

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

May 2018

Dear School of the Arts Alumni,

Congratulations to our 2018 graduates. This year's [University Commencement](#) and the School of the Arts [Celebration of Graduates](#), with guest speaker Joyce Carol Oates, were inspirations. We're thrilled to grow our ever expanding alumni community with our almost 300 graduates.

We'd like to remind our May 2018 grads to complete the [Graduating Student Survey](#). Also, as a reminder to all alumni, don't forget about [LionSHARE](#), where you can look at the more than 17,000 opportunities for Columbia University alumni. You can also join [Columbia Career Connections](#) on LinkedIn, a group exclusively for Columbia students and alumni.

We are very proud of our film alumni who showcased their work at the [2018 Cannes Film Festival](#). **Dina Emam** '16 produced [Yomeddine](#), an Egyptian film and the only debut feature in Competition for the Palme d'Or, the highest prize awarded at the festival. Learn more about Dina below in this month's Alumni Spotlight. [Under the Silver Lake](#), co-produced by **Kristen Konvitz** '08, was also in Competition. **Clara Roquet** '16 is the co-writer of [Petra](#), which was screened in the Director's Fortnight, one of the festival's most coveted programs. Last but not least, **Imelda O'Reilly's** '08 film, *We're the Kids in America*, was selected for the [Cannes Cinéfondation Atelier](#). Learn more about Columbia alumni and faculty involved in Cannes on the School of the Arts [website](#).

FILM

Kim Peirce '96 directs Season 2, Episode 4 of [Dear White People](#), now streaming on Netflix. Listen to the first act of the April 27, 2018 episode of the podcast, *This American Life*, entitled [The Miseducation of Castlemont High](#). Produced by **B.A. Parker** '12, the story involves a high school field trip that goes in an unplanned direction. **Bobby Miller** '09 wrote and directed the fantasy film, [The Cleanse](#), starring Johnny Galecki of *The Big Bang Theory* along with Anjelica Huston. The film premiered at South by Southwest in 2016, but was officially released in theaters and online May 4, 2018.

THEATRE

Benita de Wit '16 directed a production earlier this month of [Salty](#), a new play that just had its world premiere in NYC at the Access Theatre. The production was stage managed by **Jenny Ainsworth** '14 and featured **Cassandra Nwokah** '17. **Dianne Nora** '15 assisted playwright Tracy Letts on the original production of *The Minutes* at Steppenwolf Theatre, a comedy about small-town politics which was also listed as a 2018 Finalist for the [Pulitzer Prize in Drama](#). **Jocelyn Bioh** '08 received two [2018 Drama Desk Nominations](#); one for Outstanding Play for *School Girls: Or, The African Mean Girls Play* and another for Outstanding Featured Actress in a Play for her role in [In the Blood](#). In other award related news, **Robert O'Hara** '96 received the [Herb Alpert Award in the Arts](#). **Rebecca Henderson** '06 has a recurring role on HBO's [Westworld](#) as well as in the TV Mini-Series [Manhunt: Unabomber](#), now streaming on Netflix. Henderson also has a starring role in the feature film [They Remain](#), formerly in theaters and now streaming.

VISUAL ARTS

MoMA PS1 is presenting the first solo museum exhibition of alumna **Julia Phillips** '15 entitled [Failure Detection](#).

Her work primarily focuses on ceramics with the exhibition featuring newly commissioned major works. Visit one of the Lower East Side's latest public art Installations that will reside in Stewards Park at Hester & Essex titled [Reclining Figure \(Buddha's Classic Pose\)](#) by alumna **Ann Gillen** '69. **Molly Surno** '13 has joined [Elsewhere](#) as the new Art Director developing new, rotating arts programs. In Atlanta, **Irini Miga's** '12 installation, [Reflections](#), a "site-responsive installation that utilizes sculpture, light, film, sound, as well as performed and embodied text," will be on view at the Atlanta Contemporary through June 3, 2018.

WRITING

Malcolm Hansen's '14 novel, [They Come in All Colors](#), was released yesterday. [Kirkus Review](#) calls it "a gripping, scorching, and at times vexing debut novel that tracks the physical and psychological jolts that come with growing up mixed race above and below the Mason-Dixon line at opposite ends of the 1960s." **Iris Martin Cohen** '13 released [The Little Clan](#), whose book launch included Cohen [in conversation](#) with fellow alumna **Hannah Lillith Assadi** '13 at Powerhouse Arena in Brooklyn. Cohen's novel follows librarian Ava Gallanter who caters to eccentric geriatric residents at an anachronistic arts club in Manhattan. A short prose piece, *Down Fifth*, by **Jim Ryan** '98 will be published in the fall issue of *The MacGuffin* magazine. The piece is an excerpt from a memoir-in-progress entitled *Marking Time: West Point Love Stories*.

If you're in Los Angeles, check out the Columbia University Film Festival's Jury Selects Screening and Alumni Reception on Thursday, June 14 at the Linwood Dunn Theater in Hollywood. RVSP [here](#).

To keep receiving news and updates, make sure we have your most recent contact information. If you know 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 achievements with us via artsalum@columbia.edu and like and follow our [Facebook](#) page.

As always, our newsletter will be on hiatus over the summer. We look forward to bringing more news to you again in the fall.

Best,
Laila Maher
Dean, Student and Alumni Affairs

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

This edition of the Alumni Spotlight features Creative Producing alumna **Dina Emam** '16. If you would like to submit your own stories to be included on our website, you can do so at this [link](#).

Dina Emam is an Egyptian-American Producer. She has worked on numerous award-winning shorts that have screened in over 20



festivals around the world. She has served as the Assistant Artistic Director for the 36th Cairo International Film Festival. Emam also holds a BS degree from New York University in Marketing and International Business, with a Concentration in Entertainment Media in addition to her MFA in Creative Producing from Columbia University.

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

Professor Michael Hausman has left a huge mark on me as a producer with his generosity and unwavering dedication to teaching. His Producing Case Studies course was the perfect balance of in-class and hands-on learning. Together we turned an article into a short film over the course of a semester; in a class of about 12 producers, we split up tasks and worked hands-on to produce a short film titled *A Cop Story*. Professor Hausman also always had a good story to tell from his extensive and inspiring experience as a film producer. Though I am no longer a student, I continue to learn from him until this day.

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

Before attending the School of the Arts I was hesitant to call myself an artist. I went to business school for my undergraduate studies and worked in television production management where I had little to no input in creative— but I wasn't satisfied. I wanted to do more. The Creative Producing program afforded me the opportunity to confidently hone my storytelling skills and gave me space to explore and make mistakes. The well-rounded education I received at the School of the Arts put me at a creative competitive advantage as a producer and has helped me add tremendous value to the projects I have worked on.

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

Gender equality was and still is a pressing issue in our industry as a whole. While the industry outside of Columbia's doors is fighting an uphill battle, we were already having open and honest conversations about it in our program. We were and still are highly supportive of one another, whether through simple words of encouragement to jumping in last minute on set.

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

My most memorable class was Andy Bienen's Elements of Dramatic Narrative. This was my first intensive introduction to the art of storytelling when I arrived at the School of the Arts and this course laid a solid foundation for all subsequent film courses. It gave me a boost in confidence in my skills as a storyteller and I still use my notebooks from Andy's class as references to this day.

What were the first steps you took after graduating?

I started taking steps for my post studies project during my research arts years. My main objectives during Research Arts were to complete my thesis and secure a unique and challenging feature project to work on after I graduated from the School of the Arts. I didn't want to graduate without having a feature project in the works because I knew it was highly likely the pressure of having to make a living wage would quickly take precedent once I graduated and I wouldn't have the time I needed to dedicate to a feature. I knew I wanted to produce a feature set in Egypt because it's a country that I was somewhat familiar with and one where there are countless untold stories that are just waiting to be captured. I moved to Cairo to get the lay of the land and meet professionals in the industry while preparing my thesis projects. It also helped that the dollar went a long way in Egypt which alleviated the impending financial pressures! After about a year in Cairo, I met the writer/director of *Yomeddine* who had also gone to film school in New York. We immediately hit it off; our personal and professional goals as filmmakers aligned and the rest was history. We shot the film and returned to New York; I submitted my thesis projects and graduated with a feature in the can. The most time-consuming part of the feature process was over, so upon graduation I got a job as a Researcher for *The Looming Tower* and we slowly worked through Post.

What advice would you give to recent graduates?

Doors - keep your eyes open for the doors that are around you. You don't have to walk through each one, but sometimes going out of your element will be highly rewarding and can lead you down a path that will ultimately be fruitful.

ALUMNI BENEFITS

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

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