

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

## COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

March 2019

Dear School of the Arts Alumni,

The School of the Arts community has been very busy this winter and we're happy to share some of the exciting projects you have all been working on.

You may also be interested in School of the Arts **Dean Carol Becker's** recent published article about the World Economic Forum, "[How Art Became a Force at Davos](#)." One of the artists mentioned, **Lynette Wallworth**, will present [screenings of her films](#) at our Lenfest Center for the Arts in April.

### Film

**Jorge Alfaro '17** [has joined 3pas Studios](#) as manager of Spanish-language content. The film, television, and digital production company was cofounded by **Eugenio Derbez** and **Benjamin Odell '04**. **Nicole Brending '11** [won the Narrative Feature Grand Jury Prize and the Spirit of Slamdance award](#) this winter for her film *Dollhouse: The Eradication of Female Subjectivity in American Popular Culture*. **Kevin Contento '18** screened his short film *Hierophany* at the [Miami Film Festival](#) this month, and will be showing it this week as part of the [Caribbean Film Series](#) at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. *Green* will continue its successful run with screenings at three academy-qualifying festivals in April: the [San Francisco International Film Festival](#), [Aspen ShortsFest](#), and the [Atlanta Film Festival](#). *Green* was directed and co-written by **Suzanne Andrews Correa '17**, and produced and co-written by **Mustafa Kaymak '14 & '17**. Also credited on the film are **Pinar Yorganioglu '16** (Editor), **Nicolas Becerra '18 & Fabio Montanari '16** (Assistant Directors), **Mark Anthony Castillo '18** (Production Manager), and **Emre Gulcan '17** (Digital Imaging Technician). [Cancion Sin Nombre \(Song Without a Name\)](#) a feature directed by alumna **Melina León '08**, was acquired by Luxbox. She received a 2015 Jerome Foundation Grant to make the film. **Wentao Ma '18**, along with current Film students **Narcissa Sun**, **Xiaoyu Shen**, and **Zijing Yu** have organized the first annual CineCina Film Festival, with [screenings scheduled](#) from April 5-19. [The CineCina Film Festival](#) is "the only New York-based film festival dedicated to promoting excellent Chinese films." **Renee Marie Petropoulos '17** [is a finalist](#) in the Atlanta Film Festival Screenplay Competition for her screenplay, *Circles*.

### Theatre

**Ito Aghayere '12** [has been cast as a series regular](#) in the CBS comedy pilot *Carol's Second Act*. **David Wilson Barnes '98** [has been cast](#) in the American premiere of James Graham's new

play *Ink*. The play will open April 24 at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre. Alumnus and adjunct faculty member **Christopher Burney** '94 has been named [Artistic Director of New York Stage and Film](#). **Nick Mwaluko** '10 was nominated to the [Resident Playwright Initiative](#) by the Playwrights Foundation. **Naima Phillips** '12 was recently appointed Vice-President of the Board of Directors for the [Playwright's Workshop Montréal](#). She is also at work on a new opera with **Margareta Jeric** as recipients of the [Mécénat Muscia Prix 3 Femmes prize](#). **Christina Quintana** '13 was one of two second-place winners of the [Bonnie and Terry Burman New Play Award](#), a new national play contest at Barrington Stage Company. Quintana will receive \$5,000 and a developmental staged reading of her play *Citizen Scientist*. You can read an interview with Christina about the play [here](#). This winter **Heather Alicia Simms** '96 was cast in *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, [a play](#) by faculty member Lynn Nottage.

### Visual Arts

**Korakrit Arunanondchai** '12, **Ilana Harris-Babou** '16, and **Iman Issa** '07 have been selected to participate in the [2019 Whitney Biennial](#). **Adama Delphine Fawundu** '18 has a new show, *The Sacred Star of Isis* going up at CRUSH CURATORIAL. The reception will be this Thursday from 6:00-8:00 PM. We will be joining Delphine for an [Arts Access event](#) at the gallery March 28. **Cy Gavin** '16 has a solo show at [Gavin Brown Enterprises](#) in Harlem that will be up through April 14. He was also [recently profiled](#) in *Columbia Magazine*. **Allison Janae Hamilton** '17 closed out her solo show *Pitch* at MASS MoCA this month with a farewell concert featuring George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic. At the [Z Ranch](#) in Marfa, Texas, **Davey Hawkins** '14 participated this winter in the group show, *Parallax*. **Patrice Aphrodite Helmar** '15 has a show at [Ortega Y Gasset Projects](#) in Brooklyn titled *Feeling Good About Me* that will be open through April 28.

### Writing

**Amy Feltman** '16 released her debut novel *Willa & Hesper*, an excerpt of which was published by *Cosmonauts Avenue* and can be found [here](#). **Malcom Hansen** '14 published *They Come in All Colors* last May. It has since won the [2019 First Novelist Award](#) from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and has been nominated for an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literature. **Jessica Chiccehitto Hindman** '03CC, '09SOA was interviewed on [NPR's Weekend Edition](#) about her new book *Sounds Like Titanic: A Memoir*. The book was also reviewed by [NPR Books](#) and [Kirkus](#), was featured on the [O: The Oprah Magazine](#) website, and was listed as a top book by Amazon, Goodreads, and Apple. **Elizabeth Jacobson** '88 was selected by Mariane Boruch for the [New Measure Poetry Prize](#) for her collection *Not into the Blossoms and Not into the Air*. The poetry collection was just published by Free Verse Editions/Parlor Press. **Diana Khoi Nguyen** '12 received the [Kate Tufts Discovery Prize](#) for her debut collection *Ghost Of*. **Sigrid Nunez** '75 and **Rachel Kushner** '01 have selected as shortlist finalists for the [Simpson Family Literary Prize](#). **Candice Reffe** '15 won the [Antivenom Poetry Award](#) for her book of poems *Live from the Mood Board*, and will be published by Elixir Press this spring. **Lauren Wilkinson** '13, called a "writer-to-watch" by Publisher's Weekly, [has released a new novel](#), *American Spy*. **Alexandra Watson** '15 received the [PEN/Nora Magid Award for Editing](#) for her "high literary stewardship as the editor of Apogee."

*In Memoriam*

Film alumnus **Derek Mok** '03 passed away this February. He was a filmmaker, musician, and photographer remembered lovingly by his friends for his warmth and humor. Friend, former roommate, collaborator, and fellow alum **Randall Dottin** '03 writes, "If you went to Columbia between 1998 and 2003, unless you were a superstar from the door and had supreme skills on Final Cut 1.0...Derek probably helped you. He embodied the whole notion that 'good enough is the enemy of excellence' and encouraged me to always push beyond my limitations." On March 19 there will be a night of music in his honor at The Paddock in Toronto (178 Bathurst St.).

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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](mailto:artsalum@columbia.edu).

As always, please continue sharing your news and accomplishments with us via [artsalum@columbia.edu](mailto: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

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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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This edition of the Alumni Spotlight features Theatre alumna **Mei Ann Teo** '14. If you would like to submit your own stories to be included on our website, you can do so at this [link](#).

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**Mei Ann Teo** (she/they), Theatre Direction '14, is a theatre/film maker who works at the intersection of artistic/civic/contemplative practice to shift culture towards justice and compassion. As a director/devisor/dramaturg, she collaborates across genres, including multi-form performance, music theatre, and intermedial participatory work. She was featured at MIT's symposium: *Next Wave: The Future of Asian American Theatre*. She is a National Directing Fellow and was profiled in the *American Theatre* feature "Role Call: Theatre Workers to Watch." Teo's work has toured the U.S. and at international festivals including Belgium's Festival de Liege (*Lyrics From Lockdown*, "Truly polished, meaningful and entertaining" -*New York Times*); Edinburgh (*MiddleFlight*, "Stunning" -*Scotsman*), M1 Singapore (*The Shape of a Bird*, "Superb staging" - *Straits Times*), and Beijing (*Labyrinth* - "Top 8" in *Beijing News*). She has developed new work across the country, including

the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (Phil Killian Fellow), Goodman Theatre, and Berkeley Rep. Recent and current work includes: the world premiere and 25 city tour in China of *Dim Sum Warriors* by **Colin Goh** and **Yen Yen Woo** (composed by Pulitzer Prize winner Du Yun); **Diana Oh's** *Clairvoyance* at ART Oberon; **Jillian Walker** '17's *Songs of Speculation* at JACK and *SKiNFoLK: An American Show* at SPARK festival and MTF; **Nia Witherspoon's** *Dark Girl Chronicles* at BAX, JACK, and Playwrights Realm, to premiere at The Shed; *Double Yolk Moon* with **Bex Kwan** and **Sophia Mak** at BricLab and the Highline; and **Madeleine Sayer's** *Where We Belong at the Globe* in London. Her short film, *Let Me Kill My Mother First*, is an official selection of the 2018 Singapore International Film Festival. Mei Ann is the Producing Artistic Director of [Musical Theatre Factory](#), a Resident Company of Playwrights Horizons. (Photo credit Michael Kushner)

**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 very fortunate to have been taught by **Anne Bogart**, **Robert Woodruff**, **Brian Kulick**, **Gideon Lester**, and many other stellar faculty during my time at Columbia. I'd love to express deep gratitude, respect, and admiration for Anne Bogart. I call her Mama Anne - not that she ever infantilized us - quite the opposite. She created a culture of peer support and feedback, while supporting each director in their unique path without toxic comparison. She was able,

like the clearest seer, to perceive deep patterns in our work and disrupt our defaults, encouraging us to grow beyond our limited understandings. She is profoundly generous and humble, and her drive for continued learning (especially of languages) is inspiring. I hear her words even now when I'm in rehearsal, like a guardian angel on my shoulder.

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

On Tuesday mornings in Visiting Directors Anne would interview incredible people. These multiple perspectives were always enlightening. I can still remember the sage advice that came from **Kate Whoriskey**, "Don't compare your insides to someone else's outsides." Meeting **Judith Malina** of the Living Theatre before she passed. While hearing people talk about process and how they grapple with situations was immensely helpful, these conversations would often turn philosophical and existential. This allowed us to gather not just as theatre directors in a room, but people seeking meaning together through a shared art form. One of my mantras that Anne spoke in that class: "You are in the perfect place at the perfect time, and everything is exactly how it should be."

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## ALUMNI BENEFITS

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- +[Artists' Resource Center \(ARC\)](#)
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