

GDS PRESENTS: 75TH ANNIVERSARY SPEAKER SERIES: Entertainment...

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SPEAKERS

Correy Hudson, Gina Gionfriddo '87, Laura Rosberg, Kelly Aucoin '85, Terence Carter '97, Danny Stock, Lisa Schneiderman, Ethan Slater '10, Kevin Barr, A.J. Weisbard '91, Russell Shaw, Cordenia Paige

R Russell Shaw 05:34

I want to welcome you tonight. My name is Russell Shaw and I have the great honor, for those of you who I don't know, of being Head of School at Georgetown Day School. This is year 11 for me, and I have the best job on the planet. Except this fall, with, you know, being running a school in COVID, they're probably things that are more fun, but we are getting through and one of the ways that we are getting through is with the arts. Whether it is getting to watch shows on our screen or think about creating it is something that sustains us as people through times like these. We are really blessed tonight to have some amazing alumni with us who have illustrious careers in the entertainment industry. I want to say thank you to Kelly Aucoin class of 85, Terence Carter class of 97, Gina Gionfriddo class of 87, Ethan Slater class of 2010, and A.J. Weisbard class of 1991, all for joining us tonight. And a special thank you to Laura Rosberg. Laura is somebody who countless GDS alums, some on this call, and many who are not will say their life was powerfully informed by Laura. Laura is often cited as the teacher who made the difference. Laura had just gave me a commitment for another 10 years at GDS so Laura thank you. And what is remarkable is we have a beautiful new Lower Middle School building across the street from the High School just opened, and when I give people tours, and they see the 500 seat performing art space which is gorgeous, the first thing everybody says is, has Laura seen

this space yet and has she commandeered it for the High School. So, so there is...everybody gets Laura's, the breadth of her reach and the important work that she does, as our Performing Arts chair and somebody who inspires, lots of generations of Hoppers. Tonight we are going to be hearing from our panel about how the entertainment industry has fared in this challenging time. We know that in March, when our lives turned upside down and we began quarantining and physically distancing, the industry came to a halt. And yet, what we have seen now is lots of reinvention, and lots of ways to connect people through the arts. So we're going to hear about how this time has impacted our guests and their work, as well as their thoughts on what's gonna change. What's entertainment going to look like post COVID? Thank you again for joining us. Thank you, Laura, for moderating, and over to you.



Laura Rosberg 08:34

Okay. Thank you. Russell, and welcome to Entertainment in the Time of COVID. The second dinner in our 75th Anniversary Speaker Series. We have five panelists tonight—we might have had 100 times that thanks to GDS, and thanks to Zoom, as it happens. Tonight's event will be a moderated panel discussion, followed by Q&A if you'd like to submit a question, visit GDS.org/75thqa. The link is in the chat, and I'll select from among the questions as time allows. We're handling questions this way, so I'm able to combine similar questions, ask questions that the panelists actually will be able to answer, and keep the discussion on topic. And now, let me introduce the panelists: From the Big Apple. Kelly Aucoin '85, best known as Dollar Bill on Showtime's *Billions* and Pastor Tim on FX's *The Americans*. Early next year you can see him in the movies *The Good House* and *False Positive*, and some of his previous films include *The Post*, *The Wizard of lies*, *Julie and Julia*, and *The Kingdom*. He made his Broadway debut in *Julius Caesar* and won a Drama Desk Award for *The Wayside Motor Inn* at Signature. He frequently works at Manhattan Theatre Club, Primary Horizons and Primary Stages—Playwrights Horizons and Primary Stages. Kelly spent early years as a member of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Company. Part of the last seven or eight summers he spent at New York Stage and Film Theater Lab which develops new American plays, and was recently helmed by fellow Hopper Joanna Pfaelzer. Kelly says that Bill George "Bio Bill" and I both played huge roles back in the day in his growing belief that this whole, 'maybe I can create a life in the arts' idea might not be completely insane. He said, "A guy would be hard pressed to find a better couple of early mentors." Welcome, Kelly. And from LA class of 97, Terence Carter was named Co-President of Westbrook Studios head of television by Jada Pinkett Smith and Will Smith in 2019. In this role he oversees all television production and development, on behalf of the studio carriage joined Westbrook after serving as an executive vice president at 20th Century Fox TV and Fox Network, where he was responsible for developing and overseeing such shows as *Empire*, *911*, *911 Lone Star*, *Glee*, *Gotham*, *Lucifer*,

Star, X Files, and the following as well as Love Victor on Disney+ and Soundtrack on Netflix. Prior to Fox, he worked at NBC where he developed such shows as Parenthood and Southland. Terence also serves on the board of directors of the I Have a Dream Foundation in L.A., and was honored by the Ron Brown Scholar Program, with an Emerging Leader Award at the 2017 American Journey Awards. Welcome, Terence. And also from New York. Gina Gionfriddo '87 is a playwright and television writer. She's a two time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in drama for her plays, Becky Shaw and Rapture, Blister, Burn. She's written for the television dramas The Alienist, Cold Case, Borgia, House of Cards, and three incarnations of Law and Order. Currently, she is co executive producer of the CBS series, FBI Most Wanted, and she was one of my daughter's first DC babysitters. Welcome, Gina. And again, from the west coast, Ethan Slayer '10, class of 10. First big break was playing Leo Bloom in the GDS production of The Producers, alongside Noah Robbins. He studied at Vassar during which he began development of a musical that was called at the time The Untitled Tina Landau Project. It would turn into a SpongeBob Musical. He starred as SpongeBob on Broadway, winning several awards including the Drama Desk Outer Critics' Circle and Theater World, and he earned a Tony nomination. As a writer, he has a number of pieces in development, including the musical Edge of the World, the film Play Dead, and as writer and star of a miniseries based on the life of Buster Keaton. He will be playing Lee Harvey Oswald and the balladeer in Tom Doyle's directed production of Assassins at Classic Stage Company when the theater season returns. And that's alongside fellow Hopper Judy Kuhn. Welcome, Ethan. And finally from Moscow, Russia, A.J. Weisberg '91. He's an award-winning artist who designs with light and space to create work internationally for theater, opera, dance, video, exhibitions, architectural installation, and fashion. He has collaborated with the likes of Robert Wilson, Marina Abramovic, Richard Gluckman, William IV Long, Hugo Boss, Philip Glass, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and the Martha Graham Dance Company. A.J.'s recent projects include Letter to a Man by Robert Nelson, Armani Siloes, Vladimir Ronald's new opera Slaughterhouse Five, Carmen at the Opera of Montpellier Bay, and Mikhail Baryshnikov's Don Quixote in Rome. In addition to teaching and lecturing at numerous institutions around the world, he served four years as program director of the Watermill Summer Program, guiding scores of young artists and producing hundreds of projects. A.J. advocates for education in the arts. Welcome, A.J. Well now, let's get started. We had a pre-panel meeting or two. And just in the last 24 hours I talked with Gina and Kelly about what they were working on when the pandemic hit. And how it impacted their projects at the time. So, with all the panelists' permission. Let's start with Kelly and Gina, and you can talk to each other about what you told me.



Kelly Aucoin '85 15:57

Let me find Gallery View so I can see—Hey, Gina. Well, I mean, I'll just start off with what

happened on the ground for us in on Billions. On March 12, I was getting, I was filming the last scene, the last setup of the day. And it was a long day and I kept getting these increasingly frantic texts from other actors on set, who were shooting earlier talking about, I didn't even think about when I showed up the makeup person has to touch my eyes—what the!?! Finally at about three o'clock in the afternoon the next text was much more calm, it was like well they're shutting down for a week. And we'd had a built in sort of spring break for a week-long spring break. So, we were gonna have two weeks off and get this thing sorted out and then we'd be back. But what I appreciated, just anecdotally, what I really appreciated after we finished shooting a scene was that I got to be there on the last day we've shot, and none of us thought it was gonna be this long, but we certainly knew it was probably gonna be longer than two weeks. And so I appreciated being there with my family of five years and being able to look people in the eye and say, "You know I love you, good luck and we will we will we will meet again at some point."

L Laura Rosberg 17:22
When do you think you'll meet again, Kelly?

K Kelly Aucoin '85 17:27
When do we think? They, for a long time, I'm not 100% sure how much of this is, but it's official for a long time they were targeting October. Then they were targeting November, and at a certain point, because other things were starting to shoot, at a certain point I think they realized they needed to free us. Those of us on regular contracts weren't really free to go find other work. And we've now pushed for a while. I don't know if I'm at liberty to say, but we pushed for a chunk a number of months. And we can do other things if those other things. Don't get shut down, so it's good in a way because we're free to potentially make a bit of a living, again, but yeah right as of right now it's still sort of we have a goal in mind in the spring. But, yeah, that's where we are.

L Laura Rosberg 18:23
So, Gina, tell us about your projects and what happened.

G Gina Gionfriddo '87 18:27
So I was working on the first season of a Dick Wolf show called FBI Most Wanted. And we had with a 16 episodes season we were in the middle of filming 15 when we shut down. I had written 16, so that that's never gonna see the light of day. And since I didn't—one of the ways in which Kelly and I are different position. My show started filming again in

October, and one of the interesting things is I feel like this the pandemic has hit like writers and technicians, really hard. That is actors and technicians. Writers haven't really felt it quite yet because they're still paying us to write on the assumption that we're going to film things someday. So I'm in a writers' room right now on Zoom and we're writing scripts. They started filming in October of, second week in October and so far so good. Um, but who knows. I mean who knows if you know we could get shut down at any moment I know we, our show has, has a single lead with some supporting characters and I know there is a bubble of safety around the lead because he's the one man who would you know put us down. I mean anybody else can be replaced, your star grows [inaudible] [laughter].



Kelly Aucoin '85 19:51

May I ask Gina a question? So one of the things that the to the shows I've been working on Bold Type in Toronto and Billions. Both of them in different ways had to create finales out of episodes that were not meant to be finales. Bold Type I think they ended up having to shut down two episodes before the end of their season which, and they're going to start up with those episodes, but with Billions It was interesting because we were in episode—we finished episode seven. And that's often sort of a slingshot for a 12 episode season where you can do something odd and sort of break the show's rules a little bit stylistically and structurally and tone wise and then shoot off to the next back half and the back half so to stands alone, and instead it had to become this, they had to drastically edit it, so that it became—fundamentally story-wise it was the same but a lot of the secondary stories were changed. So that became an impromptu midseason finale. Did you guys experience anything like that when you had to finish before 16?



Gina Gionfriddo '87 20:54

No, because the Dick Wolf model, the Law and Order model is that the shows are designed to syndicate well so you should be able to turn any episode on in your hotel room anywhere in the world and just enjoy it. So, you know, there wasn't



Kelly Aucoin '85 21:10

—And I do!



Laura Rosberg 21:13

Terence could you hop in on this since you're also producing television?

T

Terence Carter '97 21:19

Yeah, I am. All I'm hearing is that you are both tech avail and you can develop Gina and we'll develop a show for Kelly to star in. Um, I yeah you know it was, it was funny, I left kind of my big corporate job at at Fox Disney in November of 19 November of last year and started this new job partnered with Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith and, and we started this sort of new endeavor and we're jumping into it and so, you know, you start in November and for most of the industry kind of from Thanksgiving through the holidays is a bit of a wash. So, January, February came I had like kind of two good months to get my footing, and then March hit, and you know the world turned on its axis. So, it, it definitely was a challenging point for for us and I think we had a bunch of things that were in very sort of early stages that got got put on hold that were development things that that I won't sort of bore people with but what ended up happening is that we pivoted to what can we produce. Now, what can we keep on sort of the track. So we had one show that we were producing we make a show called Red Table Talk that Jada stars in it's a it's a really terrific talk show format for Facebook Watch as for their service and we shoot that actually out of their home. And typically, we'd have a crew of about 60 people on set for a given episode plus our three, our three hosts and whatever guests that we would have. So somewhere between 60 and 70 people on set. We spent a long time figuring out how to be a little bit more efficient, and, and, and just sort of restructure our staff. We ended up, figuring out how to get this, this staff down to seven people, plus our three hosts on set, at any given time. And then we would Zoom in, everybody else and so we kept the show on, we kept going live straight through and we actually haven't stopped, what we, what we had to do was put on pause. Our spinoff, which was, which is real, Red Table Talk. The Esteban's which is around Gloria Estefan and her family, which we were supposed to shoot in April, and we actually just ended up shooting earlier this fall and it just premiered on Facebook. We were shooting that in Miami, and the big challenge there was, same kind of idea we were going to be shooting in their home and it was just the family and so we could have taken similar precautions but it was tough to travel people. You couldn't travel key, key talent that you wanted involve key crew that you wanted to participate, all of those things so we did a pretty big, sort of, pivot on that show and we turned our attention to some other things a show that we did for Snapchat that we shot out of Will's garage that he starred in that we set up and turned around in a month and put that on air, and a Netflix docu-series that could just pull found footage and documentary footage and so we really focused on post-production stuff so that was kind of how we ended up pivoting.

L

Laura Rosberg 24:51

Hey, I'm gonna pivot a little bit right now myself. I'm gonna ask A.J. to pop in because he is dealing with such a different side of the entertainment biz. AJ, are you there?

A A.J. Weisbard '91 25:05
I am still awake.

L Laura Rosberg 25:06
Yes. In Russia, and sleep

A A.J. Weisbard '91 25:11
Well, at the end of February, I was in Palermo Sicily, finishing an opera, surrounded by people in the middle of the audience and as I look back on it now it might not have been the best, most healthy moments. In a few days after I got on a plane to Tel Aviv for meetings and to be with my, my family, and mid March we came back to Moscow and everything, shut down, of course. But for me, I found the extreme challenge that we cannot in the live Performing Arts anyway, as you as you as you know so well. The audience is key. And this has been the stumbling point for all of my work in the past month. I had a project in Germany that was set for September and we didn't know if it would happen. In the end I was able to redesign it once we had the approval to go forward, and we had to change the project many times because of health regulations that kept on changing. For example, distancing regulations and actually Germany has been quite successful with keeping many, many things open, based on their approach to testing, based on their regulations for rehearsals working with performers, dancers or singers, they have, let's say, put into place practices that that really seemed to help and our and our project, made it. But it's complicated, different countries have different rules projects that I had in Russia have fallen apart, Italy for example closed. I think two days ago again two performances I have friends who are working in in theatres there and everything just stops on a dime. In terms of transitioning, which I've been thinking about, of course, how to make this. We don't know what's going to happen next. So we're looking to alternative environments for performance live performance audiences are always hungry, I think, for live events. And so we look to unconventional spaces. We've been thinking about projects in hotels, for example, specific theatrical events that are in spaces where crowd layout, and the audience is something where you can control in a different way and also be flexible as things change so we're trying to find creative solutions to face to face the moment, I think, one of the other interesting things that Terence touched upon that's been critical for for me is, travel, and its restrictions. I've flown a few times but not being able to make meetings does something very interesting with the arts, because so much of my business has been in face to face development, creative sessions and the like. So I think that that is something that we're adapting to now. Zoom is a good replacement and these chats, but it's also different than than getting in a room and hammering out the details and working on ideas.



Laura Rosberg 28:39

Ethan, can I ask you to pop in now since you're working in a variety of media.



Ethan Slater '10 28:43

Sure, yeah. When this when this started. I was in rehearsals, with Judy for a revival of Assassins in New York, which was incredibly exciting it was a dream, dream role that I've been waiting to do. And, of course, it was like tough when it shut down. Fortunately the theater is committed to producing it whenever theaters reopen so there's hope in that direction. But it did force me to pivot to something that I've been cultivating since I was in High School which is my writing, and I've been working as a writer, you know, in general, but this was an opportunity like you know was saying, you know, writers are affected in one way but sort of not in another. So I was able to work on those things. And, you know, I've had I've had this musical that I wrote. You know, in development so to speak for four years. And we were thinking, you know we have next steps in mind and we're talking with theatres and all these good things that feel way far in the future and so we thought about you know what can we do now sort of touching on what everybody's been saying what can we do now to both help the development process but also create something that feels artistically satisfying and valuable. So we took this show that is mostly sung through, and we conceptualize it for a concept album. Now like that's also something that playing with musicians and getting our band in one space to play together, like, you can't replace that with Zoom, but you can approximate it and and we do these wonderful Zoom sessions where we all listen to the track at the same time and we throw out our creative ideas and we brainstorm and then we go off and we record it remotely. And I actually just got off of a six-hour long studio session where a performer who happens to be my favorite performer since I was in Middle School is playing the lead role in it, and you shooting.



Laura Rosberg 29:00

And you can name that person?



Ethan Slater '10 30:49

Yeah, I can. It's Norbert Leo Butz is playing the main role in it. And truly, I think, I think my sister is on this but I can't see her. I remember one time in High School, she was like, so you want to be an actor, like what you want to be like Tom Cruise. I was like, No, I want to be like Norbert Leo Butz. He does the best roles. But, anyway, so, um, I've been obsessed with him since forever. And so it was a total dream like we were, we were Zooming he's in

Vancouver shooting a TV show, and we just booked the space, we had Zoom setup, it was all COVID friendly, and again it doesn't really have the same live feel as playing in front of an audience or really being in the same space with someone, but God it was really good. It was like a really amazing artistic experience to see something that we've been working on, come to life in this way. And so I think that there, it's hard to talk about silver linings in a situation that has been so so just terrible for so many people in personal ways and in socio-political ways, but we were able to find these moments of hope and optimism in terms of our art form. We being me and my collaborators. And so that's been really exciting sort of how to, how do we focus on the writing of something, how do we take theatre and make it feel live, but do it in a way that is more usually associated with film and TV. How do we develop film and TV ideas that are going to not just reflect the, you know, minutiae of what we're going through, but rather the collective change in our experience and. So, there have been really great moments of that, since March.

- L** Laura Rosberg 32:33
Speaking of silver linings I invite any of the panelists to pop in on a question about what kinds of things do you think we've experienced. We've learned we've read thought that probably will stay with us, when we return to normal. Have you some thoughts?
- T** Terence Carter '97 32:59
Go ahead, Gina.
- G** Gina Gionfriddo '87 33:00
I know that there's a lot of conversation because I go to work in writers rooms on TV shows, and we're all doing it on Zoom now. And, and I love having lost two hours of commuting from my day but it's it's not the same. And we're all kind of wondering if the studios are going to look at this, if they're going to see it as a way to do it where they don't have to pay for expensive real estate, and I would love to lose those commuting hours but I would really be sad if that happens.
- L** Laura Rosberg 33:34
Kelly?
- K** Kelly Aucoin '85 33:36
No Terence, go ahead. Yeah, I think, you—

T

Terence Carter '97 33:39

No, I was just gonna say, you know, because I have a lot of those conversations with with studios and and and buyers as well and I think there's a, there's definitely a shift in in mentality where people are realizing, you know, a lot of a lot of things that you used to do in person just aren't necessary, you know a lot of meetings that you know you whether you trek across town or you just walk down the hallway, you know, they're just not needed, and and there they can just as easily been to be done or more efficiently even, you know, over Zoom over a phone call. Over emails. And so I think, I think you're going to see a lot of even once we get back to the place of being in shared environments and and having, you know, some, you know, some part of our days in close proximity to one another. I think you're going to start seeing people who, you know, aren't going to be doing that L.A. to New York, trip, five times a month, bouncing back and forth just to be able to juggle you know meetings before I think you're gonna see a lot more of that I think part of it is going to hold for sure, you know just. Most of the people on this call aren't from L.A. but like I live on one side of L.A. and Hancock Park and my office is in Calabasas. It's a long commute I'm with you Gina. So like, you know, I will be very happy to take a day or two, you know, to work from home going forward.

G

Gina Gionfriddo '87 35:05

It's going to be interesting across all injuries what the personal cost or toll is going to be because I think we're all going to love the convenience, but there's a way in which relationships I think may get short changed so be interesting.

L

Laura Rosberg 35:20

A.J. you mentioned doing theater if we're in new found spaces, new sites that will make it easier. You mentioned hotels. Are you seeing now in your work, other countries experimenting with this kind of thing?

A

A.J. Weisbard '91 35:37

Well, in Europe I think things move, often a bit slower. So the reaction that I have seen is, for example, taking something that exists. A lot of distribution of old work online, so that they can keep interest in the theaters. This is critical, different artists are moving out of the theater spaces. And, I guess, people are trying to hold on for as long as they can, building up a store of ideas that they can push once, things get going again, This is what I'm noticing. There are lots of projects that are on hold a season will get postponed for a year or two, you don't know. And people keep putting things into their their bank into their

creative bank anyway. My hope is that there will be some more recognition for freelance artists who are not necessarily the loudest voice. In all over the world, I my experience has been for the last 20, 25 years outside of the states, mainly. And it's a different experience, obviously, there are social nets that support, everyone in the community not just artists. But nonetheless, a lot of funding dries up now, public funding that was built for the arts throughout Europe and much, much, the rest of the world, and goes to serve now I think areas where it's it's desperately needed so also people are looking for new fundraising ideas and experimenting with ways to get support, which they haven't had as an American. I'm very familiar with this I think we all are understanding that you have to pay for what you make. But in Europe the situation is so different, and their artists has more support as a public good, but it's, it was tough times before I must admit, and I think that this pandemic has, has been just the cold water bath and forcing the artistic community into into new directions which is great.

L

Laura Rosberg 38:19

Nice. Ethan you familiar with so many people who do live theater. And how are you finding you and your cohorts—are you coming up with beyond what you're talking about ways to do live theater, you and your companions?

E

Ethan Slater '10 38:39

Oh, yeah, definitely. I mean, you know he was talking about new spaces. And I think that that's been a huge part of conversations I've been having with friends is, you know, how can we find outdoor spaces, how can we be working on projects that are enhanced by an odd space are enhanced by being, you know, in the outdoors and spread apart, sort of, immersive in that way as opposed to trying to shove something where it doesn't really belong, you know, and that that's been a really good conversation. I think in terms of, you know, necessity being the mother of invention and trying to do those things so I definitely think that a lot of my, my friends and my peers are racking their brains to do something cool. And to do something that that gets us working. But again, it's just a lot of pieces falling in line I think what I do think is really cool is that I'm seeing a lot of different satellite communities of mine, having similar but not exactly the same conversations, and I'm excited to see how those overlap over the next few months to, to create some really cool new things.

L

Laura Rosberg 39:53

You know I'm going to pivot the conversation again a little bit. It's GDS, and pretty much everyone on this call is connected with GDS, even if it's our grandmothers, or daughters.

I'd like each of you to take just a moment and talk a little bit about what happened to you at GDS. Since it is notable that out of this community started just in 1945 there are hundreds if not thousands of people in the entertainment business. I wasn't kidding when I said at the beginning that we could do this panel 100 times over and just, it would be the tip of the iceberg. So would someone like to comment on that. Ethan you're there, would you like to begin?

E

Ethan Slater '10 40:42

Sure, sure. Yeah. I mean, GDS was it was in so many ways, a huge formative experience like across the board, not just in the arts, but just in general, like it was a really amazing moment to like, start to teach me to learn to love learning. You know I was, I was a resistant kid to loving learning. And that started changing at GDS. And I think, particularly in the arts that was a really important space for me. Mainly because I felt like as a high schooler, we were being respected we were being challenged and and given the opportunity to try things that on the face of it were harder than we were capable of but it turns out we were actually capable of that and more. And it started pushing me to push myself and to expect myself to be a good collaborator to expected myself to help other people see their visions. And I think a lot of that had to do with the the tech side of GDS theater and seeing how these amazing designers and and crews were building something with their own hands and, and I want it to be a part of it. So that was an amazing thing and it speaking of these communities of people who you grew up with, you know, I had a great community in New York. Some GDS people but just like you know from a few years of being there and just moved out here in June moved out to Los Angeles in June, which is a really, you know, terrible time to move across the country, but it's always scary to move across the country to a new community, and immediately we got here and, you know, Camilla Grove is here who works in entertainment, she's amazing and Isaac Jay who is my brother in law is also my friend from GDS is also you know a writer out here and so like immediately Charlie Paulinger who is, I'm just saying names as though all of you were in my class but, you know, just the—The people who I looked up to and respected in high school, were here to welcome me and be people to look up to and respect again. So I feel grateful both for the spark at the beginning and the continued community.

L

Laura Rosberg 43:06

Kelly, can you add to that,

K

Kelly Aucoin '85 43:07

I just want to—I just had a flash on the first time I walked into an audition room and Gina

was sitting behind the producer's table and I was like, Oh,

G Gina Gionfriddo '87 43:19

I was an intern, I was probably an intern,

K Kelly Aucoin '85 43:22

I don't think so. I think you'd written it was that it was a. I'm sure it was a Law and Order thing, and. And I think, and all of a sudden it was like, Oh, hello. I have no memory of the rest of it and you didn't cast me but that's okay.

G Gina Gionfriddo '87 43:37

They don't listen to the writer ever!

L Laura Rosberg 43:40

Terence, can you pop in on this with a GDS memory?

T Terence Carter '97 43:44

Oh man, um, it's funny I was told this story from time to time but, um, you know, I'm sitting on this panel with, with a group of incredibly talented artists, and I think one of you know i'm kind of the suit on the panel, I guess. One of the things that I really took away from, from my GDS experience was, was the ability to like appreciate artistry and to respect what other people put into something. This is the story that I tell sometimes: I wrote this pretty short paper for Gary McKellen. I think it was, it was maybe 11th grade English or something or somewhere around there and. And I wrote the short paper, and I got a B plus on the paper, which was awesome, and Gary and the paper may have been two pages long and Gary wrote to me just you know double space with big margins, which is what we should do. He wrote back notes on my paper comments on it that were probably twice as long as my actual paper. And, and gave it a B plus and and what what I like, took away from that and I went back home to my parents and and you know and showed them was like B plus and then they saw the notes and they were like, well, you have to rewrite that paper. He put more time into critiquing your paper than you did writing that paper and, and it, and it made me realize like, how much he respected what I had put into it, and that he in turn had showed me the respect to, to give that and so I I went back and I, you know, when I did the work even though it was a B plus and I should have just rested on my laurels. And, you know, it, that really stuck with me because I every time that I'm working

on a project and I get something I think back to like, how much somebody has put into that their blood their sweat their tears all of those things. And, and I owe it to them to, you know, to give back, equally and so that was just a lesson that I think that's specific instance with Gary taught me but I had countless teachers who who gave me that same, same feedback.

K

Kelly Aucoin '85 46:02

Can I just jump in for a second and I'll stop talking I'm not trying to I just said something but this is this is somewhat connected to that and I've just because GDS was always a very nurturing place, but it was also an incredibly rigorous place not just academically but in in the arts. And one of the best lessons I ever learned was a little bit of a smackdown from Laura. When I had been cast in like the last two shows and I was feeling pretty good about myself. And I remember going to an audition. And just like not really prepping I just like I'm gonna sing a song I'm gonna charm my way into this and if I hope I don't—She's not on I'm sure she'd be fine. Your daughter, [Laura]!

L

Laura Rosberg 46:46

Talk about Leslie, Yes.

K

Kelly Aucoin '85 46:48

Leslie, as a young girl was there at the audition and I remember I sang to her I was serenading her, and I was just literally nothing prepped, I just was gonna get this gig, and she cried. I literally made her cry. And I remember after afterwards, talking to somebody I didn't get the part. Not because of that, but because my audition was shit. But I remember, Laura overheard me when someone asked me in the hallway, because we always used to hang out sitting in the hallway that those were our lounges, I, she, someone asked me how the audition goes i well i made, I made someone cry. I didn't get it because it was, and Laura came out of her office I just want you to know that's not the reason why you didn't get that part. And I was like, Oh, no, I didn't I said no I, you just said it was because of her. Just because you didn't prepare. And I was like, [sadly] I know that. But, but whatever it was, it was a great lesson that I would have that the lesson was was something that, that, that stuck with me, that, you know, there's nothing—there's no amount of lack of preparation that charm can overcome.

L

Laura Rosberg 47:57

Okay—



Kelly Aucoin '85 47:59

Attempted charm!



Laura Rosberg 48:00

We'd like to transition now to the question and answer session, and it's it's interesting that right now. It is not giving me the spreadsheet. It's not allowing me access. So I'm going to ask my technical crew, my handy dandy technical crew. If you can get me access to that. I asked for access, it's been sent,



Danny Stock 48:27

Laura, it's coming your way. Correy has prepared the questions for you. Perfect for that. Look at the document that He has given you at the bottom, you'll have all your questions ready to choose. Thank you.



Laura Rosberg 48:40

Okay, it's coming my way and it's not coming my way.



Gina Gionfriddo '87 48:45

Maybe in the meantime, A.J. wants to mention GDS.



A.J. Weisbard '91 48:48

Yes. With pleasure and if I can bestow my compliments to you as well, Laura, because you know we've spoken about it so many times and I'm so proud to have been able to return and work with some of the students over the past years, whenever whenever I was in town and—Well, your influence on me my work and just my life was fundamental. I think that you, your approach to those of us who frequented the theater was so generous, and I think that my wish to to stay connected with teaching as has always been inspired by the way that you educated. I didn't feel that what we were doing was ever something like being students in any way, in the theater world at GDS. You gave us the theater. That's what I felt like and for this I felt a sense of ownership and confidence pride in what we were doing. And a kind of blind courage to go forward and solve the problems that were in front of us, and this is —these lessons, his philosophies are something that I've, I've always carried with me in all my work now. So I hope that's enough for you to open your spreadsheet and...



Laura Rosberg 50:30

Well, the questions. And I'm still getting access denied. So what I'm going to ask is, my, my, technical crew here. Since it's denying me access, if you would, perhaps, take a risk. Come on screen here, and begin with some of the questions for me. Thank you. Is that you, Danny perhaps? Or Correy?



Danny Stock 51:04

Hi, there. I'm gonna ask Correy to unmute he has questions.



Laura Rosberg 51:07

Okay.



Correy Hudson 51:09

All right, so our first question is can you please give some advice to the kids for what they should do to keep their passion in arts and music.



Laura Rosberg 51:17

Oh. Advice anyone. Go, Ethan.



Ethan Slater '10 51:27

Um, advice in terms of keeping your passion for arts and music. It's a good question. I think one of the things that people often say is be wary of turning your passion into your job because it'll become a chore. I'm not sure that I that I buy that because I think that if you are passionate about what you're doing and the art and the music, the work is impassioned, the work is exciting. And so I would follow that feeling and I would follow that experience where, you know, if you love doing something put the work into it and the more work, you should—That should breed more passion. And if it doesn't, if it feels like a chore, then, you know I wouldn't say give up I would say keep exploring it but also make sure that you're keeping your, your passion options open because let's say you love the theater. And you are passionate about acting but the acting freaks you out doesn't feel as good. Like, you put the work in it doesn't feel good, maybe, maybe actually what you're passionate about is the theater-making and there are so many ways to do theater-making, which is one of the great things about GDS was that it made made that very clear. I hope that is advice because I just want to really quickly add that the, the only piece

of advice that I regularly give is that it's impossible to take advice, but you should try to remember it so you can make that exact mistake and then be like, ah, he told me not to do that. He said I shouldn't do that. That's like, that's how I approach advices, you're gonna make mistakes anyway.

L Laura Rosberg 53:10

And I'm going to go back to Correy, Alum Relations, who right now has the list of questions unless you'd like to put one in the chat for me. But Correy is going to ask the next one.

C Correy Hudson 53:21

Yes. This question is for AJ. Are there things that the US could learn from the European from the European theaters that have been able to open and allow performances?

A A.J. Weisbard '91 53:34

The short answer is yes. The long answer would probably cause a lot of fights among the community. I think certainly there are solutions. The first—the first is to understand, if you want to keep things going or not. My impression and watching the news coming back from the U.S. is that there isn't a concerted wish by all of those who may help to, to keep the arts open. I was convinced at the beginning of the pandemic's that theater would find a way quickly because sports and church, religion, which are similar in their spirit to coming together as a congregation sharing an event would find a way. It's been troubling to watch what's happening now in the States. Certainly masks are required throughout Europe in all the public events. I haven't seen this specified in the US I'm not there I cannot say but people are all sorts of processes have been revamped from buying tickets, to taking out seats in theaters, to make sure that people can't get close enough together to be a risk, for example, the way rehearsals are organized, schedules, distancing, what needs to be done close can be has to be limited and cared for other things are spread out, making choices to to work remotely when when possible, certainly the last project that I—live project that I was involved with—weeks of rehearsal were scrapped schedules were rearranged to put everything into the smallest period possible, and then spaces were made, safe and healthy for us, for us to work. But I think it's also a bit more complicated because in Europe, the social structure is so different in terms of health care in terms of social safety nets. And this has also in terms of the community's connection to the government and government services. So it's not a simple question, but I think the most important thing is to be sure that that's what everyone wants right now. This is a little bit what I'm what I'm concerned about with live arts from what I've seen in the States.

L Lisa Schneiderman 56:09
Laura. Laura we had a question from the chat. Yeah, from another one of your alum Anna Bergman. She said she has found a gift and being able to do virtual concerts and readings of musicals in faraway places, London and California, New Jersey. Have the panelists found this to be a gift, to be able to share one's arts and collaborate across the globe during the pandemic?

K Kelly Aucoin '85 56:44
I haven't been traveling across the globe, just if that's the question. What was the question again?

L Lisa Schneiderman 56:51
So the question was, if you've had a chance to, did you find it a gift to travel around the world virtually and share your art.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 57:04
I mean, for me, it's gonna be different for all of us. I'm sure for me it's been, I had the constraints of, of not really being able to sign on with anything for a while and which are now lifted but for me I didn't experience that but I know a lot of people who have a lot of immersive—my wife's, a member of an immersive theatre company here in New York, Third Rail Projects. They had a show "Then She Fell," which ran for 10 years, and it finally had to close, because their margin profit margin was so tight, but they've been getting together once a week as a company, and and working on how to transfer that sort of immersive experience into onto something that's on that that's virtual and online and they've had a few of these, these shows that they've, they've presented and beamed out to the world and they've been rather successful. So that's my short answer not my personal experience but watching Carolyn doing that work,

L Laura Rosberg 58:04
Correy, do you have other questions you can cop in with?

C Correy Hudson 58:08
Yes, I do. Good. So our next question, um, I would say specifically for Gina, Ethan, and Terrence since the three of you kind of deal with writing a little bit more. In what ways do

you think the industry is responding, or not responding to the Black Lives Matter movement.

T

Terence Carter '97 58:35

I think, um, you know, I think it's been very interesting in the TV landscape. Just on on the development side of things because, you know, one of the, one of the, the, sort of downsides of television, which I think people, oftentimes sort of ding the form for—sometimes fairly sometimes unfairly—is, is it's sort of derivative nature that that there is you know that there is a lot of chasing of success of sort of things that have that have come before and worked or, you know, or what's in the Zeitgeist what people are talking about all of those things. I certainly, you know, saw it as funny, you know that the in a, in a positive way. When we did the show Empire. and you know when we had real success out of the gate with that show. And, and the next development season, you know, everyone in town who was buying was like, "Can you give me your next Black ensemble show?" And, and, and, on the one hand, it was this beautiful blessing that the town was really opening up to having diverse faces on screen and behind camera as well. On the flip side of it, it got, you know into a very reductive place where I you know I know at least one showrunner who she, she wrote a script for a certain network I won't say, and and that network, said 'We love your script it's on like the one yard line. If you can rewrite your whole cast to be Black, we'll pick it up to pilot. And so that's the extreme reductive version of it right which is like, for all the wrong reasons it's sort of happening. I think what I've been seeing now is that there is because it is part of the conversation because it is top of line for so many people. There is an openness and a willingness in the town. And, and I would even maybe go so far to say, a desire to find voices that have otherwise, or previously been ignored and amplified them. And so, that is a tremendous opportunity. There's just a, you know, a little bit of a cynical part of me that, that feels like it's, it's a moment in time, you know and and that scares me. And that's the thing that I think we all need to be very wary of is—right now. you know, we've got a bunch of a bunch of people who are trapped in their homes and focused on sort of the new cycle and, and out of their normal sort of familiar patterns and so I want to be, you know, cautious that that the enthusiasm around it continues but anyway long winded way of saying, I think right now, there has been there has been a real openness to to tell some of the stories and define those voices and bring them forward.

L

Laura Rosberg 1:01:49

Would you like to comment on that question? I can. I mean, I think is a terrible thing to say I think like shame is a big motivator and that's not necessarily a bad thing. I feel like the upside of the moment has been that, I think, executives are embarrassed if they don't have

writers of color on their staff, if their shows you know don't have any persons of color in the cast. So there has been you know this rush of like, you know, like, CBS reviews are casting lists and they will they will bounce it back if you know if it's too white and I mean that's that's that's been an incredible upside. I'm cynical about why it's happening, but hey I'll take it. Okay. Correy, have you another question—we are running over time a bit.

K

Kelly Aucoin '85 1:02:43

May I actually ask a question, may I ask a question of the writers in the group? Is that okay? I'm curious because self taping was already starting to overtake auditioning in the room. And obviously that's all people are doing now. And I think I'm wondering what—How you've maybe seen that affect the business? You now have, theoretically have, access to actors, wherever they live, which has to be theoretically would be great for you. And I wonder about that and it also makes me wonder about the future of cities like Los Angeles and New York, whether or not they will continue to be these hubs of the arts that they are Chicago, that they happen but anyway I just wonder if you guys if you guys have seen a change.

G

Gina Gionfriddo '87 1:03:34

Yeah, and I think there's a similar thing going on on the writing end and like I you know I've been approached by staff that are in Los Angeles because as long as they're on Zoom you know they can they can take writers from anywhere. Um, so I think, I think, as far as actors being on tape, but the issue right now, if this is going to be a good moment for New York actors because the TV shows, filming in New York are trying to cast locally so that that you know because nobody wants to fly. Um, but yeah it is it is something I wonder about and people have been asking me like, Oh, you can move out of New York now and pay less rent if you're going to be on a Zoom call the time.

K

Kelly Aucoin '85 1:04:16

I mean, in the future, and in particular, that's what I'm wondering about once there is a vaccine, people realize they can they can get these auditions from anywhere and whether it been how that affects things. I'm curious. Terence, do you have a thought? Have you experienced anything?

T

Terence Carter '97 1:04:31

Yeah, you know, I think, I'm having been in my prior job on the buying side at Fox and NBC before that I was already seeing a trend of that as you mentioned before, Kelly like that

was sort of the direction that it was heading in anyway and part of that was because you know when when you are on the programming side of things and you're in you're sitting at the network there as an artist, I mean, look, it's, it's, entertainment, there's an artifice to all of it but there was a real artifice to those in-the-room auditions, where, where it felt like you—We as sort of the programmers weren't able to really assess what the actor could bring to the role because the fact of the matter is when you're talking about television and film as well, like, you don't just get one chance to do a performance live in front of, by the way as you said Kelly at the beginning, like in front of an intimidating room of of Gina's. But, you know, you don't you don't usually have have that experience when you're on set, there is a crew there there's past but there's a family feeling and you get multiple takes and you can really work with it you work with it and the director and, and all of those things. So there was, um, there was an inconsistency between what the job ultimately was and what the audition process was that I think was already being identified and trying to be kind of adjusted. So I think this is probably just going to either cement that change or or speed it up if it was taking a little while, but I think Gina too, you're right about that, the Zoom rooms with, with writers I when I was at NBC, I wanted so many times to—Gina you don't know this—but to snag Gina over onto one of our many other shows, but they were all L.A. based and we could never get her because she wasn't willing to move from New York, and it was always very very frustrating. Oh, um and now I feel like you know in this day and age, it's really liberating that that we can potentially get you out of that Dick Wolf camp and and bring you into other bands that are outside of the New York writers' room, which is exciting.



Laura Rosberg 1:06:50

Correy, I think we have time for one more.



Correy Hudson 1:06:53

You've got time for one more, and it's from one of our students so I think it's a great way to end. Um, what does acting with people look like in COVID?



Gina Gionfriddo '87 1:07:06

I can tell you, on, on our show they, they told us write for a COVID environment and the actors are going to wear masks and they filmed that for a day and they looked at the dailies and they said, this—we can't do this. So they're they're experimenting now with, you know. It's harder in the East Coast I think because we can do things outdoors now we're not gonna be able to do that in February. So, that's what it's like on our end.

L Laura Rosberg 1:07:34
All right,

T Terence Carter '97 1:07:35
I can just, oh, sorry, sorry. I was just going to speak on it on a technical standpoint, you know, one of the things that they're doing now is putting into place a lot of different safety measures on the production side of things and and so there's different ways of, of, of addressing it. There's certain shows and productions that that are called bubble productions, where essentially everyone involved has to stay inside of a bubble and can only interact within that group of people and so you have this very protected environment but you're eating, sleeping, socializing inside of this bubble. There's also other forms of, of the way that productions are structured like where they break up by pods or by groups and so you might have sort of a pod one which is kind of your talent pool and those who are directly in contact your director your DP, somebody—a lighting person and AC. People who are in direct contact and then sort of pods, two which might be PAs and and loggers and then pods, three and on which is sort of the staff that isn't in direct contact so part of what's happening too is like is a shift where they're, they're splitting up productions and separating people out so that if God forbid somebody comes down with, with COVID and tests positive, they're able to sort of isolate them within the group that they've been interacting with, and the show can go on, so to speak. And and so that's that's something that's that's have I don't know, you know, Kelly then if you guys have experienced that at all, recently, but that's something that's going on I know in the TV landscape.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:09:18
Yeah, and seven tests—that one of the things I heard but when we were thinking of coming back in October was potentially seven tests a week. Two on Monday and Wednesday, and one on each of the other days, including some of the brain poke swabs, which are the ones that really tell you what's happening.

T Terence Carter '97 1:09:36
We'll do like four on some productions right now and you know it, the whole thing adds you know it's it's challenging because, you know, for somebody like Gina who also is responsible for keeping tabs on a budget and the schedule and production. You know, it's, it's challenging because there's a real added cost and time and all of those things to it that impacts what you can also put on screen. So, you know, lots of ripple effects.



Laura Rosberg 1:10:04

Parents have appreciated your comments about pods, or cohorts or bubbles or whatever you want to call it. Obviously, it's what schools are trying to do right now. And that's a perfect segue for me to say, "And now we'll join Russell for some final words."



Kelly Aucoin '85 1:10:25

Laura. Thank you. There was this fabulous moment right before we started when alums were on the call and they were greeting each other and talking about you know where they hang out [inaudible] or the lounge, and where alums we're seeing people like Jackie Marlin and Kevin bar, you know people who were sort of formative in their GDS experiences and Gloria Runyon who many of you know our longtime legendary lower school principal came on and saw Terence and said, "Wow, hey Terry, you've grown up." And, and it was this oh yeah you were a second grader once. No and Kelly you were in Middle School and Gina you were a High School English student who had Laura as your English teacher. And for us, those moments mean so much that you're you know what what do we share here? This connection to this institution. And that we have kids on the call saying, "Wow, I can maybe someday do one of these things because these people went to GDS and now they're doing them." And we know because of Kelly, that even if they're charming, it won't be enough. Attempted charm, I said attempted charm. Attempted charm. Attempted charm, real charm but maybe hard work is part of it as well. So, so to to Kelly and Terence and Gina and Ethan and A.J. Thank you, thank you, thank you for sharing your stories with us, sharing your insights with us. To Laura, thank you for having helped foster, not just the artists who have joined us tonight but so many artists who have made their way out from Georgetown Day School. We are tremendously grateful for all the work that you have done. And I want everybody to know that this is the second panel. We have our next panel is going to be in November: November, 18. We will have our 23rd Annual Benjamin Cooper Memorial Lecture. And the theme: We had signed on some of you know, a year ago, Justice Ginsburg had agreed to be our speaker, an alumni parent, we are honoring her memory with this year's panel GDS alumnus Congressman Jamie Raskin class of 79 will be on. Two alumni parents, federal judges Nina Pillard and Ketanji Jackson. Ketanji is currently on the board and will be on the panel. Also NPR's Nina Totenberg will be on the panel. They will be in conversation with me talking about both Justice Ginsburg's legacy and also, what does it mean for this moment in GDS history and our country's. So I'm looking forward to that. Join us on November, 18, and everybody, thank you for being part of this program tonight. Have a great evening.



Cordenia Paige 1:13:41

Good to see you, Kelly.

A A.J. Weisbard '91 1:13:42
Thank you, Laura.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:13:44
Great to see you too.

K Kevin Barr 1:13:45
Thanks all of you for doing this.

G Gina Gionfriddo '87 1:13:47
Yeah, good class in the 80s.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:13:51
80s!

L Laura Rosberg 1:13:53
The chat will remain open while the host lights are coming up for any conversation or reflection, you may wish to have with among yourselves. We'll close in a couple of minutes. Our goal is 8:15—you have two minutes. Register for the Benjamin Ben Cooper Memorial Lecture.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:14:15
Terence, someday in the future, I'd love to continue this conversation you just the way you were describing from the producer's point of view, the production point of view. The self tape or the or that that type of audition versus in the room. It's fascinating because it's sort of the the polar opposite of the way I think of it, and I don't know that I am the norm, but as an actor there's something about being in a room with someone who presumably as a director, the casting director has the ear or knows or is inside the head of the director or the producer, as opposed to you, you can get 100 takes, but it's just about your own amorphous idea, so that's that's an interesting thing and I think maybe an age thing. A lot of younger actors might and Ethan and maybe you can speak to this but a lot of younger

actors might have a different take on it.

E Ethan Slater '10 1:15:14
I feel the same as you, Kelly. I feel the same way.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:15:17
Yes, I'm young again.

E Ethan Slater '10 1:15:20
Oh, you're both accomplished thespians.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:15:27
But that's good that's just interesting to hear it from the other from the another point of view, but that's in a lot of ways feels beneficial to you, actually. Fascinating.

T Terence Carter '97 1:15:38
Yeah, for sure.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:15:40
I will get over myself now.

L Laura Rosberg 1:15:44
Panelists, it's 8:15. Thank you.

G Gina Gionfriddo '87 1:15:48
So fun.

K Kelly Aucoin '85 1:15:50
It was.



Terence Carter '97 1:15:52

Thanks everyone. Ethan, everybody, it's A.J., all the way from Moscow, go back to bed, A.J.
Everybody, good night everybody,



Ethan Slater '10 1:16:04

Great to see everyone.



Kelly Aucoin '85 1:16:08

Thanks, Laura.