

SAC50

STUDIO ACTING CONSERVATORY
CELEBRATES 50 YEARS



Cover: Compliments of Infinity Building Services, Inc.

Right: From left: Darnell Eaton, Kate Debelack, Jill Fields, Joy Zinoman, Murray Zinoman, Serge Seiden, Meredith Garagiola, A.J. Calbert, Andrea Hatfield and Emily Morrison

Below: Drew Holcombe in Beckett, Pinter, Albee, Mamet. Photo by Iwan Bagus

Professional Conservatory photography by Iwan Bagus.
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STUDIO ACTING CONSERVATORY



Dear reader,

As we've gone through the process of planning the 50th Anniversary, we've come to know more deeply the effect the school has had—not just on the countless number of students who have passed through these classes, but the city as a whole. From sending students off to every stage in Washington, to Broadway and Hollywood, to substantially changing the landscape of theatre in the District as well as being part of the revitalization of 14th Street, the Conservatory has stood proud and tall throughout. There are great stories contained here: of the curriculum's development, the history of the Conservatory in the city, of love found, of art rediscovered and of teachers finding their home. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Since the start of the school, the friendships made and relationships forged have been a defining factor of our student's lives. While sitting outside on a warm spring day this week, a little crowd gathered outside on the plaza. One by one people associated with the Conservatory happened to walk by – first a young teen in our Shakespeare for Young Actors program, then another teen actor on her way home from school. A teacher walked up, and an adult student came to rehearse. By happenstance, we all were there at the same time, standing in the sun, and it was a lovely moment of community. But these gatherings are par for the course at almost any time at the Conservatory, and that is precisely what makes it special. Community is the heart and soul of the school.

Bonds formed in class bind us together - by being vulnerable in front of each other, trusting each other, and discovering new characters together, we become part of a band of like-minded students. That is the power of Joy Zinoman's unique curriculum – to open us up and provide a space to allow us to be used as a vessel for art, for a character's words and thoughts. It's a magical experience made possible through technique. And it brings us together.

I came to the Conservatory in 2014 as a relative newcomer to DC. I wanted rigorous training and a community. I've gotten both in spades. The Conservatory has had a profound effect on my life as actor, administrator and human. Always challenging and always inspiring. It is my great honor to lead this organization into the next 50 years.

Thank you for joining us in person or in spirit for this wonderful day! We are grateful for your support and glad that you are part of the Conservatory community.

Emily Morrison
Executive Director



Executive Director Emily Morrison

brings us together

FROM CHICAGO TO ASIA TO WASHINGTON



Greek Chorus. First row from left: Adrian Gaston Garcia, Sia Li Wright, Tariq Omarshah.
Second Row: Khalid Abayomi; Semaj Kelly, Ned Kieloch.
Third Row: Trenor Gould, Darnell Eaton. Photo by Iwan Bagus



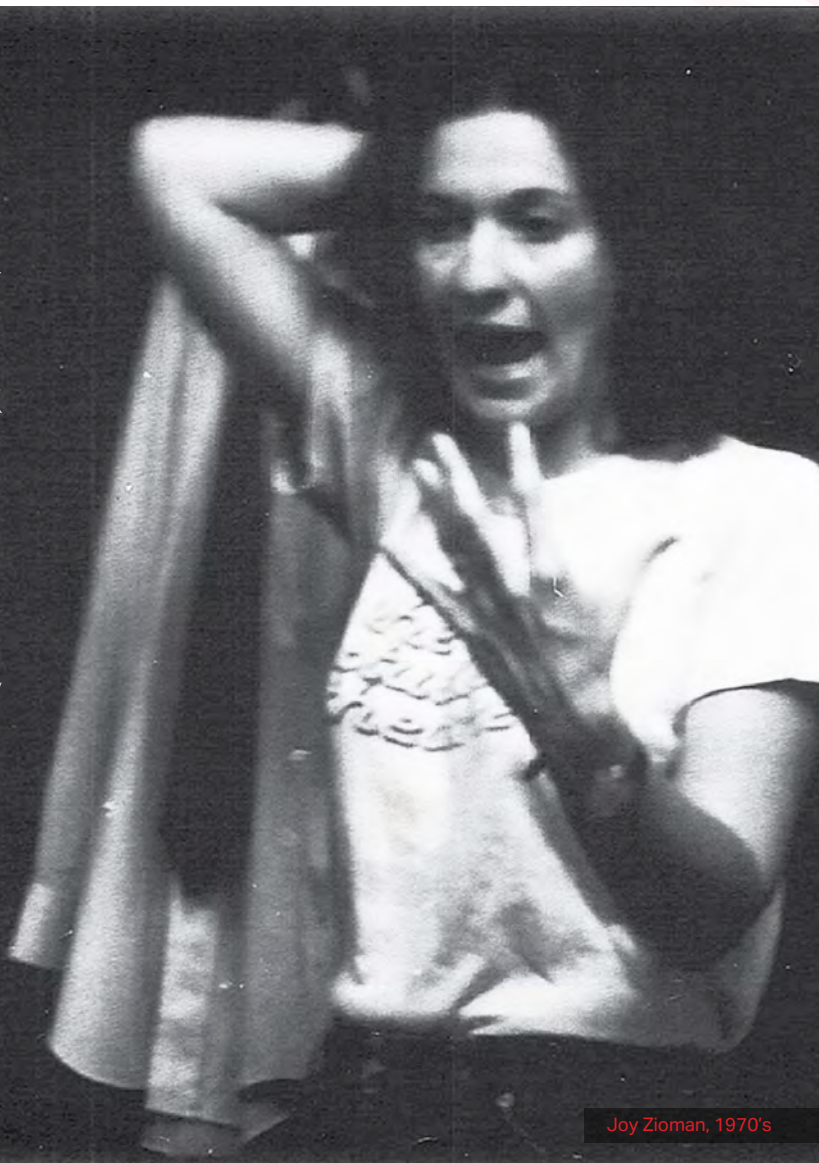


Born from Global Experience

By Joe Crea

Joy Zinoman

For more than 50 years, Studio Acting Conservatory has stood as a pillar of actor and director training, shaping over 13,000 students who have left their mark on stages and screens across the country. Founded by Joy Zinoman in 1975, the Conservatory's rigorous curriculum—rooted in American Realism and shaped by global influences—has become a defining model for actor training. Its legacy is one of specificity, creativity, and discipline, qualities that continue to resonate in the evolving world of performance.



Joy Zinoman, 1970's

When Joy Zinoman founded Studio Acting Conservatory, she drew from an education unlike any other in American theater training. Her curriculum originated not in the studios of New York or the universities of London but in the classrooms and rehearsal spaces of Southeast Asia.

In the 1960s, as a young actress and teacher married to a foreign diplomat, Zinoman found herself living in Taiwan and Malaysia, where many actors were already familiar with Western Realism and were eager to deepen their understanding of its techniques. Trained in Chicago by the legendary Alvina Krause—who was directly connected to the Group Theatre and American Realism—Zinoman was able to offer a rigorous, deeply embodied

acting practice that complemented and expanded what these artists were seeking.

"I had this knowledge, very fresh and very new, and there were these people who wanted to know about Western Realism," Zinoman recalls. "And I was there. I started teaching, but at the same time, I was studying Asian theater forms, and I was fascinated by these notions of style and their relation to Realism."

Her decade-long immersion in Asian theater transformed her approach to training. She learned multiple languages, directed productions at the equivalent of Malaysia's National Theatre, and gained invaluable experience working with multilingual audiences and a wide range of performers. That exposure—and the cultural dialogue it demanded—shaped the foundational courses she would later build for the conservatory.

A Curriculum Built to Last

"The curriculum is 100% coming out of this Asian experience—trying to break down what Western Realism could be for people who were hungry for that training," Zinoman explains.

The early courses emphasized Realism by drawing on her training under Krause and integrating the stylistic and structural richness of Asian theater. More than five decades later, that duality remains central to the conservatory's philosophy. Foundational classes in Realism provide actors with the essential tools for believability, while advanced coursework in comedy, heightened text, playwright styles, and directing broadens their expressive capacity. But at its core, the curriculum fosters rigor and risk-taking—attributes that have proven timeless.

"When I first returned to the U.S., I had this vast experience but no formal degree," Zinoman says. "The path to academia wasn't open to me. So, with encouragement from my students, I started teaching on my own."

What began with 20 students in an attic quickly evolved into a structured conservatory supported by a faculty—now 20 strong—committed to upholding and expanding Zinoman's teachings. The conservatory eventually found a permanent home after Zinoman founded the renowned Studio Theatre. For a decade, it financially supported The Studio Theatre, playing a key role in both D.C.'s theatrical rise and the revitalization of 14th Street—from a once-derelict corridor to a vibrant cultural hub.



Cover of an early Conservatory brochure

The Teachers Who Built the Institution

A curriculum is only as strong as the teachers who bring it to life. Studio Acting Conservatory has been shaped by an extraordinary faculty—many of whom were once students—who have devoted decades to refining and advancing the school's mission.



From left: Faculty members Anderson Wells, Kate Debelack, Peg Nichols, Nancy Paris, Joy Zinoman

Early on, once the core curriculum was established, adjunct classes in movement and voice were added to help actors fully develop their instrument. Eventually, a program for young people emerged, modeled after the three-year core curriculum for adults but adapted for talented teenagers.

"My job is to help students feel when they are fully committing to a movement," says Colette Yglesias Silver, the first adjunct teacher to join the Conservatory in 1981. She later became a student herself to integrate the core curriculum into her classes better. "Are you truly pushing? Is your whole being engaged—your body, eyes, feet, and spine? And is your emotional connection rooted deep in your gut? Truth is a sensation, a connection."

The Conservatory's curriculum is known for its rigor and its unwavering commitment to Realism. "Everything is connected to the truth of Realism," says Kate Debelack, a faculty member who teaches Greek and Auditioning, among other classes, and who started studying and working at the Conservatory in the late nineties. "If you create stimulus, your body responds. It requires faith in the imagination and taking away the value judgment. If something is created specifically, we'll believe it. We care about honesty, creating, and responding to stimuli. It gives

the actor creativity and independence. Stimulus/response: that's where it's all at."

This emphasis on specificity allows actors to approach each moment with fresh authenticity.

"In a world where there is so much focus on product and perfection, our curriculum allows for the spontaneity that makes every line seem like the first time a character has said it," Debelack adds.

A Foundation for the Future

Even as the Conservatory expanded, its ethos remained unchanged. It was never designed to be a commercial pipeline, but rather a place for pure training—cultivating talent, discipline, and artistry.

"There are three kinds of students," Zinoman says.

"Those who want to be professional actors, those who are professionals in other fields but want to explore acting, and those who find something transformative in the training itself."

The Conservatory has remained committed to serving all three. As acting methods evolve alongside technology, its curriculum continues to emphasize timeless fundamentals.

"What an actor needs today is the same as always—to stay true to craft and truthfulness—despite the distractions and enticements of the era we live in," says Serge Seiden, who came to Studio as an acting student and usher in the late 1980s. He's been a faculty member since the early 1990s. "Of course, actors now have more 'tools' to master as they navigate emerging technologies. Just as stage actors once had to adapt to silent film, then sound, and later television, today's actors must tackle a myriad of new media, each with its technical demands. Yet, craft and truthfulness remain the foundation of great acting."

Carol Arthur, who joined the faculty in 2003, echoes this sentiment.

"I see Realism as believability, regardless of the acting styles you tackle over the years," she says. "When I completed the curriculum years ago, I pictured Realism as the first domino in a carefully arranged sequence—tipping it would set off a fascinating and hopefully thrilling chain reaction of acting moments and opportunities. But after teaching this curriculum for over 20 years, I've realized I was wrong. Realism isn't the first domino—it's the floor. You can arrange the dominos however you like; that's where imagination and creative interpretation come in. But if your floor is solid, stable, and reliable, you'll be able to create more complex, challenging, and dynamic patterns—just like the roles and styles you take on as an actor."

That philosophy now extends to the next generation of artists as well. Anderson Wells, who first joined the Conservatory in 2013 as an education apprentice and now teaches classes, in particular, the Young Actors Program, emphasizes how the core values of the curriculum adapt to younger learners without compromising depth.

"The Young Actors Program adapts the core Studio curriculum to meet teens where they are while holding them to the same high standards we expect of adult students," says Wells. "It's not about putting on a show—it's about developing real acting technique, especially a strong foundation in Realism. We're giving young people access to serious training early on, and that kind of rigorous preparation can shape not just their work as actors, but their confidence and discipline as artists."

“

What an actor
needs today
is the same as
always—to stay
true to craft and
truthfulness.

”

Decades later, the conservatory continues to evolve. Its curriculum—born out of a unique global experience—has grown to meet the needs of each new generation while staying true to its roots. The school's journey has paralleled the rise of Washington's theater scene, and its influence continues to shape it.

Studio Acting Conservatory's impact is profound. From an attic classroom to a cornerstone of American actor training, its past is rich, its present strong, and its future remains as promising as ever.



I had seen some wonderful shows at Studio Theatre when founder, Joy Zinoman was the Artistic Director, and was chosen through auditioning to perform in some of their other plays as well. I got a call from Joy in which she said she had heard I taught voice at the Baltimore School for the Arts, receiving very good reviews. At that time she was in one of her famously engaging teacher meetings when she asked me about joining Studio's faculty as a voice teacher. I hesitated only because I was happy where I was and said, "thanks but no I am booked up with work." She called back and I was impressed with her tenacity and her passion for getting what she wants for the sake of the Conservatory. She was so persuasive and I could feel that deeply unique respect for the arts from her in our conversation. I was sold, sold with the **commitment to teach there for over 20 years now.**

—Denise Diggs

Faculty Member Denise Diggs in
Studio Theatre's *In the Red and Brown Water*

I started at the Conservatory in the summer of 1999 between my freshman and sophomore years of college at GW. I had already been a House Manager at Studio Theatre the season prior and that summer I was an intern in the production department with Serge as my supervisor. The registrar told me Joy was teaching Principles of Realism and I absolutely must take her class. So, I did! At 18 years old, Joy blew my young actor mind and I was hooked! All the years since (when I've lived in area), I've been involved in the Conservatory as a student, and for the past 3 years as an instructor. Now, 26 years later I'm scheduled to teach the summer Principles of Realism class!

— Mary C. Davis



Artist Akili Ron Anderson in front of newly rediscovered *Last Supper* sculpture

Out from Behind The Wall

Rediscovery Of A D.C. Masterpiece

By Joe Crea

It began with a text—and a photo—from Studio Acting Conservatory’s building designer, Deb Booth: “Behind the wall of the stage” Joy Zinoman, the Conservatory’s Founding Artistic Director, took one look and replied: “Whoa! I’m coming over!”



Screenshot of message from Deb Booth to Joy Zinoman

In the fall of 2019, Studio Acting Conservatory was deep in the demolition phase of transforming its new home—a former church in Columbia Heights, Washington, DC. As walls came down and the space began to take shape, the construction team made a stunning find: a monumental, 21-foot-wide by 10-foot-high bas-relief frieze of the Last Supper, with Jesus and his disciples depicted as African American men.

The work was created in 1981 by Akili Ron Anderson—an acclaimed artist, member of the Black Arts Movement, and the Chicago-based AfriCOBRA collective. Commissioned by the New Home Baptist Church, which then occupied the building, Anderson envisioned the piece as a living altarpiece—meant to be completed by the preacher and choir during worship. He constructed the mural directly

onto the cinderblock walls using wire mesh, concrete, and Structo-Lite, a coarse plaster.

At the time, Anderson lived in the neighborhood and worked on the frieze over weekends, collaborating closely with the church community. When New Home Baptist Church relocated in 1997, the sculpture couldn’t be moved. It was eventually sealed behind drywall and forgotten as the building changed hands—until the Conservatory’s renovation revealed its presence.

Recognizing its cultural and historical significance, Studio Acting Conservatory reached out to the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) to explore relocating the piece. However, its deep integration into the building’s structure made removal prohibitively complex or impossible. Instead, NMAAHC took steps to preserve the work in situ—restoring and repairing the sculpture, creating a 3D rendering, and formally accessioning it into the museum’s collection. Teddy R. Reeves, NMAAHC’s curator of religion, led the effort.

“When I first encountered Akili Ron Anderson’s *Last Supper Sculpture* after its rediscovery, I was struck by how powerfully it embodied the sacred reimagined through Black experience. Standing before this monumental work, with Christ and disciples rendered in the actual likenesses





of New Home Baptist Church members, I witnessed firsthand how art can transform religious spaces into sites of cultural affirmation and spiritual belonging. The sculpture's journey—from creation to concealment to digital preservation—mirrors our own ongoing struggle to ensure Black representation in sacred imagery remains visible and celebrated. Through our groundbreaking vertical AR technology, we've ensured this masterpiece can now transform any wall into a sacred space where viewers worldwide can see divinity reflected in their own image."

– Teddy raShaan Reeves, Ph.D., Curator of Religion, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture

For Anderson, the work was always about representation and spiritual affirmation. **"I think it's important for Black children sitting in churches all over this country on Sunday morning to look up at the windows, look up at images and see themselves—and believe that they can ascend to heaven, too,"** he said.

Today, the Last Supper frieze remains on display in Studio Acting Conservatory's Columbia Heights space, now a centerpiece of the building's evolving story. With generous support from HumanitiesDC and the Weissberg Foundation, the Conservatory hired a gallery manager/docent to oversee public viewing and lead community outreach. We've hosted programs in partnership with PreservationDC, American University, Howard University, and multiple events with the Smithsonian. Anderson remains active—his humor and insight continue to shape and energize this ongoing work—an invitation to reflect on the past, engage with the present, and celebrate the enduring legacy of Black artistry and community.



Detail of Last Supper sculpture

from The Community

June 3, 2022

HumanitiesDC
1804 T Street NW
Washington, DC 20009

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the DC Preservation League (DCL), Washington's citywide nonprofit dedicated to preserving and protecting the city's historic and built environment, I am pleased to submit this letter of

June 2, 2021

Dear HumanitiesDC Selection Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Teddy Reeves, and I am writing this letter of support for the Studio Acting Conservatory regarding the Last Supper Sculpture.

During renovation of Studio Acting Conservatory's current space in Columbia Heights, a bas relief sculpture of the Last Supper was discovered, depicting Jesus and his disciples as African American men. As the Curator of Religion at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), I was very familiar with artist Akili Ron Anderson's work and the Black Arts Movement out of which Anderson emerged. Initially, we were very interested in acquiring the artwork for the museum, however, the sheer size made it impossible to move. We have since accessioned a 3-D image of the sculpture as part of our permanent collection, repairing, restoring and digitizing it, while it remains physically at the Conservatory. To date, I have seen the Conservatory's commitment to making the sculpture accessible to the public and developing programming around it: most recently in the form of a weekend workshop on the Black Arts Movement, where I was a featured speaker. Although the pandemic has prevented public access to the sculpture on a regular basis, the Conservatory has welcomed visitors on several occasions, including SAC's Grand Opening, where representatives from NMAAHC curatorial staff spoke.

We fully support the Conservatory's goal to make this mural accessible to the public and offer programming that advances the education on its history in the DC region and extended out to the greater Black Arts Movement. NMAAHC will support their efforts through publicity and appearances, interviews, etc., wherever possible. The sculpture will also be included in future exhibitions and programs at NMAAHC, and

Because truly, in order to fully support the Conservatory in it those visiting Washington—I

Sincerely,

Teddy Reeves, Ph.D.
Curator of Religion
Center for the Study of African
NMAAHC

HumanitiesDC
1804 T Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

June 2nd, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Dr. Joanne Allen, and I am a Senior Professional Lecturer in Art History at American University, Washington, DC. I am writing in support of a funding proposal made by the Studio Acting Conservatory to facilitate broader accessibility of the mural, The Last Supper.

This mural is an important piece by Black Arts Movement artist Akili Ron Anderson, now a trumpet art professor at Howard University. Anderson was commissioned by the New Home Baptist Church in the 1980s, where the three-dimensional mural formed the backdrop to the musical and liturgical activities. Remarkably, and very surprisingly for the DC art community, this piece was discovered during renovations conducted in 2019. Since the 1980s, it had been covered by drywall by a previous owner, therefore its discovery was revolutionary. It has been restored by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and digitized for their collection. Today it forms a proud part of Studio Acting Conservatory's history and building, and the organization is very keen to increase the visibility and accessibility of this important artwork.

I have already witnessed the value of making this mural more accessible to the general public. In Fall 2021, I took a group of American University History students to view the mural, in the presence of the artist, Akili Ron Anderson. The students were enraptured on my course, *Depicting the Divine*, which investigates controversial issues of visual art and religious belief in the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Having studied both the theological importance of the Last Supper and the racial history of the portrayal of Jesus as a white man, it was very meaningful, and somewhat shocking, for the students to view a work of art that sacralized Black bodies. Having the opportunity to hear from the artist himself was even more powerful. Anderson described his experiences growing up in DC, and some of the negative reactions he received about his mural when it was first revealed—even from his fellow Black church members. The visit and meeting with the artist opened the students' minds to diverse understandings of religious art, Black art, and the history of race

8.1179 1A ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 1A

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May 30, 2022

HumanitiesDC
1804 T Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support for the Studio Acting Conservatory's application for a HumanitiesDC grant. I've personally seen the Conservatory's commitment to being good neighbors, good stewards, and aware that they need more support from times of us who can provide it. This is especially true when it comes to caring for the African American Last Supper relief sculpture and making it accessible to the public.

The Last Supper relief was an unexpected discovery hidden behind a false wall and discovered by the Conservatory in 2019 during renovations to the building. Unlike many who would have destroyed the relief, the Conservatory quickly recognized the cultural artwork as an important piece by Black Arts Movement artist Akili Ron Anderson, who is now a trumpet art professor at Howard University. It was commissioned by the New Home Baptist Church in the 1980s and served as the main artwork behind the altar during the Last Supper.

The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture has taken great interest in this artwork. The Museum has provided restoration assistance, has digitized it for their collection, and only the costs of relocation and exhibition have prevented them from installing it for public display on our National Mall. Yes, it is impossible to fully appreciate the artwork's detail and significance without seeing it in person. For this reason, it is essential that the public—both local and those visiting Washington—have access to view the Last Supper.

The Conservatory has been a good community partner with Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A from the outset of their relocation to Columbia Heights and ANCD 1A has and continues to support their programs and goals. Because of this, I unreservedly support the Studio Acting Conservatory's public access project to increase their capacity to launch and maintain this initiative.

Most sincerely,

Susan

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A
1804 T Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

historical, and social context. Beginning in the 1960s, the Last Supper imagery to challenge traditional and to bring attention to activist causes, and to express their study in the 1980s and 90s, with the defining scene-print feminist interpretation by Susan White (*The First Supper*; *Jon's In Mama's Last Supper*; 1996) (which portrays Black figures). Anderson's work, therefore, fits into a broader timeline powerful statements about gender, class, and race—was conceived for a traditional sacred space rather than a general public to have witness access to experience this not a lost local history of Columbia Heights, but it is a marginalized movement in modern and contemporary art, and be of interest to citizens of the Columbia Heights and beyond. I strongly support the public access project by of SAC administration to launch and maintain the project.

Fools for Love

**Scene Partners to
Life Partners**

By Andrea Hatfield



Above: Shayna Padovano and Joe Graf in
Character & Emotion

Right: Ixchel Hernández and Jarrod Jackson
in Comedy. Photo by Iwan Bagus

Good art is taking

risks, sharing deep emotions, listening closely and reacting honestly in the moment – all skills that nurture human connection. So perhaps it's not surprising that acting classes are fertile territory for developing relationships. Students often talk about the strong friendships and sense of community they find at the Conservatory.

Some even find love. Over the years, many Conservatory alums have chosen to keep playing opposite each other long after the curtain has come down on their final class.

The relationships profiled below bookend almost the entire history of the Conservatory, from the mid-1970s to the present, and include two of its earliest students as well as the current Co-Chair of the Board of Directors.

Kate Van Burek Davis and Tom Davis might be Conservatory couple number one. Kate took her initial class in the fall of 1977 at the old Conservatory location at 14th Street and Rhode Island Avenue. In the spring of 1979, she was in Joy's Shakespeare class, playing Juliet against Tom Davis's Romeo. "I'll never forget the first time we got up in class," she said. "We had memorized our parts and done everything we thought we were supposed to do. One of our lines was: 'This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, may prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.' When we finished the scene, **Joy simply stared at us for a minute and then said sarcastically: "Bud of love? WHAT bud of love? You two have ZERO chemistry – you had better go out for drinks!"**

That was obviously the right directive, as the two recently celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary. "We waited until the end of the semester to become official,



Kate Van Burick Davis and Tom Davis on their wedding day

though," laughed Kate. "Joy came to our wedding outside Philadelphia in 1983."

Kate and Tom moved to NYC, where Tom began law school, and Kate tried to make a life in the theatre, returning to the Studio to perform in "The Sea Gull" directed by Joy. They subsequently moved to Memphis, where Kate performed extensively and directed. "I never took the directing class, but being directed by Joy and watching her work was about as close to a directing class as anyone could get. I did lots of Chekov and Shakespeare and comedy."

Eventually the pair returned to the DC area, and Kate began teaching Principles of Realism and Shakespeare at the Conservatory. "We came full circle," she said. "It feels like we have been connected to the school for our entire lives."

One of Kate's students was A.J. Calbert, now president of the Board of SAC. A.J. and his wife, Joi Cheney, also met in an acting class, though it was Character and Emotion, taught by the late Nancy Paris. The two were not scene partners; in fact, A.J. was not actually enrolled in the class. But Nancy asked A.J. if he would assist another student who needed a partner for a scene from "Bent."

The scene required A.J. to remove his shirt, which was a stumbling block—A.J. was just not comfortable doing that. Nancy asked Joi if she could help move things along. "I've



Joi Cheney & A.J. Calbert

no idea why she asked ME," said Joi, "but I guess I was persuasive because AJ was finally able to perform shirtless."

Subsequently, when Joi took on Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare I, she needed a husband. She emailed AJ: "Would you like to commit murder with me?"

He responded right away: "I thought you'd never ask!"

Things moved quickly after that. They went on a "friends date" to the Round House Theatre to see August Wilson's "Two Trains Running," and looking back, they measure their courtship from that evening. In fact, they named their dog "August" in honor of the experience.

"The Macbeth scene required a lot of making out," said Joi, "which was a little confusing when we actually became a couple, because we realized that we had to start a new physical relationship as ourselves, not our characters."

Whatever they did must have worked. Joi and AJ have been together for ten years and married for five (two of their groomsmen were fellow SAC students). "We still have a bit of the Macbeths in us," said Joi. "I might be more like

We are proud to be a Conservatory couple.

Lady M.... but when he puts something into motion, he really puts it into motion. He just needs my encouragement."

Reflecting back, the two say timing and luck played a big part in their getting together. Joi had dropped out of her first class for cancer treatments; had she stayed on her initial track, she would likely not have met A.J. But also, she says, the experience with illness and the instruction she received in class left her more open emotionally, and more receptive to "the give and take of a relationship.... and to romance. Acting teaches you to be in touch, to engage in the back and forth, to read the subtext..."

A.J. and Joi are SAC groupies, in the fullest sense. Although Joi has moved on professionally, currently working in media and politics, she still hopes to take Shakespeare II one day. Until then, she wants to support the SAC community in any way she can. "I still use all the skills I learned in classes at the Conservatory," she said. "The training opened me up as a human being. Now I look for the fullness in other people, knowing that everyone has a back story. I will always be loyal to SAC because of the friendships and community I found there." Smiling at AJ, she said, "We are proud to be a Conservatory couple".



Right: Michelle Norris and Wesley Cook in Shakespeare 1. Photo by Iwan Bagus

SHOUTS!

and soliloquies

by Hau Chu

reprinted with permission from *The Washington Post*

Stand inside this two-floor building in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Northwest Washington and you'll hear shouts, piano notes and soliloquies bleeding through the walls at all hours of the day and night.

The Studio Acting Conservatory has four rooms, modeled after stages, that students can use as their dramatic playground. But it's not uncommon for students to fill up the kitchen hallways and outdoor areas with rehearsals during busier times.

Khalid Abayomi knows what it's like to spend hours upon hours at this converted church with a bloodred entrance. Abayomi, 24, says he often heads straight there from his substitute teaching job in Prince George's County Public Schools. He spends at least five days a week rehearsing, observing and absorbing the feel of working with other creative types — with some nights stretching until 2 or 3 a.m.

"There are nights I've come by just to be by myself," Abayomi says. "Ever since my first class, it's had the feel

of a community and a home. So, it's always felt like a place I can come to whenever I need to do anything."

Abayomi is taking a directing class at the conservatory, which has been training D.C.'s theater community for almost 50 years.

The theatrical school opened at this location in August 2021. It used to be nestled within Studio Theatre, the performance space farther down 14th Street NW. Throughout its lifespan, founder Joy Zinoman has offered students the promise of rehearsal space with 24-hour, seven-days-a-week access.

"I want people to rehearse," Zinoman, 81, says of the come-as-you-please mind set. "You have to do the work, and unfortunately doing the work means rehearsing.

"To get to the quality that I want, then you've got to provide the resources to do that."

The directing-class curriculum is one of the most intense.

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SUPPORTERS

The Studio Acting Conservatory wants to thank our individual donors, Board of Directors, foundations, government agencies, and many of our **13,000 alumni and current students** whose generosity is deeply appreciated.

Gifts to the Studio Conservatory are tax deductible and support a vibrant and engaged student body with financial aid, scholarships and work-study opportunities. To learn how you can make an impact on the next 50 years of training and care for these talented students visit studioactingconservatory.org, scan the QR code, or call Enily Morrison, Executive Director, at 202.232.0714.



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the pr



Maya Thompson in Greek, at the National Arboretum



Proving grounds

By Emily Morrison and Joe Crea

Michael Chamberlin and Robert Camino Matta
in Beckett, Pinter, Albee, Mamet

Since its founding, Studio Acting Conservatory has been more than just a school—it has been a gathering place, a proving ground, and a creative home for thousands of DC artists. Over the past fifty years, more than 13,000 actors and directors have trained here, each shaped by a curriculum rooted in rigor, innovation, and community.

The history of Washington, DC is so often told through the lens of politics—administrations, movements, policies—but that’s never been the whole story. The city has always had a parallel narrative: one of writers, musicians, and painters who have long shaped the cultural fabric of the District. And at the heart of DC’s theatrical community—especially as it began to expand beyond its earliest institutions—stood a bold and unlikely force: Joy Zinoman. Without the Conservatory, the landscape of local theatre would look very different. There would still be actors, and still be theatre—but perhaps not with the same depth of discipline, professionalism, or artistic spirit that this place has nurtured for generations.

a one-
of-a-kind
environment
that shaped
generations
of artists.

The time I spent studying at Studio

In 1975, Zinoman held her first acting class in the attic of Bart Whiteman’s aunt’s home. (Whiteman was an early student and went on to found Source Theatre Company.) It was the beginning of what was the Joy Zinoman Studio and, eventually, the Studio Acting Conservatory. From basements and porches to shared spaces with the Dance Exchange and Zenith Gallery on 14th and Rhode Island Avenue, the school grew steadily. From the start, it stood apart: a place for serious actors, unaffiliated with any university program, offering a challenging and uncompromising curriculum grounded in process and craft. Students came because they knew it wouldn’t be easy. And they left with technique, tools, and the foundation of a lifelong artistic practice.

After the first year, Zinoman trained her first new teacher, Molly Smith—herself a member of that inaugural class—who would go on to lead Perseverance Theatre in Alaska, and then Arena Stage. Even in

those early days, the Conservatory became known as the place to go if you were ambitious, focused, and ready to be challenged. It was also the only training center of its kind not connected to a university program. The teachers were exacting. The work was rigorous. And it made a difference. As one former student, Ginger Moss, put it, “You saw that the actors who studied there were the ones you were seeing on stage.”

From the beginning, Joy offered a directing class—not just to train directors, but to deepen actors’ understanding of the full craft of theatre-making. That course alone has inspired countless careers in directing, and created generations of actor-directors who lead with a deep sense of artistic empathy.

Prior to the founding of the Conservatory, Washington was home to a handful of producing theatres. By the mid-1970s, the city was ripe for new voices—and Joy Zinoman’s vision arrived at exactly the right moment.

“The time I spent studying at the Studio in the late seventies and early eighties was life changing. This was during a unique window of time in D.C. when small theatres were created and started blossoming and opportunities to perform also started to emerge. To this day as an actor I rely on the technique I learned there, and particularly Joy Zinoman’s system and depth of understanding of what theatre can hold, be, become; what the actor uniquely brings to the table. Grateful.”

— **Nancy Robinette, Actor**

Small companies were starting to produce bold new work. In 1978, Zinoman, (together with Russell Metheny and Virginia Crawford,) founded the Studio Theatre with a mission to produce evocative, innovative work. That same year, Bart Whiteman was developing Source Theatre on 14th St, and New York actors Howard Shalwitz and Roger Brady arrived in DC to launch Woolly Mammoth. There was a creative electricity in the city—and Joy was at the center of it.



Joy Zinoman. Photo by Don Hamerman for Washingtonian Magazine

The Conservatory continued to grow and in 1981 began adding Voice & Body classes - essential to the work of all actors. In 1986, it launched its Young Actors program with a mission to offer top-tier training to DC youth. From the beginning, half of the slots in each young people's class were funded at 100% scholarship—a commitment to serve underserved youth that remains in place to this day. Over the years, the Conservatory added advanced scene study, focused on specific styles—from Shaw/Ibsen/Chekhov to Beckett/Pinter/Albee/Mamet. Workshops provided short introductions to areas of interest for actors. And the marriage of professional theatre and serious study

created a one-of-a-kind environment that shaped generations of artists.

As DC theatre blossomed throughout the '80s and '90s, so did the opportunities. Today, on any weekend night in the District, one can see anywhere from 20 to 30 different productions—from pre-Broadway tryouts to intimate, self-produced solo shows—staged by over 80 professional theatre companies. For many artists working on those stages, the road began at SAC.

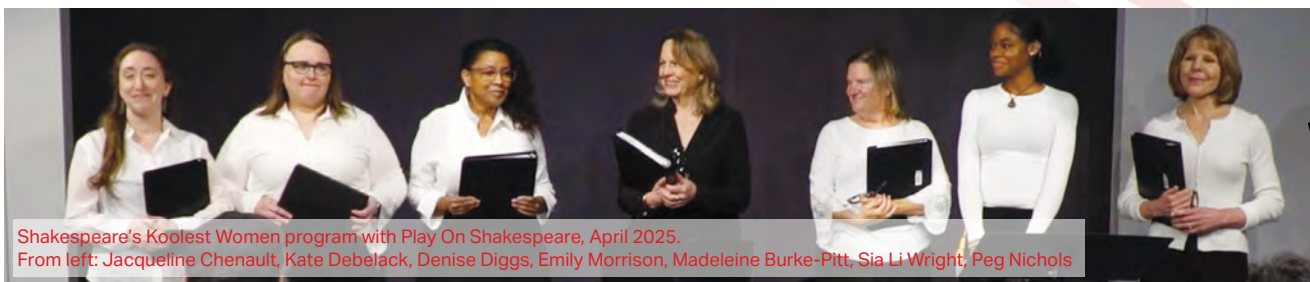
Joy Zinoman and the Conservatory stand at the center of this transformation. There are three key ways her impact has shaped the

"The training I got at SAC in my early professional development as a theatre maker continues to inform and guide just about every aspect of my professional life. I will forever credit Joy Zinoman's rigorous directing class for my career. Imagine a hands-on laboratory that allowed budding directors to put theory into practice under the guidance, observation and evaluation of a master director. Thirty-plus years later, I often recall memories of Joy and the class. Those memories, seared in the mind, are the equivalent of a go-to theatre tome that grounds me with both comfort and newfound passion for the art form. Infinite gratitude to Joy Zinoman and birthday wishes to SAC—my beloved theatre alma mater and training ground."

— **Jose Carrasquillo, Director of Artistic Programming, Ford's Theatre**

broader DC theatre movement: First, by establishing one of the first independent, conservatory-style actor training programs in DC, Joy expanded access to rigorous actor training for working adults and emerging professionals alike. The three-year curriculum, flexible structure, and affordable tuition created a unique pipeline for serious artists outside graduate degree programs.

Second, Joy worked with fellow theatre leaders to negotiate with Actors' Equity, expanding the union's reach and influence in DC. Thanks to the creation of the Small Professional Theater (SPT) Contract, theatres with under 300 seats could now hire union actors—helping local companies compete artistically while providing more equitable opportunities for actors.



Shakespeare's Kooldest Women program with Play On Shakespeare, April 2025.

From left: Jacqueline Chenault, Kate Debelack, Denise Diggs, Emily Morrison, Madeleine Burke-Pitt, Sia Li Wright, Peg Nichols

And finally, Joy's decision to locate—and remain—on 14th Street had a powerful effect on the neighborhood's future. From the earliest days on Rhode Island Avenue to a converted hot dog warehouse, to the iconic space at 14th and P Streets, the Conservatory and Studio Theatre became creative anchors in what would become one of the city's most vital corridors.

Visitors to 14th Street today would be shocked to learn what it looked like 50 years ago. Following the riots after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968, the area suffered decades of economic decline and neglect. "A Washington Post article from 1998 begins: "The sidewalk was littered with hypodermic needles and condoms. Buildings boarded up for 10 years slumped between weedy vacant lots. Joy Zinoman picked her way along 14th and P Streets NW, stepped into the warehouse crowded with pushcarts and freezers stuffed with Sabrett hot dogs, then spotted the

rats scurrying past her legs. Here, she thought, we could build a theater." While these accomplishments alone would be a monumental legacy, Zinoman wasn't finished. After leading both the Conservatory and Studio Theatre for over four decades, she faced an unexpected challenge: Studio's board decided to separate itself from the school. It could have marked the end of the Conservatory. Instead, Joy galvanized an extraordinary coalition—faculty, students, alumni, donors, designers, architects, and business leaders—and secured a new permanent home on Holmead Place in Columbia Heights. During the renovation of that building, a stunning discovery was made: a long-lost sculpture of *The Last Supper* by local artist Akili Ron Anderson. The massive artwork had been covered by drywall for many years by previous owners. In partnership with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the work was restored and preserved, and a 3-D rendering was created and

accessioned into the Smithsonian's collection. The piece remains in situ at the Conservatory and is shown to visitors regularly: a symbol of the school's commitment to honoring artistic legacy and cultural memory.

Today, under the leadership of Executive Director and Conservatory alum Emily Morrison, Studio Acting Conservatory welcomes students to 40-50 classes each year, taught by a faculty of 22 teaching artists. Many of its earliest teachers still teach in its halls—including Zinoman herself.

And so, like all great acting, the work of Studio Acting Conservatory continues: fully lived, deeply studied, and grounded in truth.

No single person has had a bigger impact on my artistic journey than Joy Zinoman. I first worked with her as an actor 25 years ago in Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* at The Studio Theatre. That experience changed my life and my career and is one of the reasons that years later I moved to DC. We did many plays together and I learned so much about acting and absorbed so much about directing a play from those golden years. But it was her directing class a decade ago that changed me forever. She helped me put into words and action the things I had always only intuited. Joy helped me free my creative and visual impulses.

I have directed many plays since then and my success originates from that semester at the Conservatory. Her obsession with the craft of acting and the craft of directing inspires me and now I also carry that obsession into my work. Joy loves the theatre. She loves the technique of acting and directing and recognizes that having technique allows the creative angel to descend. Joy also loves her students and is absolutely dedicated to their success. I am so lucky to have had her as a teacher and I am beyond lucky to have her as a mentor and a friend.

— Tom Story, Actor & Director

continued from page 15

Abayomi and 19 other students are learning fundamentals of coordinating the stage. Maybe most importantly, they learn what it means to corral unpaid volunteers to bring their scenes to life. Some are selected from the conservatory's acting-class ranks, while others are performers on other D.C. stages. A few are total amateurs.

All for scenes that would be performed one night only. The conservatory's entire fall semester, which includes directing and acting classes, culminates in public showcases of performances starting in mid-January.

Students across the conservatory's handful of autumn classes scramble to find time on the calendar to reserve space since the four dedicated studios are assigned by reservation. Those in beginner workshops can sometimes fit in their work within the two to three hours of allotted weekly class time. But the more dedicated and advanced among them know they have to sacrifice off-hours to make things perfect.

Even if it means being present during all hours of the evening. For some, that means hopping straight from work and worrying about things like dinner or a full night's sleep later. Students can punch in a code, which updates each semester, to access the space at any time.

Many come to Washington for professional opportunities but find their community by pursuing creative endeavors in spaces such as the Studio Acting Conservatory.

Andrew Ly came to D.C. for work around five years ago. The 39-year-old is a policy analyst who was raised in Seattle and describes himself as a theater kid. In college, he studied and

performed classical piano music and sung in choruses. It wasn't until around two years ago that the resident of D.C.'s Logan Circle neighborhood decided to resume acting and began classes at the conservatory.

"What we do outside of work makes us fuller human beings," Ly says. "At least for the people I know, work isn't the only fulfillment of their lives."

That dedication is why Ly was able to recruit a quintet of other working professionals to join him for a scene he was directing from "Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play."

Mikki Smith first met Ly when they were in a class together at Washington Improv Theater. Smith, 42, has her own busy

schedule. The Alexandria resident spends hours taking and teaching improv classes by night while being an intellectual-property lawyer by day.

In fact, she was bouncing from this early evening rehearsal to another one for musical improv that would go on well into the night. But she sees her professional and stage work training the same intellectual muscle.

"I think the thing that some people may not realize is that getting good at one makes you better at the other," Smith says.

The work and satisfaction from nailing these rehearsals and performances are what drive people like Aboyami. He wants to become a professional actor in the long run, but he knows that will take time.

For Ly, the directing class has emboldened him to revisit experimental operas he has written and that he wants to produce sooner rather than later.

On a recent Sunday evening, Ly's scene from "Mr. Burns" still needed to be shorter. His production would be a bit different from his classmates' work: His actors rehearsed and performed outside, in front of the conservatory.

The moon was breaking through the clouds and an unseasonably warm afternoon gave way to hints of a wintry chill. They headed inside to warm up and continue honing their craft in a studio space. They had to learn a song. The comfort of the conservatory would allow them to make mistakes and try things out.

"We did all our hard work," Ly told his actors, once seated inside. "Now, it's play time."

Michelle Carnes in Directing

balancing day jobs and night passions

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

by Meredith Garagiola

It happened as I was walking through John Wayne International Airport. Kate Debelack's name flashed on my phone screen, and I picked it up.

**"Hey there. Can you talk to me and Joy?
Something's happened."**

We spent the next year swimming against the current of that something—the decision of the Board and next Artistic Director of the Studio Theatre to, as they put it, “wind down” the Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory.

To be there from the start of it all was to live through a new work of contemporary American realism as it was being written. This is the story of that play – naturally, a drama in three acts.

SAC50

from bottom: Groundbreaking at 3423 Holmead. Front Row: Marvin Bowser, Joy Zinoman, Jordanna Hernandez. Second Row: Serge Seiden, Kate Debelack. Third Row: Adam White, Jonathan Pitt. Back Row: Jamie Crowne, Joe Graf, Jon Hensley

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

BY MEREDITH GARAGIOLA



HOW THE CONSERVATORY
BECAME WHAT IT IS TODAY



ACT I:

It's the End of the World As We Know It

The backstory we were told of why the school had to go incorporated both the seemingly transcendent (a zillion-dollar renovation plan involving a new theater space and ambitious restaurant concept) and the mundane (an apparent need for additional office space, mediated by the great staffing efficiency maximizer that was the pandemic).

The cast of characters was split between the protagonists and the antagonists—those who could not care more about the Conservatory squaring off against those who could not care less. There were scenes set in Studio D starring the Artistic Director who brought the Conservatory into the world sitting across the table from the Artistic Director hellbent on ushering it out. Occasionally some lawyers were there too, to amp up both the drama and the tedium (as only lawyers can). There was even a gun on the wall—a one-year deadline for the Conservatory and all of its people and things to exit the space in Studio Theatre it had occupied for longer than I had been alive.

From August to December we did what anyone facing home eviction does—we fought like crazy to try to stop it from happening. We looked for any possible

points of leverage we could wield. We negotiated and bargained and pleaded. We pounded our fists on tables in public and twisted our hands in anguish and despair in private. Joy and I talked on the phone (a lot), mostly late at night. The circle of people at the Conservatory who knew what was going on then would have fit in a small life boat. I was taking Comedy at the time and could not breathe a word about it to anyone, including my teacher Nancy Paris. And still I was expected to lift and land. Drama at the theater, but the show must go on.

There was an oh-so important meeting with the teachers. Finally there came a moment when Joy did what Joy always does—she saw through to the core of the thing, the angle that causes the problem to fade away into the dimming lights. Enter: The Solution. It was time for us to become something new. The Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory at the Studio Theatre was dead; long live the Studio Acting Conservatory, future location unknown.

Something's happened...

ACT II:

My Kingdom for A Space

So now it was a simple enough thing—we had to move. We didn't have any money, or any leads on a viable space, or any independent organizational structure, or even a clear idea as to whether we could continue using our own name. But Joy was unbothered by all of this. Details. They were, as she put it, "just problems to be solved."

The Director in her truest form. She was right, of course. The hardest part is always the deciding of the What. Once you've done that, then you just have to commit yourself body and soul to following that course and the path begins to clear. The mind orients itself toward figuring out the How, one phone call and email at a time. This is what we did.

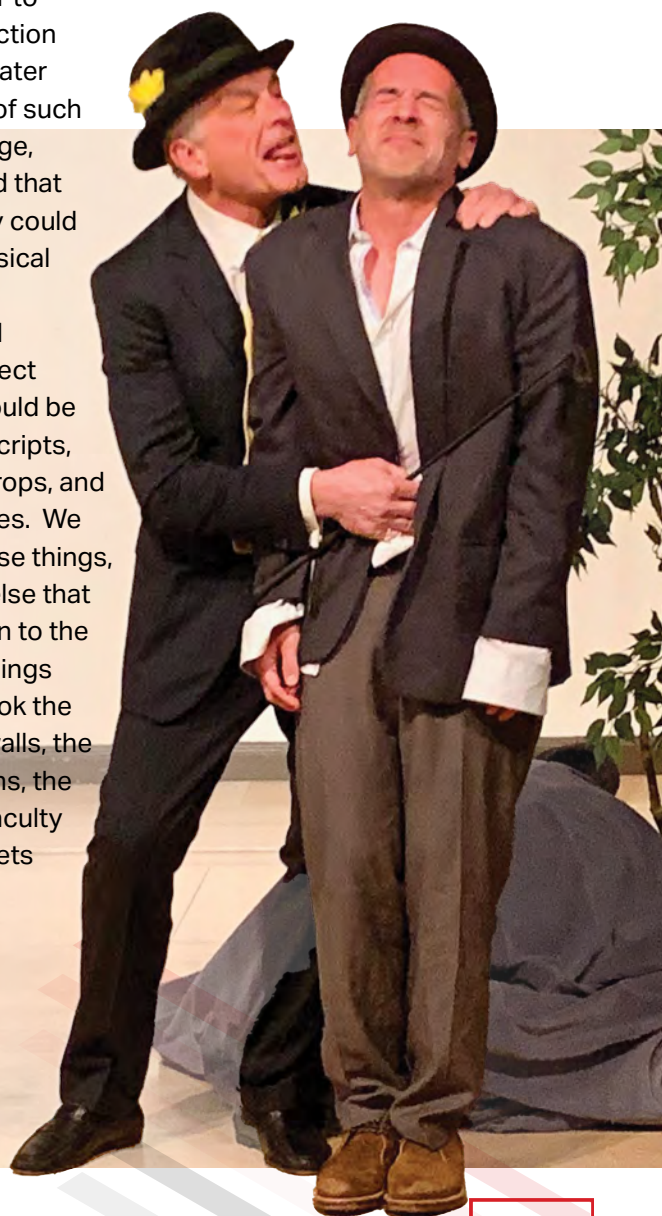
We told the Studio Theatre heads of state that we would be striking off on our own. They looked at us with incredulous bemusement, and just a whiff of relief. We had stopped being their problem the moment they decided to kick us out, but the news that we were embracing our exile meant a decreased potential for messiness, which was hugely important. The Theatre's massive capital campaign was set to kick off in May—messiness could not happen. To ensure that we would go away quietly and cleanly, they suggested that they prepare and issue a joint

statement presenting the situation as a conscious uncoupling. They even offered us a payout in exchange for agreeing to sign off on whatever PR statement they wanted to write. We declined. We left the Theatre the way the Conservatory began—penniless and beholden to no one.

The circumstances of our physical departure from the space were a high point of the experience for me. We had agreed to vacate earlier than initially requested (in order to accommodate a construction deadline that in fact was later delayed; who ever heard of such

a thing). In exchange, the parties agreed that the Conservatory could take all of its physical property out of the spaces it had occupied. I suspect they figured we would be taking boxes of scripts, set pieces and props, and some old costumes. We did take all of those things, plus everything else that wasn't nailed down to the floor (and a few things that were). We took the curtains off the walls, the light grid skeletons, the chairs from the faculty room. If the carpets

hadn't been blighted beyond repair with forty years of dirt, sweat, tears, and cigarette burns, we would have ripped them up and taken them too. It was a glorious, bewildering, euphorically terrifying time. We assembled an army of volunteers who packed everything up in cars and one big van over a weekend, sweating it out in 95 degree humidity, and suddenly it was the end of an era, and we were gone. Nobody had any idea what came next.



Joe Graf, Bill Wilburn, Joe Crea in Beckett, Pinter, Albee, Mamet. Photo by Iwan Bagus

ACT III:

Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow

If you're reading this magazine, you almost certainly know where the Conservatory is now—happily ensconced in a gleaming red building on Holmead Place, which we own outright. The magic trick that was getting from that moving van to here involved many, many hands pulling rabbits out of hats. We assembled the very first Conservatory Board of Directors—a kind of knights of the round table of Joy, Kate Debelack, Serge Seiden, Marvin Bowser, Jonathan Pitt and me. Future board members Jamie Crowne and Joe Crea managed fundraising and publicity, respectively. We had left the Theatre with a full community of teachers and students, and now we performed the sacred rite of document drafting that civilization required to make us legit. We screamed and cheered when our 501(c)(3) application was approved, and not long thereafter, future Board member Keith Hansen began negotiating with the city for a temporary space. A few months later we moved into our rooms at Garnett Patterson, an abandoned middle school in Shaw, just in the nick of time, and the life of the school began anew.

The Garnett Patterson time was exciting and hard, filled with problems to be solved. One semester into our time there, the world shut down. The pandemic brought untold numbers

of challenges to our fledgling organization, which like the rest of the world suddenly had to figure out overnight how to transform into an entirely online institution. Thankfully, we'd had some recent practice dealing with catastrophic unforeseen circumstances, and we made our way through, thanks to an intrepid staff to hold the ship steady.

We grew our board and our coffers (the latter thanks primarily to Joy's ferocious fundraising efforts, and the indefatigable energy that she and the staff brought toward grant writing). We welcomed the first cohort of students into the school who would never know the Conservatory as part of the Studio Theatre, and we continued to make plans and to dream dreams for our future.

One day Joy approached the Board with some news—friend and realtor David Blaufarb had found a building for sale in Columbia Heights, and it was her fervent hope that we consider buying it. It had lived most of its life as a church before it was bought by developers with big plans to turn it into condos. But the zoning board denied a request for seven condos on site, making the developer's deal unprofitable, and now they were anxious to unload it. A few months and much negotiation later the building was

ours. Deb Booth, Joy and designers got to work. a few months later after Infinity had begun (during the pandemic, no less) Joy got a call from construction workers doing the interior demolition work saying that she had to get down to the building immediately. There was a miracle she needed to see.

Of all the many twists and turns in the story of how we came to be the Studio Acting Conservatory, the discovery of the Last Supper sculpture remains my favorite moment. That such a culturally significant masterpiece was hidden from the world for years under drywall in a decommissioned church, only to be unearthed after an acting school bought the building after being expelled from their own sacred space, is, well, remarkable. And after all of that, it was not really surprising that once we figured out who the artist was (Howard University's Akili Ron Anderson), Joy tracked him down, befriended him, and set about ensuring that the sculpture would be restored, preserved, and celebrated for the extraordinary work of art that it is. She wouldn't for a second have considered doing anything less

. It has been more than six years since I answered that phone call from Kate in the airport. I stand in the lobby of our gorgeous building on a weekday evening and hear the buzzing voices of actors, directors, teachers, and staff. I can feel the force of their energy, their focus, their drive, their joy. It is a heady and intoxicating thing, that mix. I drink it in, and then I head into Studio A for a rehearsal. There is work to do.



Sharon Neubauer, Carlotta Capuano and Natalie Collins in Beckett, Pinter, Albee, Mamet.
Photo by Iwan Bagus

I was fresh out of grad school (MFA from NYU's Tisch School) in 1984, and fresh off the road with a tour of Oliver! New to the DC area, I was hoping to refresh my auditioning skills, and wanted to meet folks in the DC Theatre Community. Brad Watkins from Harlequin Dinner Theatre in Rockville suggested an auditioning class with Joy, so I trudged downtown to the Studio Theatre's Church Street space, and never looked back.

— Elizabeth van den Berg

Top Row: Nancy Robinette, Isabel Keating, Ed Gero.
Bottom row: Joy Zinoman, Sarah Marshall, Serge Seiden.



Fall of 1985 I moved into a basement apartment at 1920 Calvert Street and from my bedroom I could hear the upstairs neighbors in a group house talking about theater. When I got up the courage to talk to them I discovered they were actors Isabel Keating and Michael Russotto. They encouraged me to see *Landscape of the Body* by John Guare at Studio Theatre on Church Street and that I could usher and see the show for free. They were taking classes there at the Conservatory. I went to the show and it was about (among other things) a boy from Bangor Maine - who dies horribly - but I had just moved to DC from Maine so I took it as a sign. That Spring I took Principles of Realism with Paul Cunningham and played Austin in *True West*. Even though I had taken several acting classes in college I was told to repeat the class that summer with Joy Zinoman. I did and the rest is history.

—Serge Seiden

Joy Zinoman

Joy Zinoman in Myanmar (Burma)

What is your idea of perfect happiness? Dinner al fresco with my husband, children and grandchildren in harmony. **What is your greatest fear?** Annihilation of our values in America. **What is your greatest extravagance?** Laying in bed every morning reading two print newspapers. **What was your favorite journey?** Traveling the wide world – India, Indonesia, China, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, England, France, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Austria, Hungary, Estonia, Turkey and more. **On what occasion do you lie?** In the lobby, after a show. **Which talent would you most like to have?** Baking Challah. **What is your current state of mind?** Alternately emotional, peaceful, worried, angry, joyful. **If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?** To be less rash. **What do you consider your greatest achievement?** Too many: 63 years of marriage, 8 children and grandchildren, building a theatre, being able to live as a Theatre Director and Teacher. Continued passion. **Where would you like to live?** Just where I am, or Rome or London or Luang Prabang. **Who is your favorite hero of fiction?** The women of the four great Chekhov plays. **Who are your heroes in real life?** Risk takers, Real actors. The Obamas. **Who are your favorite writers?** Chekhov, Beckett, Caryl Churchill. Of course, Shakespeare. **How would you like to die?** In my sleep. **What do you consider the most overrated virtue?** Being careful, prudent. **What is your most marked characteristic?** My hairdo





The Conservatory's acting curriculum, developed by founder Joy Zinoman, is Stanislavsky-based with an emphasis on realism, the critical and necessary foundation for all actors. The curriculum is structured into three years of study: Realism, Classics, and Styles.

YEAR 1 of the program is the foundational work of realistic playing and characterization.

YEAR 2 explores classical technique, with heightened language and imagery.

YEAR 3 tackles different styles, from Comedy, Directing, and advanced scene study classes.

All students begin their training in Year 1 Realism, taking either Actor's Process or Principles of Realism. Students continue along the acting curriculum after successfully completing a course at a time. All acting classes end with a public showing of the students' work.

There is no audition required to join our program, and you do not have to make a three-year commitment: students can take classes at their own pace.

In addition to our acting curriculum, the Conservatory recommends a variety of adjunct classes that focus on the study of the voice and body-essential to the work of all actors-and classes that diversify the students' skill set, such as improvisation, Alexander Technique, auditioning, and musical theatre.

Our array of programs offers something for everyone, whether you want to pursue a career in acting, continue your education, explore a new interest, or improve presentation skills in other fields.



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Alex Diaz Ferguson in Greek.
Photo by Iwan Bagus

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