

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

May 2017

Dear School of the Arts Alumni,

Welcome May 2017 graduates to our alumni newsletter! We're thrilled to grow our ever expanding community. Every month we'll share out news and updates from School of the Arts Alumni across the world.

In Writing news, **Margo Orlando Littell** '04 has won an IPPY Gold Medal for Regional Fiction (Mid-Atlantic) for her novel *Each Vagabond by Name*. And **Suzanne Hodes** '62 has just published her book *Studio Days: A Memoir* on Blurb about the creative process. We've also had two writing alumnae, **Leslie Brenner** '88 and **Sheila Kohler** '84 submit their stories on [ColumbiaYOU](#). If you would like to submit your own story, feel free to do so [here](#).

Matt Kagen '13 and Fern Diaz CC'09 have begun a new play accelerator called softFocus. Read more about it in their profile on [Playbill.com](#). Check out *Soot and Spit* written by Theatre Faculty **Charles Mee** and directed by Theatre Directing alumna **Kim Weild** '07 playing from May 27 to June 17 at the [New Ohio Theatre](#). **Racquel Almazan**'s '15 show, *La Paloma Prisoner* as part of in [Hi-ARTS' Critical Breaks Residency](#) will be presented as a staged reading on May 23 with panel discussion, "Unlocking Female Incarceration: A Panel Discussion Part III." Raquel was the recipient of the 2015 Arthur J. Harris award from Columbia University.

Congrats to Visual Arts alumna **Vesna Pavlovic** '07 who was recently awarded [The George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation Fellowship](#) for her Art History Archive project and is opening the exhibition *Tito's Bunker* at Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart on May 27. **Guy Ben-Ari** '11 and **Leah Wolff** '11 co-curate *Double Take*, the inaugural exhibition to be held at AGENCY, which includes works by **Dana Lok** '15.

Deb Shoal's '13 *AWOL*, produced by **LA Teodosio** '15 and **Jessica Caldwell** '12, co-written by Fiction alumna **Karolina Waclawiak** '10, and co-produced by **Andrew Hauser** '12 will be screening at [Independent Filmmaker Project](#) in Brooklyn May 19 - May 25. And congrats to **Kurt Lustgarten** '13 on the release of his comic book, [Misfit City](#).

If you're in Los Angeles, check out [Columbia University Film Festival's Jury Selects Screening and Alumni Reception](#) on **Thursday, June 15** at the Linwood Dunn Theater in Hollywood, CA. And if you're in the San Francisco area, join CAA's Northern California club for their [Annual Film Night](#) hosted by Film Faculty **Jack Lechner** on **Wednesday, June 14**.

To keep receiving news and updates, please [please ensure we have your most recent contact information](#). If you know a fellow alum who is not receiving emails from us but would like to, please have them email us at artsalum@columbia.edu.

As always, please continue sharing your news and achievements with us via artsalum@columbia.edu and be sure to like and follow our [Facebook](#) page.

Best,
Laila Maher
Associate Dean, Student and Alumni Affairs

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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



Hammaad Chaudry is a New York City based playwright from Edinburgh, Scotland. His work has been staged in both the U.K. and U.S. including the The Royal Court Theatre in London, The New York Theatre Workshop, The Public Theater, The Pershing Square Signature Center and The Flea Theater. His plays include *Salaam*, *Mr. Bush*, *Kismat*, *God Willing* and his most recent play, *An Ordinary Muslim*, that will be produced by the New York Theatre Workshop as part of their 2017/18 season, directed by Jo Bonney.

He is currently a Van Lier Fellow at New Dramatists, a NYTW Usual Suspect, member of the Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group 2017 and recipient of the New Playwrights Award from Playwrights' Studio, Scotland. He is also a graduate of the Royal Court Theatre's Young Writers Programme in London where his work was selected for the Young Writers Festival and Unheard Voices competition. He holds an M.F.A. in Playwriting from Columbia University and a B.A. in International Politics from the University of Surrey.

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

There were many faculty members who influenced my work and myself, it would be difficult to choose one. Having said that, two classes that stood out for me were Collaboration Class taught by Anne Bogart and Storytelling by Gregory Mosher.

Anne's class involved students across the MFA program, playwrights, directors, and dramaturges collaborating with each other. As a playwright, it was hugely beneficial to write short pieces, rehearse, and then have that work put on its feet in front of your peers and Anne for feedback. The latter aspect, seeing your work performed was really useful in letting one gain an insight into how things translate from page to the stage.

In Gregory's class, we explored Aristotle's Poetics, looking at what Aristotle theorizes about plot, drama etc. and seeing how it applies to historical and modern plays. This class was good in equipping one with certain skills on how to read a play closely, in particular for structure and being able to identify the 'story'.

What were the first steps you took after graduating?

The first steps I took immediately after graduating were to stay on the sofas and floors of many generous friends. The next immediate step was to get a job and find a suitable place to live in New York so I could continue working on my play and get my playwriting career going. Getting an Artist Visa so I could stay in the country was quickly added to the plate as well.

What advice would you give to recent graduates?

I honestly don't feel I have much to give here. All I can do is share what (possibly) may have worked for me. New York can be a difficult city. If you want to explore or 'discover who you are', this might not be the best city to do that, unless you're rich.

After you graduate, if you decide to stay in New York, then stay for a reason. That will give you a certain drive and focus which will help you through the many challenges that you will encounter.

Have a very clear, specific and tangible goal that you're working toward, such as working on a particular project and having it realized to its full potential, and let everything else you do in life be in service of that goal.

Also, if you can, have good health insurance.

ALUMNI BENEFITS

- +[Artists' Resource Center \(ARC\)](#)
 - +[Update Your Information](#)
 - +[Email Forwarding & CU Address](#)
 - +[Online Alumni Community](#)
 - +[CAA Arts Access](#)
 - +[Complete List of Benefits](#)
-

Columbia University School of the Arts
artsalum@columbia.edu

**Office of Alumni Affairs
Columbia University
School of the Arts
305 Dodge Hall, MC 1808
2960 Broadway
New York, NY, 10027
email: artsalum@columbia.edu**