Alumni

Alisa Weilerstein, Howard W. Buffett, and Other Alumni in the News

Fall 2011



Alisa Weilerstein (Courtesy of the MacArthur Foundation)

High notes

Cellist **Alisa Weilerstein ’04CC** has received a 2011 MacArthur Fellowship, which comes with a grant of $500,000. Weilerstein, 29, performed at the invitation of First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House in 2009; she played Elgar’s Cello Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic in a concert that was broadcast live internationally last

year . . . The Lilly Awards, named after playwright Lillian Hellman, were started in 2010 to honor the work of women in the American theater. This year, two Columbians were honored: School of the Arts professor **Kristin Linklater**, who is an actress, writer, and lecturer, and **Bathsheba Doran ’03SOA**, a playwright.

TV guides

Cinema Verite, an HBO film directed by **Shari Springer Berman ’95SOA** and **Robert Pulcini ’94SOA**, was nominated for nine Emmy Awards this year. The film, starring Diane Lane and James Gandolfini, about a groundbreaking reality TV series from 1973 called *An American Family*, won an Emmy for single-camera picture editing. Berman and Pulcini, who are married, also codirected the 2003 movie American Splendor, about the comic-book writer Harvey Pekar, which was nominated for an Academy Award for best adapted screenplay.

David Bohrman ’78JRN, a former CNN Washington bureau chief, has been named president of Current TV, a cable network that features the one-time MSNBC ratings grabber Keith Olbermann. Bohrman, who will be responsible for all programming, is known as an innovator in the broadcasting of political debates, conventions, and elections. One of his more flamboyant ideas was to beam a hologram of musician will.i.am into the CNN studio on Election Night 2008.

Editor! Editor!

Richard L. Berke ’81JRN, the national editor of the *New York Times*, was named an assistant managing editor on September 6. Executive editor Jill Abramson promoted Berke to her senior-management team on her first day in the position. A week later, she promoted **Adam Bryant ’87JRN**, a deputy national editor, to senior editor for features.

Good yarns

John Glusman ’78CC, ’80GSAS was recently named editor in chief of W. W. Norton & Company. Glusman has worked in book publishing for more than 25 years, with authors who include Czeslaw Milosz, Richard Powers, and Jim Crace. **Matt Weiland ’78CC** was named a senior editor at W. W. Norton effective October 24. He comes to the position from Ecco, an imprint of HarperCollins, where he edited such books as Padgett Powell’s conceptual novel *The Interrogative Mood* and Philip Connor’s memoir *Fire Season.* **Kerri Majors ’04SOA** has been awarded one of four Innovations in Reading Prizes from the National Book Foundation for her young-adult journal YARN, the Young Adult Review Network, which publishes teens alongside established writers. The prize can be up to $2500.

Going viral

Columbia virologist **Ian Lipkin** shared his scientific expertise as an advisor to Steven Soderbergh’s movie *Contagion*, about the outbreak of a virus that kills millions around the world. Lipkin was involved in everything from script development to costumes to set design. The actor Elliott Gould plays Dr. Sussman, a character based on Lipkin. **Jacqueline K. Barton ’74BC, ’78GSAS** has received a National Medal of Science for her work on the chemistry of DNA. The award is the highest honor the United States bestows on scientists. Barton is a professor of chemistry at the California Institute of Technology.

Medics on the move

First Lady Michelle Obama has appointed **Judith S. Palfrey ’71PS** executive director of the Let’s Move! campaign to fight childhood obesity. Palfrey is a professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. In June, **Peter W. Carmel ’70PS**, a pediatric neurosurgeon in Newark, New Jersey, became president of the American Medical Association. Founded in 1847, the AMA is the nation’s oldest and largest physicians’ organization. Carmel has served as chair of the National Coalition for Research in Neurological Disease and Stroke, and subsequently as chair of the National Foundation for Brain Research.

Young at art

Danielle Evans ’04CC and **Mary Beth Keane ’99BC** were recently included in the National Book Foundation’s annual list of the country’s outstanding “5 Under 35” fiction writers. Evans, who earned her MFA at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, is the author of the short-story collection *Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self*, which won the 2011 PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize. Keane, who graduated from the University of Virginia’s MFA program, is the author of the novel *The Walking People*, which won honorable mention at the 2010 PEN/Hemingway Foundation awards. Both Evans and Keane are being honored for their first books. Winners are selected by National Book Award recipients and finalists.

Smart money

Kai-Fu Lee ’83CC, the president of Google China from 2005 to 2009, has created a business incubator to provide financing, advising, and support services to young Chinese entrepreneurs. His firm, Innovation Works, recently announced that it had raised $180 million in private funds to help technology start-ups get off the ground . . . Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney has chosen Columbia B-school dean and supply-side



Howard W. Buffett (Lincoln Journal Star)

Excellent friends

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation has a new executive director. **Howard W. Buffett ’08SIPA**, Howard G.’s son, will preside over a fund that donates some $50 million a year to initiatives in areas such as sustainable agriculture, clean water, poverty eradication, and refugee assistance. The younger Howard, who has worked as a domestic-policy advisor for President Obama, is the grandson of investment icon **Warren Buffett ’51BUS.** On September 13, philanthropist and media entrepreneur **Gerry Lenfest ’58LAW, ’09HON** was awarded the insignia of Officier de la Légion d’Honneur, which is one of the French government’s highest awards. The French ambassador to the United States, François Delattre, called Lenfest “a great Philadelphian, an exceptional businessman, an extraordinary philanthropist, and a most excellent friend of France.”economist **R. Glenn Hubbard** to lead his economic policy team. Hubbard advised Romney in 2008 and helped construct the Bush tax cuts of 2003.



Guide to school abbreviations

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