

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

April 2019

Dear School of the Arts Alumni,

Spring is in full swing, and with it a number of exciting accomplishments and events, including our ongoing collaborations with the Columbia Alumni Association's Art Access program. Arts Access promotes the work of many of our School of the Arts alumni to the larger Columbia community. For more information and to get on their mailing list, [click here](#).

Film

Sohrab Noshirvani '12 and **Rory Haines '11** received [BAFTA nominations](#) for the BBC Drama "Informer." **Bora Kim '11's** [House of Hummingbird](#) will screen at the Istanbul Film Festival, as will [Tel Aviv on Fire](#), written and directed by **Sameh Zoabi '05**, and co-written by Professor **Dan Kleinman**. This March, **Sola Fasehun '15** was selected by the Film Society of Lincoln Center to participate in their [Industry Academy](#). **Zachary Morrison '18** and **Taylor Ortega '18** were awarded [Best Comedy](#) for their thesis film, *Everything's Fine: A Panic Attack in D Major*, at the College Television Award Emmys. The Independent Filmmaker Project, host of the annual Gotham Awards, named **Jeffrey Sharp '01** as its [Executive Director](#). Writer and Director **Bane Fakhri '19** and Producers **Federica Belletti '18** and **Birgit "Bitz" Gernboeck '16** have been selected for the [Tribeca Film Festival All Access](#) program for their film *Keep it Together*. Stay tuned for a Tribeca recap in next month's newsletter.

A number of our filmmakers participated in the [SXSW Film Festival](#). Faculty member and Film Chair **Hilary Brougher** wrote and directed *South Mountain*, on which she collaborated with a long list of School of the Arts alumni: **Kristin Frost '16**, Producer; **Giovanni Ferrari '15** and **Nadia Zoe '17**, Associate Producers; **Raj Trivedi '17**, Line Producer; **Eric Unverzagt '17**, Art Director; **Jon Branden '17**, Post Production Supervisor; **Markus Englmaier '16**, Colorist; and **Andrew Stephen Lee '18**, Head Credits Designer. **Keola Racela '15** directed *Porno*, co-written by **Matt Black '15** and **Laurence Vannicelli '15**, co-produced by **Chris Cole '15**, **Sarah Seulki '15**, and **Michael Toscano '12**. *Sister Aimee*, co-written and co-directed by **Samantha Buck '16** and **Marie Schlingmann '18**, was listed as a Festival Favorite. *Booksmart*, written and produced by **Katie Silberman '12**, was screened in the Headliner segment. **Elisa Lleras '11** was the Executive Producer of *Daniel Isn't Real*. *The Peanut Butter Falcon*, produced by **Albert Berger '83**, screened as a Narrative Spotlight, as did *Villains*, on which alumna **Alexandra Vivas '14** served as Production Coordinator. **Jason Mann '15** starred in *Aleski*. Featured in the Visions segment was *The Garden Left Behind*, written and directed by **Flavio Alves '07**. Faculty member and alumnus **Shrihari Sathe**

'09 produced the pilot *A Cure for Fear*. Also screening were two shorts: *Manila is Full of Men Named Boy*, co-written and directed by **Andrew Stephen Lee '18**, co-written by **Emre Gulcan '17** and current student **Neda Jebelli**, co-produced by **Mica Coburn '17**, and executive produced by **Valerie Castillo Martinez '16**; and *Nice Talking to You*, co-written and directed by current student **Saim Sadiq**, co-written and produced by **Joseph Capotorto '18**, and co-produced by **Federica Belletti '18**.

Theatre

Anthony McDonald '13 is the General Manager of [Miracle in Rwanda](#), at Theatre Row (410 W 42nd St) through May 11. On April 22, **Celine Song '14** will participate in [America 2024: Playwrights on Our Country's Future](#), a special program co-presented by BAM and *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*. Acting alumnus **David Fierro '11** has been cast opposite Edie Falco in the [new CBS drama pilot](#), *Tommy*. [Caborca](#), a bilingual experimental theatre and film company, founded by **Javier Antonio González '06**, was featured in *Theatre Forum*. The company's membership and group of collaborators includes **Laura Butler Rivera '06**, **Anne Gridley '06**, **David Skeist '06**, **Shira Milikowsky '07**, **Tania Molina '07**, **Luis Moreno '06**, **Jon Froehlich '06**, **Kyoung Park '12**, **Erin Koster '07**, and **Courtney King '07**. **Ashley Tata '12** directed [Mosaic Interactive](#) at the Big Ears Festival in Knoxville, TN, as well as [Soldier Songs](#) at Austin Opera. She is also directing the upcoming [Bound](#), with the Fresh Squeezed Opera, at the Baruch Performing Arts Center in New York. More details can be found below under "Events." **Ellen Mezzera Lavaia '13** is the Second Assistant Stage Manager on [The Lion King](#). This month, **Kim Weild '07** is directing [American Moor](#) at ArtsEmerson. **Alix Sobler '17** is co-writing [Certain Woman of an Age](#) with Margaret Trudeau, mother of the Prime Minister of Canada.

Visual Arts

Orlee Malka '18 and **Ana Rivera '18** participated in a joint exhibition, [No, not here](#) at Mom's Gallery. **Nancy Cohen '84**'s show [Force: Observations from the Interior](#) will be on view at Kathryn Markel Fine Arts until May 4. **Zoe Avery Nelson '09**'s solo exhibition [Zoe Avery Nelson: The Measure of a Boi](#) opened on March 20 and will be on view until April 21. Internationally, **Ektor Garcia '16**'s [sangre y barro](#) is on view at Cooper Cole in Toronto. In Seoul, **Lauren Silva '13** is in two shows currently on view: [The Celebration of Painting](#) at Sophis Gallery, and [Back to the Painting](#) at Kwanhoon Gallery.

Writing

Alumni in the Southwest can catch a reading and book-signing with **Terese Svoboda '78** as she continues her book tour for *Great American Desert*. This month she will be in Houston, Austin, Tucson, Phoenix, and Albuquerque, before returning to New York for a May 15 event at Book Culture. [Click here for the complete list of events](#). *Great American Desert* has received great reviews, including in the [Los Angeles Review of Books](#). **Ravi Shankar '00** published [The Many Uses of Mint: New and Selected Poems 1998-2018](#) with the Canberra-based Recent Work Press. After receiving starred reviews from *Publisher's Weekly* and *Kirkus*, **Jennifer Cody Epstein '03**'s historical novel [Wunderland](#) will be released on April 23. **Subhashini Kaligotla '06**'s first

book of poems, [Bird of the Indian Subcontinent](#), was just published. She was joined by faculty member and alumnus **Timothy Donnelly '98** at the launch at Book Culture. **Laura Jean Moore '10**'s story "Husbandry," won the [2018 Los Angeles Review Short Fiction Contest](#). **Devi S. Laskar '96** published **The Atlas of Reds and Blues** to great reviews by [The Chicago Review of Books](#), [Time Magazine](#), and [The Washington Post](#).

To keep receiving news and updates, make sure we have your most recent contact information. If you know of a fellow alum who is not receiving emails from us but would like to, have them email us at artsalum@columbia.edu.

As always, please continue sharing your news and accomplishments with us via artsalum@columbia.edu, and like and follow our [Facebook](#) page. You can also keep an eye out for exciting new alumni achievements on our Twitter feed by following [@cusoaalumni](#).

Best,
Laila Maher
Dean, Student and Alumni Affairs

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

This edition of the Alumni Spotlight features Writing alumna **Tracy K. Smith '97**. If you would like to submit your own stories to be included on our website, you can do so at this [link](#).



Tracy K. Smith is the author of the memoir *Ordinary Light* and four books of poetry: *Wade in the Water* (April 2018); *Life on Mars*, which received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize; *Duende*, recipient of the 2006 James Laughlin Award; and *The Body's Question*, which won the 2002 Cave Canem Poetry Prize. Smith is also the recipient of the Academy of American Poets Fellowship, a Rona Jaffe Award, and a Whiting Award. She was the Literature protégé in the 2009-2011 cycle of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. In June 2017 she was named the 22nd [U.S. Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry](#) by the Library of Congress, and in March 2018 she was re-appointed to a second term for 2018-19.

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 feel lucky in that many of my School of the Arts faculty were supportive and available during my time as a student. I think often of Lucille Clifton's workshop, and her willingness to talk about her own life, and the experiences that led to many of her great poems. Mark Doty was a generous and galvanizing force for my classmates and me. And Linda Gregg modeled the life of someone who lived 100% of the time as a poet. But I think Lucie Brock-Broido '82 gave the most to us over those two years. She was like a poetry enchantress, inspiring my classmates and me to sense and seek the true magic and mystery to which poetry gives access. She guided us to think deeply about the structure and organization of the books we read, as a way of thinking about the books we were trying to write.

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

It gave me a lifelong community of fellow-poets. And those are the people who have remained my readers, friends and confidants. They're the ones whose belief encouraged me to keep writing even when I wasn't sure that my efforts would result in anything ever.

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

I was a student in the mid 90s, when politics and poetry didn't seem to mix much. We were worried about ourselves, about growing up and making lives as artists after Columbia. But this was also the moment when demands for diversity were reaching the poetry establishment. Two years after I graduated, Lucille Clifton was elected as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. Cave Canem was founded. And publishers were beginning to become much more aware of and interested in a far broader range of voices. Something like a much-needed Revolution happened in American Poetry, the fruits of which we are still enjoying today.

What were the first steps you took after graduating?

I received a Stegner Fellowship, so I moved back home to California and enrolled in the workshops at Stanford. My classmates that first year were Quan Barry, Mark Wunderlich '94, Monica Youn and Hugh Behm-Steinberg. After that, I meandered a while. I got my first teaching job in 2001.

What advice would you give to recent graduates?

Your classmates will be some of your best allies during what might be your "lean years." Be supportive of them, share resources and opportunities, invest in their success and allow them to do the same for you. My journey to publishing a first book felt interminably long when I was living it, but in retrospect, it was necessary. I needed to get past the poems I was writing as a

student and discover what my genuine questions and beliefs as an artist were going to be. I'm glad I didn't rush that process.

ALUMNI BENEFITS

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