ROCKY NOW

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Rocky Now: Keeping our friends and supporters informed about what's new and exciting at Rocky Mountain College

All About Our Students

Reaching Out

One of the special characteristics about Rocky Mountain College is that there aren't impediments to individual initiative and personal development. Case in point: Sam Cornthwaite. The Shields Valley, Mont., native transferred to Rocky after his freshman year at a state university where he found classes "stagnant and unchallenging." Within his first semester at Rocky, Cornthwaite had begun writing a book, continued to grow his youth leadership company, and, as a work study student assisting the development and alumni offices, he began a process to build a student-alumni association.

Photo: Courtesy
Sam Cornthwaite has found his RMC experience invigorating and challenging.

"When I came here, I felt challenged to better myself. I really liked the class sizes and quality of the professors, but I was really drawn in by the community atmosphere," he said. "This place nurtures my belief that you don't need to wait to serve. You can do your best now. You can help others now."

A communication studies major, Cornthwaite believes deeply in reaching out to lend a hand whenever possible. In high school, he started his own fly fishing rod company – Shields River Rods – designing and crafting custom rods that sold from $300 - $1,000. To help the annual Black Tie Blue Jeans scholarship benefit, he donated one of his rods, valued at $675, for the auction.

"I wasn't at Rocky very long, and here was an opportunity to practice what I preach right off the bat, " he said.

To grow a student-alumni association – one where students feel a part of the

(Please see **All About Our Students** *inside)*

Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC
Commencement is always made more colorful when the uniqueness of the RMC experience is displayed on mortar boards at graduation ceremonies.

The 129th

Bill Bowers Will Address Graduates

Graduates of the Class of 2011 will hear from a Rocky Mountain College alumnus, who is an actor, mime, and educator, at the 129th Commencement, May 7, 2011. It will not be the first return visit to his alma mater for Bill Bowers, RMC'81. Bowers was the guest entertainer at the annual RMC Institute for Peace Studies Jeanette Rankin Peace Concert in 2002, and received an honorary doctorate at an RMC Convocation in 2001.

Bowers, profiled in the Focus on Alumni section inside this issue, will also be guest of honor at the annual RMC President's Dinner, hosted by President Michael Mace and his wife, Karen.

Commencement begins at 1:00 p.m. in the Fortin Education Center. The President's Dinner begins with a reception at 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m., in the Great Room of Prescott Hall.

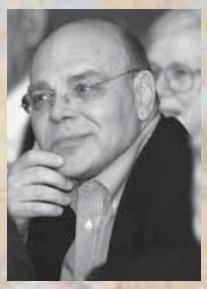
Commencement is free and open to the public. The President's Dinner requires a ticket, available for $75, and may be purchased by contacting Vicki Davison, RMC director of development, (406) 657-1005/ vicki.davison@rocky.edu.

Other events scheduled during Commencement week include:

- **Friday, May 6:** Reception for graduates and their families, hosted by President and Mrs. Mace, in The Great Room, Prescott Hall, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
- **Friday, May 6:** Baccalaureate, at First Presbyterian Church, 2420 13th Street West, 7:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, May 7:** Graduation Brunch for graduates and their families, McDonald Commons, Bair Family Student Center, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Insider

By Michael R. Mace, President



Graduates Make the Case for New Facilities

"I really feel that I was better prepared than many of my peers for medical school, and most of my peers went to big name East Coast schools."

-- Nicole Ruske, RMC 2008, now in medical school at Albert Einstein College of Medicine

When Dr. Claire Oakley shared this comment from Nicole Ruske with me, it reminded me of when Nicole capped an outstanding college career at Rocky by winning the President's Cup, which I award to one female and one male student for academic excellence and contributions to the community.

Nicole was exceptional in so many ways, achieving high honors in her course of study, but also participating in other facets of campus life. Nicole is what we mean when we say Rocky provides a transformational experience. In addition to earning top grades while majoring in biology, chemistry, and theatre, she surprised herself by becoming a cheerleader, something this high school soccer and softball player never dreamed she could do. And, while participating in drama in high school, she never imagined she could make the grade in college level plays. She not only won parts in dramas all four years she attended RMC, she starred in "Moon Over Buffalo," winning rave reviews.

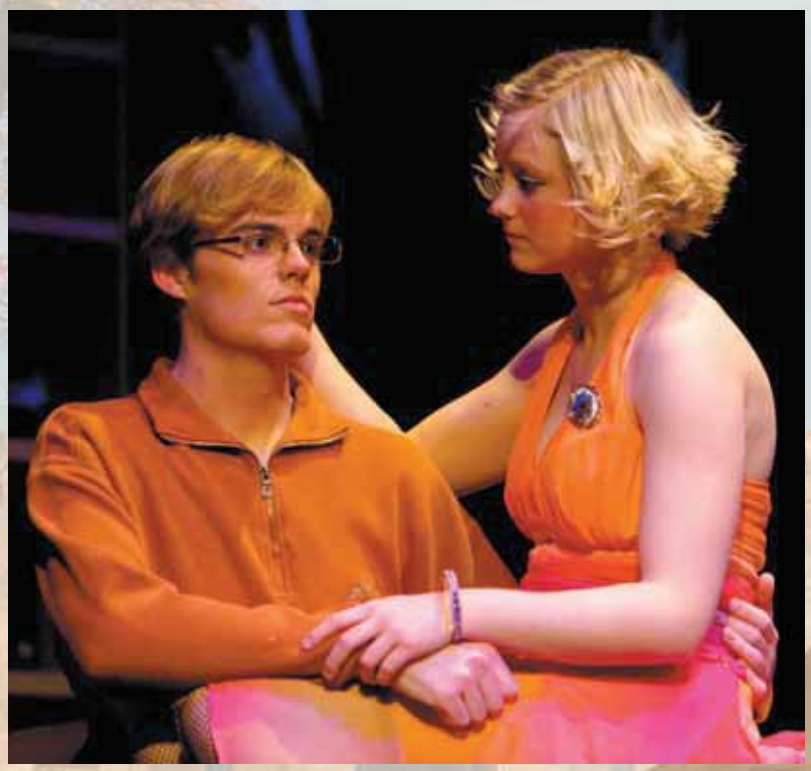


Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Now in medical school, Nicole Ruske, shown here in "The Shadow Box," found RMC opened doors to new opportunities and experiences.

Part of her brisk schedule also included working on a research project conducted by RMC Professor Dr. Cristi Hunnes, and funded through the National Institute of Health, that looked into wastewater runoff into the Yellowstone River. By graduation, she was summa cum laude. Besides winning the President's Cup, she also won the outstanding senior award in both biology and theatre performance.

Nicole Ruske is an example of why I push so hard to build a new science building. While she is a testament to what we can accomplish with students here, she is also an example of how much more we could do with science facilities that will prepare more of our students to follow her path.

Nicole is one example. Here's another from Katie (Waibel) Oja, who graduated in 2007 and is attending the College of Pharmacy at the University of Minnesota.

"Last week, I was sitting on a student panel at a pharmacy school preview day in Minneapolis. There were six students on the panel. All the students were asked to share with the crowd their names, hometowns, and where they received their bachelor's degrees. A girl a few students ahead of me mentioned that she had received a bachelor's in Billings. After the meeting, I met up with her. She was, in fact, Katie Olson from Rocky class of 2005. It was great to instantly have a bond with someone because we were both Rocky graduates. She is currently a first year student at the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy. One of the staff approached us in the excitement and shared that Rocky had given the program two of the best students!"

And let me mention one more. Staci Sanford (featured in last month's Alumni section) is not only someone who shares Nicole's view that Rocky prepared her better than her peers in medical school were prepared, but someone who continues to grow and look for ways to better her world. Not content to have earned a Ph.D in neuroscience, she is now earning her MBA so she can find ways to fund research and development.

Besides all being RMC alumni, the other common bond is that all of these will tell you frankly that, while RMC provides an education that puts them in the forefront of their graduate schools, it needs to improve its facilities for future students. They will also tell you that when they are able, they will help. In the meantime, they hope those who are in a position to do so will recognize the importance of recruiting the best and brightest with the best and brightest facilities.

If you agree, please feel free to call me to discuss our plans for the new science building.

Focus on Faculty & Staff

Collaboration with Stanford Will Open New Doors

Rocky Mountain College students have many opportunities to study geology in the field, "where the rocks are," according to Tom Kalakay, Ph.D, RMC associate geology professor.

Soon, where they go to study those rocks will expand to Mongolia, thanks to a connection with the Department of Environmental Earth System Science at Stanford University. Stanford researchers are engaged in a collaborative research project with Derek Sjostrom, Ph.D, RMC assistant geology professor.

Researchers at Stanford want to "capitalize on Derek's expertise on the sedimentary basins in Mongolia," according to C. Page Chamberlain, a Stanford geology professor who is collaborating on a National Science Foundation funded study of the history of the high elevation areas of northern Mongolia.

Specifically, the project focuses on the connections between the development of topography and climate modification in the Hangay Plateau region of northern Mongolia over the past 30 million years. Sjostrom's previous field experience, and his expertise with geochemical techniques, will comprise a major part of the Stanford study.

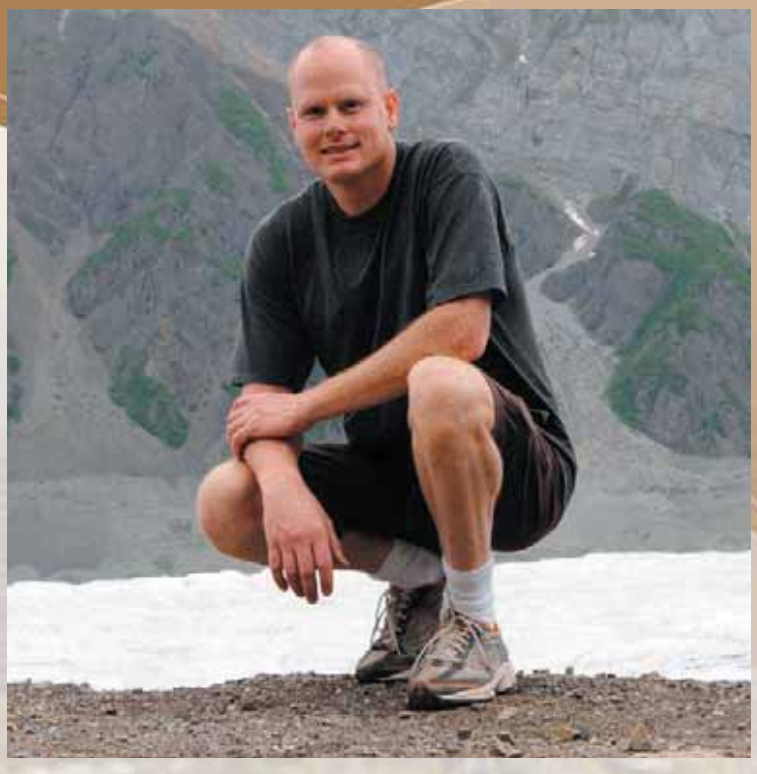


Photo: Courtesy

Derek Sjostrom's research collaboration with Stanford University could result in funding for RMC undergraduate research in Mongolia.

The collaboration works to RMC's advantage because, after Sjostrom's initial field season with Sanford researchers, whom are also collaborating with researchers from North Carolina State University, Lehigh University, and The Carnegie Institute, funding may be available from the National Science Foundation to pay for undergraduate student travel in future years.

Other projects with RMC and Stanford could occur closer to home, including a collaborative study of the uplift history of the

(Please see **Faculty & Staff** *on back page)*

Focus on Alumni & Friends

Actor, Educator Headlines Commencement 2011

As an actor, mime, and educator, Bill Bowers has traveled throughout all 50 states and Europe.

His original mime show, "Under a Montana Moon," premiered Off Broadway at Urban Stages to critical raves, and since that time, he has performed the show throughout the world.

In recent years, Bowers has performed "Under a Montana Moon" in Italy, Romania, Macedonia, Japan, and Norway.

Committed to introducing mime to new audiences, Bill has taken "Under a Montana Moon" all over the U.S., visiting such disparate settings as one-room schools in Montana and Nebraska , Amish colonies, the Flathead Indian Reservation, homeless shelters in New Jersey, as well as The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater.

Photo: Courtesy

Bill Bowers returns in May as RMC Commencement speaker and guest of honor at the annual RMC President's Dinner.

Margo Jefferson, of the The New York Times, writes that, "To watch Bill Bowers' "Under a Montana Moon," is to see the technical elements of a style that brings Marcel Marceau readily to mind, joined to the American West.

Mime can be wonderful -- the air between him and us was his palette."

Bill's play, "It Goes Without Saying," opened Off Broadway at the Rattlestick Theater, and has also been produced at Berkshire Theater Festival, Adirondack Theater Festival, and

(Please see **Alumni & Friends** *on back page)*

Neighbor to Neighbor

RMC and BST Have Good Neighbor History

By Barb Skelton,
Chairman of the Board of Rocky Mountain College

Because it was not a Rocky Mountain College Theatre Department production, many people may have missed the wonderful presentation of "Hairspray" in February at Billings Studio Theatre.

But, for those of us who did have the opportunity to attend one of the 13 performances, it was not only an entertaining event, it was a reminder of the interaction between Rocky Mountain College and this fine community theatre.

BST sits on the shoulder of our campus and is where our RMC theatre productions are presented, one each semester. This year, "Wonder of the World" was performed in November, and "California Suite" is on tap for March 25, 26, 30, 31 and April 1 and 2 (March 30 is RMC Night).

"Hairspray" might have seemed an RMC production because of the involvement of so many faculty, staff, and students. RMC Theatre Arts Professor Gerry Roe directed. Sarah Brewer, RMC assistant theatre arts professor, designed the set. Students Jennifer Rassley and Beccah Maier served as stage manager and assistant scene designer, respectively. Margia Pretlow, RMC admissions counselor for the Physician Assistant Program, had a major role as Motormouth Maybelle, and students Shane McClurg, Judah LoVato, Cody Halverson, Holeigh Shafer, and Al Lattin all had supporting roles.

RMC Professor Gerry Roe helped Margia Pretlow overcome her shyness to become a real stage presence in "Hairspray." Roe said after begging her to audition, he assured her she would not fail. "Not many people that I know today would have put in that much effort and commitment. And I have nothing but praise for her," he said about her performance.

Behind the scenes, you'll find Chris Dorr, who serves with me on the RMC Board of Trustees, Greg Kohn, RMC vice president for human resources and community relations, and Sarah Brewer all serving on the BST Board. No one gets paid for bringing these terrific live shows to Billings. This is community theatre, meaning everyone is a volunteer. This is another fine example of neighbors helping each other for the benefit of the larger community, and I am so proud that RMC people are some of those neighbors.

"Hairspray" was a special kind of performance to me because its themes are about accepting others for whom they are rather than how they look, and about breaking down silly barriers that keep people apart. This College has a proud history of promoting those ideas of justice and equality, one that refreshed this community when hatred and bigotry threatened it in 1993, and resulted in the "Not in My Town" campaign to ward off racism and stand together for a hate-free city. RMC's Festival of Cultures, held in June, grew out of that campaign, as did the Institute for Peace Studies that sponsors that and many other events designed to promote diversity and oppose violence.

It was a poignant performance to me for that reason, but also because a close friend, Margia Pretlow, playing Motormouth Maybelle, gave a memorable rendition of "I Know Where I've Been." That song, sung by Queen Latifah in the movie version of the Broadway musical, is inspiring, and Margia made it so when she sang it here. She has not performed in plays before, and had to overcome her shyness as well as learn how to fit into her role. It brought tears to my eyes when she sang, "There's a dream in the future; there's a struggle that we have yet to win; and there's pride in my heart, 'cause I know where I'm going... and I know where I've been."

I think some day we will all understand where people who have been held back "have been," and I hope all of us continue to make sure we realize that "dream in the future." That's what good neighbors do.

All About Our Students

(Continued from front page)

RMC legacy before they graduate – he hopes to hold "AlumNights," where students will meet alumni and form relationships. He studied Dr. Lawrence Small's RMC history, "Courageous Journey," to acquaint himself with his new college's heritage, something that came in handy when he was chosen to give the student address at the 102nd Candlelight Dinner. Cornthwaite was praised for speaking about how a $50 gift from Amos Prescott in 1912 to help buy a load of coal grew into continuing support from the New York City businessman. Eventually Prescott donated the money for the building bearing his name.

"I think it's important to give back, and you don't have to wait until you think you can afford it to do that," he said, describing why he began another project, called Parallel 49 Strategies. Parallel 49 (named for the parallel that runs coast-to-coast across the U.S.) is a youth leadership training company he began in 2009.

"We hold seminars for high school students with the message that it is important to make a contribution to the community, and that you can begin volunteering at a young age. You don't have to wait until you have a job or begin a career to serve others," he said. "You can always find time and a way."

Conrthwaite's book, titled "Defined," is a work in progress, motivated by the creativity class taught by Dr. Steven Hart, and "focusing on non-traditional concepts of leadership in both individual and team circumstances," Cornthwaite explained.

"Dr. Hart helped me develop my ideas and challenged me to carry through on the project," he said. "That's an important part of campus life here, getting feedback and encouragement."

One who doesn't doubt Cornthwaite's ability to juggle so many projects is Vicki Davison, RMC development director.

"He's a hard worker and energetic," she noted. "He's our go-to guy."

Cornthwaite eventually hopes to work as an agricultural advocate and in non-profit fund raising.

"It's important to have an open mind about what you may wind up doing, because it depends on what the job market may be. However, I hope to continue to have a diverse education and experiences," he said.

Giving Back to the Community

Canstruction Teams Ready to Help Billings Food Bank

Five teams with five architects are ready to build sculptures with canned food for the annual Billings Canstruction® event to help the Billings Food Bank.

"The the theme for 2011 is Disney Pixar movies," said Jill Washburn, of RMC Campus Corps, who is charged with organizing the event.

The teams competing to build the best sculpture using cans of food include RMC Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE), with architect Jim Beal, CTA; RMC Campus Corps, with architect Sherril Burke, HGFA; Albertsons Grocery Store (management), with architect Mike Patterson, TUYA Studios, Inc.; Albertsons Grocery Store (associates), with architect Craig Frohlich, Designlab; and HDR Engineering, Inc., with JGA Architects.

"Teams may choose from Toy Story, Nemo, Monsters, Cars, Up, and Ratatouille, among others. That makes for a lot of diversity and color in the presentations," Washburn said.

Teams of architects, sponsoring businesses, and organizations compete to design and build colossal structures made from full cans of food. The results are giant "canned art" exhibits, Washburn explained.

The sculptures, which will be built April 9, will be on display April 10 -15.

After the entries are judged and admired by the public, all the food goes on the Billings Food Bank shelves for distribution to needy families.

Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

It requires a delicate balance to make cans of food into a compelling sculpture, which is why architects join participating teams during the Billings Canstruction event. All the food goes to the Billings Food Bank to restock supplies for the hungry and homeless.

"It's a good way for people to know who we are, where we are, and what we do while having some fun for a good cause," according to Sheryle Shandy, Billings Food Bank executive director.

Four tons of canned goods were used in the event last year, according to Karen Beiser, SIFE faculty advisor and Rocky Mountain College assistant professor and faculty advisor to Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE), which launched the event in 2010. The theme for the first annual Billings Canstruction® event was something about Billings, about Montana, and/or about a Billings organization.

Coming Up

FRIDAY, MARCH 18 – THURSDAY, APRIL 14

Spring 2011 Art Student Exhibit opens, with a free public reception on March 18 from 5:00--7:00 p.m. For more information, Sally McIntosh, Ryniker-Morrison Gallery director, (406) 259-6563/mcintoshart@imt.net.

RMC Board Chair Barb Skelton visits with Mayor Tom Hanel and his wife, Robin, at the 2010 RMC President's Dinner. This year's dinner will be held May 7. Tickets may be purchased by contacting Vicki Davison, (406) 656-1005.

FRIDAY, MARCH 25 – SATURDAY, APRIL 2

The RMC Theatre Program performs "California Suite" in the Billings Studio Theatre on March 25, 26, 31, April 1 & 2. There will be a special showing for RMC Night on March 30. Tickets are $10 for adults, $8 for seniors/students, and $6 for RMC Family. For more information, Gearld Roe, RMC professor, Theatre Arts, (406) 657-1111/roeg@rocky.edu.

TUESDAY, APRIL 12

The annual Rocky Mountain College Academic Awards Banquet will be held in the Bair Family Student Center from 5:30--7:00 p.m. Please call the Dean's Office at (406) 657-1018 to RSVP for the event. For more information, Teresa Rowen, (406) 657-1018/teresa.rowen@rocky.edu.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14

The RMC Aviation Awards Banquet will be held at Rocky Flight Operations at Billings Logan International Airport at 6:30 p.m. Cost is $10. To make a reservation, or for more information, call (406) 657-1060/hargrovd@rocky.edu.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15

Last day to submit nominations for the RMC Athletic Hall of Fame. For more information, contact Vicki Davison, RMC director of development, (406) 657-1005/vicki.davison@rocky.edu.

Faculty, staff, alumni, and friends join the annual RMC Easter Egg Hunt.

SATURDAY, APRIL 16

The annual Rocky Mountain College Easter Egg Hunt will be held, rain or shine, on the Rocky Green at 10:00 a.m. For more information, contact Kristin Mullaney, RMC Coordinator of Alumni & Parent Relations & Special Events, (406) 657-1007/kristin.mullaney@rocky.edu.

Faculty & Staff

(Continued from inside)

Beartooth-Absaroka Mountains, as well as environmental geochemistry projects in the Billings region.

Sjostrom, who earned his bachelor's degree at the University of Washington, his master's degree at the University of Montana, and his doctorate at Dartmouth, taught at RMC in 2003-2004, and rejoined the geology faculty in 2009 after teaching at the University of Alaska-Anchorage for several years.

"I'm excited to be back in Montana and at Rocky where there have been positive changes over the six years I was not here. It's always exciting to be where I can incorporate field work and undergraduate students in my projects, and relevant geologic research is possible right outside the door," he said.

The connection with the Stanford project not only provides unique opportunities for Sjostrom, but for his students.

"It will be an outstanding opportunity for students to be involved in cutting-edge geologic research in such an exotic locality. This field research will result in undergraduate theses for these students," Sjostrom said.

According to Stanford's Chamberlain, there is a "very high probability of funding for the RMC undergraduate research proposal. I look forward to working closely with Derek and his students at Rocky Mountain College," Chamberlain said.

The initial field work for this study will take place in Mongolia as part of a four-week expedition this coming June and July. This will be Sjostrom's third trip to Mongolia to conduct geologic field research. He spent a total of 12 weeks in western Mongolia in 1995, and southern Mongolia in 1997, while he was a master's student at the University of Montana.

Alumni & Friends

(Continued from inside)

theaters in 47 cities in the U.S.

Bowers has been hailed by critics as "a great American mime," winning the Dallas - Fort Worth Critics Award, Best of the Berkshires, Best Performance in the International United Solo Festival, and International Fresh Fruit Festival.

His Broadway credits include Zazu in "The Lion King," and Leggett in "The Scarlett Pumpernel." He appeared with John Turturro Off Broadway in "The Souls of Naples," and also performed this play in Italy. He has also appeared in New York at Ensemble Studio Theater, Here, LA MA MA, St. Anne's Warehouse, and the New York Fringe Festival. His regional credits include Berkshire Theater Festival, Cincinnati Playhouse, Rep of St. Louis, Northshore Music Theater, Two River Theater, George Street Playhouse, PaperMill Playhouse, the Denver Center, Tennessee Rep, Seven Angels Theater, and the Eugene O'Neill Center.

Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Nothing captures the thrill of commencement as the satisfied smile of a graduate. This year's graduates will hear from Bill Bowers, returning to his alma mater to deliver the RMC Commencement address.

He is featured in the Sandra Bullock-Hugh Grant film "Two Weeks Notice," and on television in Disney's "Out of the Box," "Remember W.E.N.N.," "One Life to Live," and "All My Children."

After graduating from RMC in 1981, where he was awarded both the President's Cup and Dean's Cup, he earned a master's in fine arts from Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts. He studied under legendary mime, Marcel Marceau.

In 2008, he was named Artist of Eminence at the University of Wyoming, and created a new theater piece entitled "Heyokah" while in residence in Laramie.

He presently teaches at the Neighborhood Playhouse and New York University, and is a teaching artist for Urban Stages and the Paper Mill.

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