I directed, Paul and I wrote the script and another columbia classmate, Joe Murphy, was one of the film's editors.



Lawrence Levine '08 Film
Always Shine

Lawrence Michael Levine wrote, produced and stars in ALWAYS SHINE (Tribeca '16). Lawrence's past films as a writer, director, and actor include WILD CANARIES (SXSW '14) distributed by IFC Films, GABI AND THE ROOF IN JULY. He also produced and starred in Sophia Takal's GREEN and produced Jay DiPietro's PETER AND VANDY (Sundance '09). Levine acted in V/H/S 2, Joe Swanberg's THE ZONE and Onur Tukel's RICHARD'S WEDDING. <http://www.alwaysshinefilm.com/stills/>

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

I had a number of inspiring teachers at SOA: Tom Kalin, Bette Gordon, and Nick Proferes among them. The late Jerry Kass was my favorite teacher. He was extremely encouraging to me at a time when I needed it most. My confidence was problem for me when I was starting out and I'm not sure I would have continued on this path if he hadn't believed in my ability. He passed this year but not a day goes by that I don't think of his warmth and generous spirit.

What was your favorite or most memorable class while at the School of the Arts?

The class I remember most of all was the very first directing class I took. Nick Proferes was the teacher and he was tough as nails. I was terrified of him. He watched my first exercise and said, "You mother's wasting her money sending you to film school if you're going to be turning in crap like that." It hurt, but I took the next exercise more seriously because I could see he was holding us to a higher bar. When I turned the second exercise in, he could see I'd worked on it and was very complimentary. Turned out he was tough but fair. I learned a lot from him.

Events



THE LEROY NEIMAN GALLERY | EXHIBITION
Contemporary Ceramics

Wed, Mar 30-Tues, Apr 26, 2016

Reception: Thurs, Mar 31, 2016, 6-8 pm

The LeRoy Neiman Gallery, Dodge Hall

Use main campus entrance: 2960 Broadway

[More](#)



WRITING | LITERARY TRANSLATION AT COLUMBIA

A Conversation with Christian Hawkey

Moderated by Director of Literary Translation, Susan Bernofsky

Wednesday, April 13th, 2016, 7pm

Room 413, Dodge Hall

Use main campus entrance: 2960 Broadway

[More](#)



FILM STUDIES | CONFERENCE

Transformations I: Cinema & Media Studies Research Meets Digital Humanities

Fri-Sat, Apr 15-16, 2016

Michaelson Screening Room, Tisch School of the Arts, NYU

721 Broadway, Room 648

[More](#)



FILM | SCREENING AND CONVERSATION

International Tourism, (Marie Voignier, 2014)

Tuesday, April 19, 2016, 6:30 pm

Columbia Maison Française

515 W 116th St, Buell Hall 2nd Fl

Use main campus entrance: 2960 Broadway

[More](#)



WRITING | NONFICTION DIALOGUES

Jane Mayer

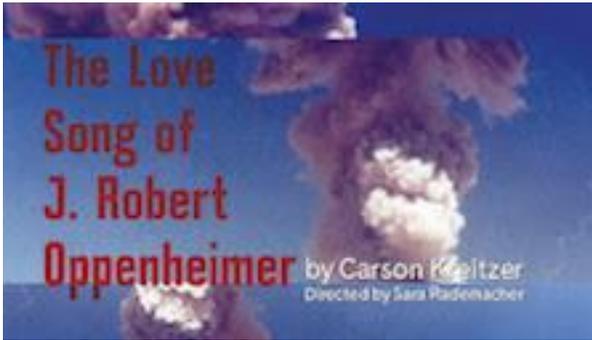
Distinguished authors in conversation with Associate Professor Lis Harris

Wed, Apr 20, 2016, 7 pm

Room 501, Dodge Hall

Use main campus entrance: 2960 Broadway

[More](#)



THEATRE | DIRECTING THESIS

The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer

Carson Kreitzer, Sara Rademacher

Wed-Sat, Apr 20-23, 2016, 8 pm

Sat, Apr 23, 2016, 2 pm

The Connelly Theatre, 220 E 4th Street

\$15 General, \$5 Senior, and FREE with any valid student ID.

[More](#)



THEATRE | PLAYWRITING FESTIVAL

Columbia New Plays Festival

Wed, Apr 20-Sun, May 15

Ford Foundation Studio Theatre

The Pershing Square Signature Center

480 West 42nd Street

[More](#)



SOUND ARTS | EXHIBITION

Spring Exhibition: First-Year works from the 2016 Columbia University School of the Arts Sound Arts MFA Program

Friday, April 22, 2016, 6-8 pm

Central Booking Offline

21 Ludlow Street New York, NY 10002

April 23-May 2, 2016

Gallery

Hours: Thursday - Sunday, 12-6 pm

[More](#)

News



Interdisciplinary

Five School of the Arts alumni have received 2016 Guggenheim Fellowships: **Marina Adams** '83 in Fine Arts; **Jesse Ball** '04 in Fiction; **Edmund Champion** '93 in Music Composition; **Amanda Petrusich** '03 in General Nonfiction; and **Sue de Beer** '98 for Fine Arts. [more](#)



Film

Writer **Jennifer Lee** '05, best known for her Academy Award-winning work on Frozen, teamed up with **Phil Johnston** '04 on Zootopia's screenplay. The story is about a thriving animal metropolis where the first rabbit on the police force teams up with a wily fox to solve a mysterious case. [more](#)



Theatre

Natalie Gershtein '15, is joining the leadership team of the Pipeline Theatre Company as a producing director. Pipeline, a non-profit theatre company based in downtown Manhattan, produces full-length plays, one-acts and short films. [more](#)



Visual Arts

Alumna and adjunct faculty member **Inbal Abergil**'s '11 solo exhibition N O K - Next Of Kin was recently on display showing at Baxter Street at the Camera Club of New York. The exhibition, which closed March 26, is the third in a set of four exhibitions from the Workspace Residency Program at Baxter Street; Abergil was a resident last year. [more](#)



Visual Arts

Yve Laris Cohen '11 received a grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts in dance. The Foundation for Contemporary Arts, founded in 1963, awards grants to support, encourage and promote artists' experimentation in pioneering new works. The foundation awards grants to artists in five disciplines: dance, music/sound, poetry, visual arts and performing arts/theatre. [more](#)



Writing

Catherine Lacey '10 has won a 2016 Whiting Award for Fiction. Lacey, author of the acclaimed novel *Nobody Is Ever Missing* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), has two books forthcoming from FSG: a second novel and a short story collection. [more](#)

Office of Alumni Affairs
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