Alumni

Jessica Greer Morris, Timothy Donnelly, and Other Alumni in the News

Spring 2012



Jessica Greer Morris

Fearless director

The *Daily Beast* and *Newsweek* magazine included **Jessica Greer Morris ’06PH** on their list of “150 Fearless Women,” alongside names like Oprah Winfrey, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee. Morris was recognized for her

work as executive director of Project Girl Performance Collective, which addresses women’s issues through theatrical productions, giving girls a space in which to write and perform their own work

Words' worth

School of the Arts poetry professor **Timothy Donnelly ’98SOA** won the $100,000 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award for his second collection, *The Cloud Corporation*. Donnelly, whom the *New Yorker* called “an acrobatic formalist,” is also a poetry editor at *Boston Review.*

Modern Terrorism, a play by **Jon Kern ’07SOA**, was selected for the second annual Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award, which grants $50,000 to an emerging playwright and $100,000 to the nonprofit theater that produces the play’s premiere. The dark comedy, about “the difficulties of being a terrorist in the 21st century,” was chosen by the trustees of the foundation, formed in honor of writer Arthur Laurents (*West Side Story, Gypsy*) and his partner, Tom Hatcher.

If the startup fits...

Shopping has gone digital in two new ways, thanks to businesses started by alums. Clothes Horse, founded by **Dave Whittemore ’06CC** and **Vik Venkatraman ’06SEAS**, is a virtual dressing room, providing custom recommendations for sizing at more than fifty different online stores. Venkatraman, who formerly owned a tailoring company, created a series of algorithms that combines measurements submitted by the manufacturer and the customer to determine the best size and predict how well an item will fit.

Doug Krugman ’93BUS and **Lynn Zises ’89BC, ’96BUS, ’96SIPA** created some new competition for the Salvation Army, taking charity shopping online with their site WebThriftStore. Donors post and price their own items (ranging from $5 to $5,000), promote them instantaneously through social media, and select their charitable beneficiary from a list of site partners.

Executive Decision

President Barack Obama ’83CC awarded **Andrew Delbanco**, the Mendelson Family Professor of American Studies and director of Columbia’s American Studies Center, a National Humanities Medal “for his writings on higher education and the place classic authors hold in history and contemporary life.” Delbanco, whom *Time* magazine once called “America’s best social critic,” is the author of *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*, the subject of this issue’s Booktalk interview.

Christina Hull Paxson ’87GSAS will become president of Brown University on July 1, succeeding Ruth Simmons. Paxson studied economics at Columbia and since 2009 has been the dean of Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. She is also the founder of the Wilson School’s Center for Health and Wellbeing, which focuses on the impact of economic factors on children’s health and welfare.

Language lab

Jacob Andreas, a senior computer science major at Columbia’s engineering school, became the second Columbian in history — and the first since 1963 — to win a Churchill Scholarship for a year of study at the University of Cambridge. Andreas plans to use his time there to continue his research on computation and natural language.

Codecademy, a company founded by **Ryan Bubinski ’11CC** and **Zach Sims**, a current Columbia College student, was featured in the *New York Times* in March. The free site helps users to understand basic computing and Web languages through interactive lessons. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg pledged to use the site to learn code this year.

Connecting the dots

Thomas Jessell, a neuroscientist and codirector of Columbia’s Mind, Brain, and Behavior Initiative, received Canada’s Gairdner International Award, which honors significant contributions to medical science. The $100,000 prize is considered one of the most important in the medical field; many of its recipients have gone on to win

the Nobel Prize. Jessell was recognized for his research revealing the basic principles of communication within the central nervous system... Columbia chemist **Louis E. Brus ’69GSAS** won the 2012 Bower Award and Prize for Achievement in Science, which comes with $250,000. Brus was honored for developing the quantum dot, a type of semiconductive nanocrystal that is used in solar cells, diode lasers, LEDs, and medical-imaging equipment.



Guide to school abbreviations

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