



PILLARS OF THE ARTS

Storytelling is a fundamental part of who we are as human beings. Storytelling is everything from fiction and entertainment to history, experience, and wisdom. Storytelling moves us forward as a society. Without it, we remember nothing. There are no lessons learned. If no one tells the stories that need to be told, we lose them forever. The following is a collection of stories about those who tell them.

Sam Saliba, Haley Breit and Kate Muldoon

PASSING THE TORCH FORWARD

Director Melissa Williams pushes young people to continue the tradition of storytelling through the performing arts, based on her own experience

Standing on the risers of an elementary school choir is where Ms. Melissa Williams first discovered her passion for the performing arts. "I vividly remember being in choir in elementary school and a choir director just really tapped into my love of music," she said. "He kept encouraging me to try theatre, to try dance."

Later, in her teenage years, Williams switched high schools. She felt right at home in the performing arts area of her new school. "I found the community, the acceptance, and the people that I resonated with," Williams said. "It made me feel like I had a place to express and a place for people to hear my voice, and listen."

Since high school, Williams has been involved in everything under the sun involving the arts. She started teaching voice and theater at age 22, and at age 28 she began working in arts administration.

Looking back, she wishes she'd begun her journey in arts administration sooner. "I wish I'd had a broader opportunity to explore administration and things like that in the arts, because that's what I've found myself doing in my later years, as opposed to being just a wonderful performer," she said.

Currently, Williams is a director for CenterStage Theatre Company in Louisville. She puts on productions with an aim to tell stories to the best of her ability. In addition to directing for

CenterStage, she runs South Boulder Vocal Studio as her day job.

In October of 2018, she directed a production of Avenue Q which sold out every night. More recently in March of 2020, she directed Into the Woods, which was equally successful. In November 2019 when she performed in Longmont Theatre Company's production of Carrie: The Musical, the majority of audience members already knew who she was and were there largely to see her.

Williams strives to pass the tradition of storytelling down to young people. "It's our responsibility to create full humans, and a full human is someone who values the arts," she said, "Whether it's performing, visual, digital, something that taps into the creative side of humans."

She herself is an adept storyteller, and in being one she is passionate about sharing the craft of it with others. "I think it is very important to, as adults who are involved in the arts in any format, whether you're a patron, or a teacher, or an artist, to pass that love of the arts down to the next generation," Williams said.

Without the addition of the arts to a person's life, Williams feels there would be something missing. "[The arts] gives [young people] a form of expression that completes them," she said, "and that will guide and be with them and they will find value and beauty in the world around them through the arts," she said.



THE INTERSECTION OF STORYTELLING AND TECHNOLOGY

As a designer and evangelist of the arts, James "Kit" Beall is both a storyteller and a patron

After hanging a light upon the first electric of his Massachusetts Middle School auditorium, a young Kit Beall pursues his recently sparked passion for production. "I went from being that middle school kid with nine mechanical dimmers to seeing things that I would call 'semi-professional,'" Kit said. "It was exciting to continue to do more and learn more and create."

Kit grew up in a "fairly arts-aware community." It was relatively close to New York City, which meant that he grew up around people who were, in some way or another, involved in major Broadway productions. "The shows I was involved with were increasingly professional," Kit said.

Kit's interest in lighting developed exponentially. "I like being able to mix the art with the technical aspects of it. To actually be able to connect an idea to the physical delivery of it," he said.

Many compare lighting to sculpture, as a lighting designer essentially creates a physical thing with a wide variety of tools at their disposal. In the end, the result is what allows us to perceive that which is three-dimensional.

Now, as an adult and a leader in the arts community,

Kit believes firmly in the value of bringing the technical side of production to younger generations. "To me, there's no team sport more involved than putting on a show. You have architects, artists, actors, designers, and the director. All of these people come together, and effectively, act in unison to deliver," explained Kit.

No aspect of this is a solo act for Kit. "Nobody leaves the theatre humming your lighting design. That's the fun part of it for me, if you do it well, it's seamless, and it contributes to a compelling experience," he said.

Putting on a show is "when you give people a purpose and a compelling reason to come together and do something you can create great art, and along the way, you're teaching."

Beall continues, "I think our responsibility as educators and leaders in the community is to provide opportunities to kids and young adults to be able to have this opportunity for this form of expression."

EXPERIENCING THE STORY

Actors like Lily and Jack Weisbart live at the heart of storytelling by embodying the characters that convey the story

Props lay piled in the corner as makeshift curtains draw closed and the lights dim to darkness. Two young children wait eagerly in their costumes, anticipating the curtains' reopen. Another show in the Weisbart family room stage begins.

Lily Weisbart '22 and Jack Weisbart '24 have always been theatre kids, in every sense of the stereotype. "I think that the arts are kind of the only way we can express ourselves and get our big personalities out. We've just been doing it for so long, and now it's just a part of who we are," Lily said.

In fifth grade, Lily performed in her first musical, *Seussical*. At first she was disappointed because she wasn't familiar with the show. But she soon discovered a more important aspect of performance than the content itself. "It

doesn't even matter what the show is," she said, "because honestly, just being on stage is the most amazing part."

For Jack, "it's also about the connections that you make with other people." Being a part of a production is more than just being on stage and performing a few nights a week. Everything from the relationships formed with peers to the feedback received from directors is integral to the final product.

Actors are the ones who seem to 'experience' being in a show more than anyone else. "What's most rewarding is actually getting on stage and having the rush and being able to perform something for other

people," Lily said.

A major part in that experience is receiving direction from the show's leadership. "[A director] was super honest with me, which I think really pushed me to be better than I was," said Lily. "The honesty you get from everyone who is leading you through the process of doing a show is really the most important thing to help you grow as an actor."

As with producing and leading a show, acting and performing in one is just as important. While a show could be performed with an empty stage, it's much harder to convey a compelling story without giving it a mascot. That's where actors come in. Tropes and stereotypes aside, passionate individuals like Lily and Jack are how it all starts.

