

## ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

March 2025

If you've seen the news recently, you know it's been a difficult and painful time for many in the Columbia community. We are deeply moved by the bravery of so many of you, who through your art, stand for your beliefs, whatever they may be. It is an honor to lift up your work through this newsletter and our [Class Notes](#) page. Your work's significance is necessary for society, now more than ever.

The Artists' Resource Center is also here to help you with your career needs. Please visit our [video library](#) for recordings of career-related events and make an appointment for a 1:1 [career coaching](#) session.

Last month, **John Doelp '89** returned to Columbia to speak to students and alumni about his illustrious career in the music industry. This week, Writing alumni gather in Los Angeles for the annual [AWP conference](#).

Be sure to keep your [contact information](#) up to date! Follow our [LinkedIn](#) group for updates!

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter, which includes a spotlight on Theatre alum, **Vaughn Pole '22**, and tips from the ARC on writing successful resumes, CVs, and cover letters.

With warm regards,

**LAILA MAHER**

DEAN OF STUDENT AND ALUMNI AFFAIRS

**JESSICA PIERSON**

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE ARTISTS' RESOURCE CENTER AND ALUMNI AFFAIRS

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### ALUMNI EVENTS

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### LUNCH WITH ALUMNI: JOHN DOELP '89

The Artists' Resource Center series, *Lunch with Alumni*, continued last month. **John Doelp '89**, Senior Vice President of Sony Music Entertainment, spoke with students and alumni about his career in the music industry, which includes as a performer, arranger, engineer, producer, and record company executive.



### COLUMBIA FICTION FOUNDRY SPECIAL EVENT

You're cordially invited to join an upcoming Columbia Fiction Foundry special event: **Meet the Gatekeepers - A Conversation with Leading Literary Agents**, a webinar featuring some of today's most experienced literary agents. Learn first-hand what you need to know to grab their attention and secure representation.

The event will be held on April 10, 2025 at 7:30pm.

RSVP



### SAVE THE DATE: SOA SPEED NETWORKING

This event is a professional version of 'speed dating' where every 7 minutes you'll meet someone new! This is an exciting opportunity to connect, initiate a dialogue, and expand your professional network with artists from all walks of creativity.

**Date & Time: Wednesday, April 30th, 2025 at 7pm**  
Location: TBD



### LUNCH WITH ALUMNI: FORSYTH HARMON '01CC, '13 SOA

Wednesday, April 9, 2025  
12:45-1:45pm | Dodge 605

Join **Forsyth Harmon '01CC, '13SOA** to discuss her multidisciplinary career as a writer and visual artist.

*\*Alumni: please note campus access instructions in RSVP form*

RSVP

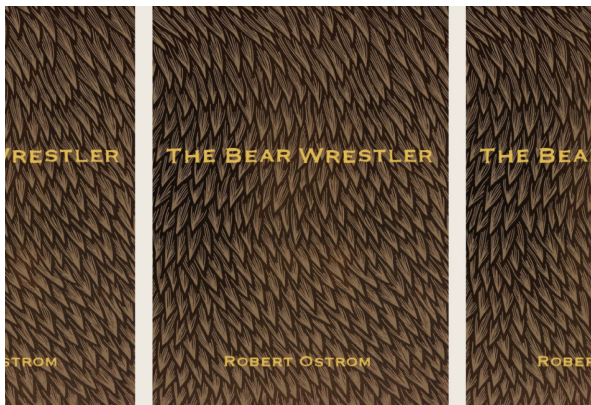
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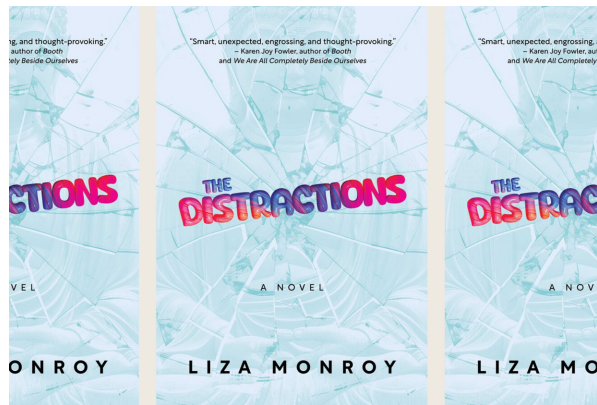
*The Encampments*, a documentary about the campus protests against the war in Gaza, was produced by **Munir Atalla '23** and is showing in NYC and LA in March and April.



*Ask A Punk*, a short film by **Kevin Contento '18**, will be having its World Premiere at the Miami Film Festival in April.



*The Bear Wrestler*, a novel by **Robert Ostrom '08**, was launched on March 22nd at Stone Circle Theater in Queens.



*The Distractions*, a novel of speculative fiction by **Liza Monroy '10**, was published in January.



**Sam Gabiner '21** was nominated for an Olivier Award for his play, *Boys on the Verge of Tears*.



**Ito Aghayere '12** was a cast member in Conor McPherson's adaptation of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, which played at Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Peet's Theatre in March.



Music from the 24-hour composition *Elastic Horizons* by **Julian Day '21** features in the hallucinogenic new documentary *John Lilly and the Earth Coincidence Control Office*, which premiered at the Museum of Modern Art on March 4.

**Raphael Lyon '13** is showing work in the exhibition *Raphael Lyon, Bill Shuck: Time Based Works* at Sculpture Space in Long Island City, NY until April 14.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



**Vaughn Pole '22** is an alum of the Acting program. His recent credits include Shakespeare & Company, Royal Court Theatre, Berkshire Theater Group, and Northampton Center for the Arts. He will be playing Laertes in *Hamlet* for the 25th Season of the St. Louis Shakespeare 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?***

It's far too difficult, and honestly unfair to single out any faculty member. They were all incredibly supportive of the training that I needed as an actor. None of them gave up on me, even after all the headaches I caused them. I would constantly ask them to break down and distill their teachings. I demanded clarity to what it is about a performance that makes a subjective art form almost objective when we all agree on what greatness looks like on stage. I would say I was inspired by Ron Van Lieu,

for the mere fact that he was still teaching and doing what he loves at 80 years old. I remember him saying in a joking way, "I can't die if I have rehearsal tomorrow. You guys can't direct yourselves with Chekhov. As long as I have rehearsal, I have to keep living."

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

Attending the School of the Arts gave me the confidence I needed to walk into any room with an unshakable self-belief that my talent is enough. As actors, we have chosen a profession where the majority of the time, the results of an audition will not be in our favor. Hearing a limitless amount of "No's" week after week, or year after year, has the potential to shake you out of that belief that you have a gift to share with the world. It's ultimately up to you whether you let it. To work from a place of I have nothing to prove, but a gift to share with you, has definitely changed how I approach my work.

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

Without a doubt the Covid-19 pandemic along with the unforgiving amount of Black people who died from police brutality. It's a blessing I'm here today.

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

I didn't have a favorite class, but what I appreciated the most was that in every class, no teacher cut me any slack. My professors understood the kind of actor that I wanted to be, and they made sure they provided me with the tools, and did the best they could to get me to the level I needed to be by the time I graduated.

### ***What were the first steps you took after graduating?***

Luckily I was able to have secured a job with Shakespeare and Company in Lenox, Massachusetts, where I played Claudio in *Measure for Measure*. My mentor John Douglas Thompson was able to see me play the same role he did at Trinity Rep with Viola Davis back in 1993, so that was a surreal moment for me. James Calleri also came through to support. Shoutout to James!

### ***What advice would you give to recent graduates?***

Don't play the waiting game. Don't wait for the next audition. Don't wait to hear back from casting. Don't wait for your agent to call you. It's your career and you have to take control of it because no one will care about it more than you. Create opportunities for yourself. Write your own scripts, grab your friend who has a camera, and make your own films. Rent out a space or use the park and put on your own show. People will come. Don't compare your journey to others. Be happy for everyone's success, because when your time comes, you would want people to be happy for you. You would want people to say, "That role was made for \_\_\_\_" instead of "I could've done that better, or my friend would've been better cast." Drink water, exercise, not too much alcohol, safe sex, and pray!

# ARTISTS' RESOURCE CENTER

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT TIPS FROM THE ARTISTS' RESOURCE CENTER

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### QUICK TIPS: RESUME, CV, and COVER LETTER

Struggling with a job application? Want to polish up your resume, CV, or cover letter? Don't know where

to begin? Not to worry. Use these ten quick tips curated by the ARC to take your application to the next level.

### Resume Tips:

- \* Keep it to **one page**. 1,000 words max. Employers spend an average of 6-7 seconds looking at your resume! Save that extra material for your CV!
- \* Use a free [template](#) to give your resume a professional look! This can help organize your material and aesthetically elevate your application!
- \* Focus on **results** when you list your experience! For example, you might have originally said that you "resolved student conflicts" under the description of a teaching job. While that may be accurate, specificity can greatly improve your chances of landing an interview. A more effective way to communicate this would be to say that you: "Collaborated with students to resolve interpersonal conflicts between students and teachers."
- \* Use **active verbs** in your descriptions! Words like, "facilitated," "established," or "fostered" bring a sense of action and accomplishment to your resume and can show progress in the workplace that employers want to see.

### CV Tips:

- \* Keep it **3-4 pages!** CV is Latin for Curriculum Vitae (course of life). In the U.S., a CV is an exhaustive academic summary (more than one page) used for applications for roles in academia, scientific research and medical fields. This is your chance to expand upon all relevant academic, research, publication, or artistic experience you may have!
- \* Use **headings** such as "Solo Exhibitions" or "Bibliography" to organize your CV. This can help employers navigate the document and help you to better organize your thoughts! In addition to Exhibitions and Bibliography, section headings can include, but are not limited to: Education, Honors and Awards, Grants and Fellowships, Teaching Experience, Visiting Artist Lectures and Presentations, Research Experience, Relevant Work Experience, Skills, Presentations, Publications, and Professional Affiliations.
- \* **Reverse-chronological order:** List your work experience and education in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent role.

### Cover Letter Tips:

- \* Be **thorough, yet concise**. Keep it to **¾ of a page (one page at most)**, approximately 250-300 words. A well-written cover letter can set you apart from candidates who don't submit one.
- \* **Match the tone of the job description or vibe of the organization's website.** This is your chance to demonstrate you know what the organization needs and that you are the candidate who can provide it. A cover letter is more than a resume in paragraph form. The format, content and purpose of a cover letter are highly individualized.
- \* Use a [cover letter template](#) that **matches your resume** to show attention to detail and bring a sense of professionalism to your application.

For more tips, access Princeton's Resume, CV, and Cover Letter guides [here](#). Have more questions? Book a [career-advising appointment](#) with an ARC fellow today!

## ALUMNI BENEFITS

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

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