

As a BU student, Jason Alexander wanted to be a classical actor. But a professor, Jim Spruill (CFA'75), urged him to try comedy. Referring to his physicality, Spruill told him, "I know your heart and soul are Hamlet. But you will never play Hamlet."

# Seinfeld's Costanza Gives Master Class in Acting at CFA

*Jason Alexander returns to work with School of Theatre students*

LONG BEFORE HE BECAME FAMOUS as curmudgeon George Costanza on the long-running hit TV series *Seinfeld*, actor Jason Alexander was making a name for himself on Broadway. He starred in Stephen Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along* and in Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound* before winning a Tony Award for his performance in Jerome Robbins' *Broadway* in 1989. Alexander (CFA'81, Hon.'95) drew on these experiences during a master class he conducted before more than 100 College of Fine Arts School of Theatre students on September 22. Dressed in jeans and a button-down

shirt, the actor recounted how the late Jim Spruill (CFA'75), then a CFA associate professor of theater arts, gave him some indispensable career advice.

Noticing Alexander's physicality, he said, "I know your heart and soul are Hamlet. But you will never play Hamlet." Spruill urged him to do comedy. The actor left BU a year shy of graduating to appear in a film being shot in New York City. Months later he was on Broadway starring in *Merrily We Roll Along*. Over the next 30 years, Alexander appeared in dozens of films and television shows, including *Pretty Woman*, *Shallow Hal*, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.



He is currently lending his voice to the 2015 documentary *The Gettysburg Address*. Alexander's performance in *Seinfeld*, which ran from 1989 to 1998, earned seven Emmy nominations and four Screen Actors Guild awards.

Alexander told the CFA students that famed acting coach Larry Moss gave him four rules of acting. For every role they assume, actors must ask the following questions:

Who am I talking to?

What do I want them to do?

What do I do to make them do that?

What's in the way of me getting what I want?

Following the master class, Alexander stuck around for students' questions, many of which focused on the differences between acting for stage and acting for film. Acting teachers who coach for a film performance many times "tell you to bring it down," Alexander said. "But think of any performance you've loved in a movie. Was it small? No."

By way of example, he recounted the time he and Michael Chiklis (CFA'85) both auditioned for the role of John Belushi in the film *Wired*. Although they were neck and neck for the part, Chiklis went for a bigger impact, and trashed the set during the audition. Alexander laughed: "He got the part."

But it was the heartfelt advice and encouragement Alexander offered to the students that made the evening especially memorable. At one point, he told students that they have no reason to

**WEB EXTRA**  
Watch a video of Jason Alexander (CFA'81, Hon.'95) giving a master class to CFA School of Theatre students at [bu.edu/bostonia](http://bu.edu/bostonia).

not do what they want to do, noting that iPhones and YouTube have made it easier than ever to produce a film. "Be gentle with yourself," Alexander counseled. "You don't yell at a bud because it's not a flower yet. It's going to take time."

AMY LASKOWSKI

## Long Live the *Daily Free Press*

*Famous friends among those donating more than \$70,000 to save student newspaper*



The *Daily Free Press* received donations from about 300 alumni, professors, students, and friends through the crowdsourcing website GoFundMe. An additional \$10,000 donation came from *Freep* alum and Fox News host Bill O'Reilly (COM'75).

For a while there in early November, it seemed like the weekly print version of the *Daily Free Press* might not survive. BU's independent student-run paper announced that it was almost \$70,000 in debt to its publisher, Turley Publications, and had less than eight weeks to come up with the money.

Two days later, the *Freep* had raised more than \$17,000 in donations from about 300 alumni, professors, students, and friends through the crowdsourcing website GoFundMe. An addi-

tional \$10,000 donation from *Freep* alum and Fox News host Bill O'Reilly (COM'75) and a \$50,000 pledge from local car dealer and philanthropist Ernie Boch, Jr., got them over the hump.

Although the 44-year-old paper scaled back production of the print edition from four days a week to one day a week last May (it's published daily online), debt continued to mount, and ad revenues continued a long, slow decline.

In fiscal year 1998, ad revenue was \$504,027.

In fiscal year 2008, it was \$314,814. And in the fiscal year that ended August 31, 2014, it was just \$101,565.

Kyle Plantz (COM'16), who was editor-in-chief in the fall, says contributions and posts on the GoFundMe page affirmed a lasting fondness for the *Freep* on the part of many alumni.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Don Van Natta Jr. (COM'86) donated \$300 and Bravo TV host Andy Cohen (COM'90) gave \$250.

The most telling comment may have come from Melanie DeCarolis (CAS'92, COM'92), now a copy editor, who donated \$75. "I tell everyone I didn't major in journalism or English at BU; I majored in the *Freep*," she wrote.

The GoFundMe page is officially closed, but the *Daily Free Press* is still accepting donations on its homepage through PayPal. AL



Kyle Plantz (COM'16)