

FALL 2018

THE DORNSIFE CENTER CONNECTOR

TELL



YOUR

STORY

DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Dear friends and neighbors,

Early in the initial planning process for the Dornsife Center, we heard from neighborhood residents as well as from members of the Drexel community that creating resources for people to tell their own stories was going to be important.

We think there are a lot of ways to tell a story. When you apply for a job, you are crafting a story about yourself as a professional. And of course self-expression through visual arts and music is all about creating a story and sharing it. We have been so gratified to learn the stories of everyone who comes to the Dornsife Center and shares something of themselves.

In this edition of the *Dornsife Center Connector* we feature a set of people who are telling stories at the Dornsife Center. Jeff's personal narrative resonates through music, and he is training neighborhood kids to tell their stories through music performance. Tajsha has a story about family and embracing a passion for dance. Latasha is working on the story of her career as she creates her next chapter as a professional. And Brenda's story of the neighborhood's past is a warm reflection of the human experiences that tie us all together.

We hope you enjoy reading, and we welcome you to join us to discover new ways of telling your own story.

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PARTNER PROFILE

<i>Name:</i>	Cyrille Taillandier
<i>Job:</i>	Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of Music Industry in Drexel's Westphal College of Media Arts & Design
<i>Hometown:</i>	Paris, France
<i>Current Residence:</i>	Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania
<i>Favorite food :</i>	Steak-frites
<i>Favorite movie:</i>	<i>Back to the Future</i>

What is your role at the Dornsife Center?

I manage the MAD Dragon Community Recording enterprise. We just finished building a mini recording studio at the Dornsife center to help our neighbors with their musical or vocal projects. We offer music production and recording workshops as well as open lab hours in our 12-seat computer music lab.

Where can we find you at the Dornsife Center?

In the recording studio in the Carriage House

What is your favorite thing about the Dornsife Center?

It feels like a secret place, the buildings are beautiful and feel cosy. I get to meet great people who are all driven by a collaborative spirit and are open minded.

What do you do when you're not at the Dornsife Center?

I spend time with my family, go to movies, and I enjoy cooking and making music!

LATASHA PEARSON A CAREER STORY

Being a jobseeker means crafting the story of your own career: a resume is a pared-down biography of our work experience, and a cover letter is the prologue. At every job interview, we walk a prospective employer through a narrative of what we can bring to a new workplace, with a chapter about what we hope to accomplish, and with some practice we can make it understandable and compelling.

Latasha Pearson has been working with Dornsife Center staff in the Beachell Family Learning Center on the project of telling her story as a jobseeker. Pearson grew up in Philadelphia's Mill Creek neighborhood and she now lives in Eastwick. She has been coming to the Dornsife Center for a couple of years now to use the computer lab and to



Latasha Pearson

take advantage of the Career Services program, and she also enjoys the monthly community dinners.

With a professional goal of working in early childhood development, Pearson has drawn on support from Dornsife Center staff to help her get there. Drexel Human Resources specialist Courtney Claiborne has helped her with getting online for job searches, doing online applications and uploading documents. She says that Claiborne's help with developing her resume has meant that she is getting more interviews than ever, with interviews two to three times a week. Brenda Lewis has been a champion for Pearson as well, helping her gather information and job leads.

Computer lab trainer Kevin Williams helped Pearson get her Child Development Associate profile together - and to maximize income during her search for a job in the child care field he also helped her organize her own small business selling home-made pies.

About the Dornsife Center, Pearson would say that the one-on-one help that the staff and Drexel students offer with her resume and job search has been invaluable. She has gotten great leads to training and benefits, and sees a path to a career in early childhood development that she can grow into.

And after she lands her first job along this path she says she'll definitely keep coming back as part of the Dornsife Center community.

Neighborhood jobseekers are welcome to visit us at the Open Lab, part of the Beachell Family Learning Center in the Dornsife Center. Spend time learning computer skills, getting help with job searches and applications, and meeting with our HR staff for help creating and refining your resume. Dornsife Center staff are available to support computer training, job searches, and career pathways for all residents. You can find the Open Lab on the first floor of the Dornsife Center's carriage house.

JEFF KESSLER A MUSIC STORY

Jeff Kessler, a graduate student in Drexel's College of Nursing & Health Professions music therapy degree program, has been teaching music lessons at the Dornsife Center with the Department of Performing Arts for a couple of years now, and his enthusiasm about the program is infectious.

A Delaware native, Kessler currently lives in New Jersey, and after he finished his undergraduate degree in liberal studies at Rowan University he recognized Drexel's music therapy program as an opportunity to reconnect with music. "Music got me through my childhood," he said: "I wasn't into sports like most of the other kids and everything I did, whether watching Mr. Rogers or Star Wars or Sesame Street, it was all about the music. When I learned guitar starting at age 13 it became all-encompassing. It's the place in my life where I feel most comfortable and most at home in terms of a profession."

Kessler believes in the idea of music as an important means of expression. Not only is it a way of sharing a story, but for kids who feel pressure to perform up to other people's standards - to get good grades in school, to be a good kid - "it is a way for them to feel their own voice: that voice might come through playing a melody, or banging on a drum, or playing notes on a guitar or piano, and that sort of nonverbal expression is sometimes the best outlet a kid has." Kessler writes and performs his own original music, too, which he describes as "sounding a lot like the WXPN singer-songwriter genre."

Music lessons at the Dornsife Center start with the basics. Sometimes, Kessler says, the kids are a little too ambitious and want to skip straight to playing songs by their favorite artists, but Kessler has to rein them in a bit for the sake of skill building. "We start with learning the easy stuff - "Star Spangled Banner," "Ode to Joy," or a Christmas song, but I point out to them that it might have the same chords as the Bruno Mars song they want to learn. Lessons happen in groups and one-on-one, with the opportunity to customize for students who are especially committed.

Through his music teaching, Kessler learns his students' stories, whether they are patients he works with at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, or kids who live in the neighborhood at the Dornsife Center. Lesson time starts with catching up with their weeks, talking about what they are most interested in performing, and encouragement to make music practice a fun part of life. "Kids can hardly get a better program than the one we've built here. It's all about the music, and there are some very talented learners in the program."

Kessler fell into music therapy after having been a guitar player in bands for years. He thought about getting back into music more and more after finishing his liberal arts degree. He learned more about music therapy, and he knew a music therapist at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The work sounded like a fit to him and it all fell into place when he got to Drexel.

For the students here, Kessler notes, "I feel like they have a great learning opportunity even younger than I had because of the great program that Performing Arts put together - you can see that they love the music, and it can be their story, or a part of their childhood story. Kids can hardly get a better program than here - it is all about the

music. This program is an amazing opportunity for the kids, and they are so talented - and the teaching team is so talented. This is a very unique community program."

At the early learning stages, Kessler wants his students to have fun and not approach music performance like it is just another homework task. He loves those moments when a student suddenly realizes "this is MY THING," a moment that happened to some of the kids when they played their first end-of-year concert. "They realized it is more than the everyday exercises we do in the practice room. Performing with their peers made all the difference, and that is always a special discovery."



Jeff Kessler

FROM WRITERS ROOM MABEL TAYLOR'S SPEAKEASY BRENDA BAILEY

There was a time, not so long ago, when on Sundays the bars, liquor stores, grocery stores as a matter of fact most of the stores, were closed. Sunday was a sacred day. People went to church and rested to prepare for work on Monday. However, some found a way to make money from home. They sold soul food, liquor and a good time. It was called the speakeasy. The one in my community was

Mabel Taylor's. She was quite the entrepreneur. You could play cards for money and the house got a cut. You could enjoy a meal and have a cocktail all at a price. Liquor was sold in shots, half pints, and pints. You would receive a set up with your drink order (ice, cups and soda). Living on Ludwick Street, we were in walking distance from Mabel's. I can hear my mother asking my father where

he was going. Around the corner to Mabel's was his response. My mother would smile and say he was going to see his girlfriend. When his brother/friends came looking for him she would tell them he is over his girlfriend's house and they knew exactly where to go. Selling liquor on Sunday was against the law. You had to use code words. Sometimes if my dad had too much to drink and went to sleep, Mabel's husband Goldie would come and tell my mother. She would go and wake him up. No one wanted to get punched out trying to wake him up. She knew the secret: throw cold water in his face and move out of the way fast. I do not remember there being any fighting but there were plenty of people hooking up. Speakeasy love affairs.

Today, liquor stores, bars, and grocery stores -- just about everything is open on Sunday. And most restaurants serve alcohol. The speakeasy is a thing of the past. The house on 41st Street is still there with many memories within the walls. Looking at the house I can hear the sweet sounds of music coming out of the front door. See the women in their dresses looking beautiful, the men



Brenda Bailey

in their suits and ties some coming from church, others coming from home. Ms. Mabel and Goldie are gone but the memories linger. I guess you could say those were the good old days.

"Mabel Taylor's Speakeasy" was written by Brenda Bailey as part of the Tripod: People, Places, Portraits" project, part of Writers Room and sponsored by Canon Solutions USA.

TAJSHA POPE A FAMILY STORY

Several years ago, Tajsha Pope's mom learned about the dance program at the Dornsife Center and signed up both Pope and her sister for classes. Offered by the Department of Performing Arts, part of Drexel's Westphal College of Media Arts & Design, the program features free dance lessons for neighborhood children ages four



Tajsha Pope

and up, as well as dance and fitness programming for adults and seniors. Drexel students who are studying dance and performing arts, or who just have a passion for dance and are taking dance classes themselves, teach these lessons at the Dornsife Center under the supervision of Drexel's Dance Program Director Valerie Ifill. Many students who are dance performance majors go on to Drexel's Creative Arts Therapy masters degree program in the College of Nursing and Health Professions.

For Pope's family, residents of Mantua, the program was close to home and easily affordable, and they jumped right in together.

When Pope graduated from high school, she headed for two years at Community College of Philadelphia, and then this past spring she transferred into Drexel, where she is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in Global Studies.

Pope's passion for dance brought her back to the dance program at the

Dornsife Center. Once a kid learning to dance in the program, she is now sharing her skills and enthusiasm and teaching other neighborhood children how to tell their own stories through dance and movement.

About the Dornsife Center, Pope notes that she likes the atmosphere, and that people there are friendly and helpful. It's a place where she can share her passion for dance, and meet others with the same passion.

Last year, she performed at Drexel's 125th anniversary celebration with her sisters and her mom, an experience that wouldn't have happened had they not discovered the Dornsife Center. "Not many people get to perform with their family!" she says.

As far as a career path goes, Pope says that she likes learning languages but wants to stay involved somehow with dance. She especially enjoys salsa dancing and wants to learn more about dance culture around the world. She visited Cuba last summer on a study abroad program with CCP and had the opportunity to dance there a lot; the experience stoked her interest in Cuban culture and especially in Cuban salsa dance.

We think Pope is going to go far, and her spirit of adventure proves that. She thinks that if you are interested in something, "just try it out! Try, just try it, and don't second-guess yourself. Don't let fear guide you."



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