Growing up, Mike DiCenzo had a dream: he wanted to reunite the cast of one of his favorite shows, Saved by the Bell. As a senior writer on NBC’s Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, he not only was able to make that happen, but had a boss willing to star in a sketch that brought Zack, Kelly, Jessie, and Slater back together.

DiCenzo cast Fallon as a Bayside High classmate of the four, and he persuaded Saved by the Bell stars Mark-Paul Gosselaar, Mario Lopez, Elizabeth Berkley, and Tiffani Thiessen to take up their old personas and dress in ‘90s duds. The eight-minute skit was an instant hit when it aired last February and has been viewed on YouTube 31.5 million times since.

“My job is awesome,” says DiCenzo (COM’05), who admits he still has “holy s--t!” moments when he realizes he’s writing for a late night show with millions of viewers. He was the first writer Fallon hired when he succeeded Conan O’Brien on Late Night in 2009, and he went with him when Fallon took over the Tonight Show from Jay Leno last year. “Just the nature of the show and who you get to work with is amazing—I got to write lyrics for Paul McCartney,” DiCenzo says. The personal payoff is good, too: “My grandma’s definitely proud of me.”

Joining DiCenzo at the Tonight Show writers’ table each day is Arthur Meyer (COM’06). The Emmy-nominated alums pen sketches and celebrity bits that have helped the show dominate late night TV. During last February’s sweeps, The Tonight Show beat its competitors by more than a million viewers.

The BU scribes met only briefly in college. DiCenzo, who wrote for BUTV10’s now-defunct Overexposed, landed a gig at the satirical news website The Onion before going to work for Fallon. He began to use his Brooklyn neighbor Meyer in some of the Late Night skits, drawing on Meyer’s background in sketch comedy as a member of BU’s comedy group Slow Children at Play and then of Pangea 3000, a sketch comedy group he belonged to in New York after college. His talent for sketch comedy helped him get hired as a Tonight staff writer. “It taught me how to collaborate with other comedians, and that’s a huge part of doing comedy,” Meyer says. “The only way you can write a good sketch is to collaborate and be open to other people’s ideas.”

The Tonight Show is known for goofy humor, good-natured interviews, and skits like Michelle Obama “mom dancing” and Tom Hanks performing slam poetry. “It’s a very sincere show, a positive show,” says Meyer. “It celebrates more than it takes down.”

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