

### On this day

In 1972, Home Box Office, also known as HBO, was launched. HBO is the oldest paid TV channel in the United States



## 'For those hungry to connect': Podcast festival gives students, podcasters chance to learn more

**GHAILAH NYEANCHI**  
Contributing Writer

Be kind. Stay open. Set clear boundaries and expectations. Have grace. Stay curious.

These were the five tips that Christabel-Nsiah Buadi, audio developer and strategist, outlined in her presentation about the importance of mentorship. Buadi's workshops were one of many presented at the RESONATE Podcast Festival, hosted by the Institute of Contemporary Art and Virginia Public Media on Nov. 3 and 4.

The event was a chance for both old and new podcasters to share their work and connect, according to their website. RESONATE featured a keynote speaker, presentations from other podcasters, special performances and a pitch party.

Most journalism schools don't have a robust podcasting curriculum, said Chioke I'Anson, founder and director of Virginia Public Media & Institute of Contemporary Art Community Media Center. Many students, hungry for ways to connect, graduate without knowing how to break into the industry, he said.

RESONATE gives students the opportunity to meet industry professionals and refine their skills before leaving campus, according to I'Anson

"It's the educational resource they need to supplement their learning," I'Anson said. "But it only works if they know about it, which is why advertising for RESONATE is so important."

RESONATE also premiered "Audio Trips," an art exhibition featuring work from sound artists and final projects from students of Level Up Academy, a summer program focused on teaching students how to produce podcasts.

“

You can hear a person's voice telling you a story. The human voice carries emotion and other subtleties that I just couldn't capture in print.”

**Maya Kroth**  
Pitch Party! finalist  
for RESONATE

Lamp-like structures with bell-shaped glass domes were scattered across the museum. Instead of bulbs, the domes housed speakers that told stories from different creators.

"If we do it right, RESONATE

Podcast Festival will be the place where producers meet their peers, newcomers meet their heroes, and everyone gets better together," I'Anson said.

Three producers pitched their podcast show to a panel of judges in a room full of attendees on the event's second day, according to the website. The winner of The Pitch Party!, Ivy Le, received \$10,000 to produce their podcast pilot.

"I started out writing for a newspaper before I got interested in audio," said Maya Kroth, a Pitch Party! finalist for RESONATE.

Kroth loves the immediacy and intimacy of the medium, she said.

"You can hear a person's voice telling you a story," Kroth said. "The human voice carries emotion and other subtleties that I just couldn't capture in print."

Podcasts are an important medium because they deliver to an audience hungry for information and entertainment, Kroth said. It's one of the mediums that people are gravitating toward in growing numbers.

Laughter rippled through the air as Ivy Le, one of the RESONATE finalists, delivered her pitch to the panel of judges. After deliberation behind closed doors, Le was announced as the winner.

It feels awesome and validating winning the award, Le said. There were

not a lot of stand up comics at the festival, according to Le.

Le said she cares about important, dense subjects.

"I went through a phase, like every artist does, where I was making art to prove that I was a human being," Le said. "Now, I'm over that. I make art because I am a human being and that's just what humans do."

Travis Fellows, an attendee at RESONATE, started making podcasts with his friend during the pandemic.

"We would get together and talk for hours and we thought we were pretty interesting," Fellows said. "So we said 'I wonder if other people think the same thing?'"

Fellows hopes to use his experience at RESONATE to find motivation to figure out where he is going with podcasting in the future, Fellows said.

**Sound check before the show at RESONATE.**  
Photos by Andrew Hill.





# Annual exhibition changes locations each year, presents new aspect of Richmond's history

**EMILY MCCAULEY**  
Contributing Writer

Attendees observing glowing artwork and meeting artists filled the streets and alleys on Broad Street for InLight 2023. Attendees trailed in and out of the outdoor exhibitions and various art galleries.

InLight 2023 was located along the 200 to 400 blocks of West Broad Street in Richmond's downtown art district on Nov. 3 and 4 and featured various art forms that utilized light-based platforms, according to the InLight website.

This year's theme was "Reflection and Refraction" and strived to embrace Broad Street's history in Jackson Ward and Monroe Ward, according to Emily Smith, the director of the 1708 Gallery.

"I hope that people use the experiences and the artworks presented to think a little bit more about Broad Street as the artery that it is and how important of a street it is in terms of connecting different parts of the community," Smith said.

1708 Gallery first started InLight as an annual light-based art exhibition in 2008, but it has evolved over the years into an annual event that moves locations, according to Smith.

Every year the event location changes around Richmond to incorporate different aspects of the city's history into the artwork, according to Smith.

"What we have learned through having InLight at different sights is that every year is different — every year has a different vibe and a different flavor," Smith said.

The event is a celebration of lights as well as a great opportunity for artists, according to InLight artist Mauricio Vargas.

“

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**Emily Smith**  
director of the 1708 Gallery

The exhibition changes locations annually so artists can pull inspiration from the immediate geography in order to portray a better, holistic view of Richmond as a whole, Vargas said.

Creating his piece for InLight helped Vargas learn more about the history of Jackson Ward and challenged him in a healthy way, he said.

"That is part of the fun — learning

new things as an artist and always being curious and just persisting," Vargas said.

InLight 2023 artist Kelley-Ann Lindo first attended the event in 2019 and has been going ever since, she said. This is her first year featured as an artist.

Lindo felt thrilled to be a part of InLight and enjoyed seeing the response to the exhibition, she said.

Lindo presented a multimedia sculpture at InLight that reflected grief and mourning in the Black community as well as a celebration of life, she said.

"I was thinking about the history of Broad Street and thinking about the history of slavery and Virginia being one of the biggest slave ports," Lindo said.

Lindo's piece focuses on community and gathering, she said.

"The work being present within that space adds to the entire experience and this idea about reflecting on Black presence and the history within the space," Lindo said.

InLight always has sculptures and interactive artwork, according to Morgan Carey, a fifth-year InLight attendee.

"It's always my favorite art event to go to in Richmond," Carey said.

Events like InLight bring attention to Richmond's Arts District and show that it has a lot of creativity to offer, whether through galleries, vendors or live performances, Carey said.

"I feel like this shows how public space can be activated and how art can be

brought into different parts of the community, whether it be a park or a neighborhood, so it is really nice to see a space be used in a different way than you would normally see it," Carey said.

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**Morgan Carey**  
fifth-year InLight attendee

Carey felt impressed with how the various mediums exhibited at the event incorporated light, she said.

"I'm like a moth to a flame," Carey said.



Attendees viewing InLight exhibition.  
Photos by Julia Garrett.

# VCU organization allows students to pioneer theater production

## LAUREN HALL

Contributing writer

## EMILY MCCAULEY

Contributing writer

The Shafer Alliance Laboratory Theater, or SALT, allows students to put on full productions and gain experience they can utilize in the professional world, according to Charlotte Grace Smith, the director of SALT's upcoming production, "The Female of the Species."

SALT presents "The Female of the Species" on Nov. 10 and 11 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 12 at 2 p.m. at the Shafer Street Playhouse, according to Smith. The play "The Female of the Species" is based on a true story turned into a comedy and is an examination of the different waves of feminism. The performances are free to attend.

Smith will host a Q&A talk-back after the Nov. 12 matinee performance of "The Female of the Species" to hopefully bridge the gap between different generations and their ideas of feminism, she said.

"Especially as we're in our fourth wave of feminism, which is really taking into consideration intersectionality and the rise of the 'Me Too' movement and us all coming together as a community to speak about really important issues," Smith said.

SALT is a Student Government Association-recognized theater organization created by VCU students, according to the VCU SALT website.

"It's an opportunity for us to really experience or pioneer our own shows rather than having the professors do it for us who have had years of experience," Smith said.

Both undergraduate and graduate students can participate in SALT, according to Smith.

"What is beautiful about that is I can look at the audition sheet and I won't be able to recognize any names because there's so many people auditioning outside of the theater department," Smith said.

SALT is really important because it allows students to have opportunities that they normally would not have, said Jessica Pain, a VCU senior cast as Tess Thornton in "The Female of the Species."

The cast is full of talented and hardworking people, and the actors have free reign, which allows for personal character development, according to Pain.

One of the main goals of "The Female of the Species" is to have people discuss feminism and what feminism means to them, according

to Pain.

"Feminism is being able to choose and not being forced to do something," Pain said. "I hope that the show can help people realize what feminism can truly mean to them but also how inclusive it is."

The story has six different characters who each have very different ideas of what feminism is, according to Pain.

"We provide the opportunity for people to create passion projects and do shows that they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to do," according to Molly Marsh, president of VCU SALT.

The organization used to put on three shows a semester but now has the ability to put on five, according to Marsh.

"I love all the elements of theater whether it's behind the table or on stage," Marsh said. "Being SALT president was something I came across as a hub for all the things where I can dip a toe in all the different pools that make up theater."

"The Female of the Species" covers many difficult subjects and what it means to be a woman, according to Marsh.

"It hits all the keys of a good show," Marsh said.

SALT is a great place for students to create a production without pressure, according to Lex Cobbinah, a sophomore at VCU and an actor in two previous SALT productions.

"This organization gives

everyone an opportunity, even students who are outside of theater who just want the opportunity to get back into it," Cobbinah said. "That's also why I love it. It's students doing these things. Everything is student-led."

The rehearsal process is usually only a few weeks long, but the cast and crew usually form close family-like relationships, which are helpful to running a smooth production, according to Cobbinah.

"It's almost instant, even after two days or even after one day, you'll have that kind of comradery," Cobbinah said. "Being able to work with so many talented individuals and also just getting to facilitate something that makes you feel good and makes you better as an actor."

One of the most beautiful things about SALT is the freedom for creative expression it provides, Cobbinah said.

"It's nice to feel like you're not pushing against any narrative," Cobbinah said. "You're just working together with a common goal in mind."



The cast of 'The Female of the Species.'  
Photo by Maggie Root.

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**Charlotte Grace Smith**  
director of SALT’s upcoming production, ‘The Female of the Species’

“

We provide the opportunity for people to create passion projects and do shows that they normally wouldn’t have the opportunity to do.”

**Molly Marsh**  
president of VCU SALT



The cast of ‘The Female of the Species.’  
Photo courtesy of VCU SALT.

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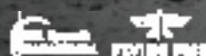
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## Quote of the week

“The attempt to escape from pain, is what creates more pain.”

— GABOR MATÉ



Illustration by Victor Romanko.

# IRL with Arielle: Capitalism makes therapy the solution to everything

**ARIELLE ANDREWS**  
Staff Writer

It would not be controversial to say a lot of you need therapy.

In an era where we are healing demons and purchasing shadow work journals, therapy is trendy and a lot of us are realizing how desperately we need it.

I'm in therapy myself. ADHD and Borderline Personality Disorder are not going to deal with themselves, and I've been on the couch since I was fifteen. I love my therapist, and I have a general appreciation for the industry — emphasis on “general” —, but I have some questions.

Therapists and wellness professionals will tell you that everyone will benefit from talk therapy, and that is probably true to some extent. However, what if I told you the research shows this is not always the case? And what if — gasp — a lot of our therapy kick is a capitalistic scheme for productivity?

Whenever you go through something traumatic or have a period of blues, you will meet plenty of people who will tell you to see a therapist.

Talk therapy involves “talking to a trained professional about your thoughts, feelings and behavior,” according to the UK's Mental Health Foundation.

The main selling point of talk therapy

is its ability to help individuals cope with daily stressors. Stress is a pivotal part of daily life and it has a simple evolutionary purpose to edge us forward and into action. However, too much stress, or acute stress, can lead to long-term mental and physical problems.

Therapists will tell you that we are not meant to handle all that stress on our own. That statement is both true and false.

Most people recover from high levels of exposure to acute stress without professional help, researchers Anthony D. Mancini and George A. Bonanno found in a brief for the Center on Children and Families.

Most people assume that acute stress will lead to poor long-term mental health. That's the “trouble with averages,” the researchers found.

“Our research has confirmed — in study after study — that people respond in surprisingly diverse ways to a wide variety of life events and acute stressors ... whatever the explanation, when we rely on averages, we often invent a normative reaction that does not exist,” the brief details.

There is no “normative” reaction to acute stress and often only those with “persistent and elevated distress” will need intensive therapy, according to Mancini and Bonanno. Their research somewhat

confirms the natural recovery process humans have that allows us to bounce back from stressful situations.

Interventions like grief therapy or trauma unpacking can actually harm the natural process of recovery and make the client worse emotionally than they were before, Mancini and Bonanno found.

Psychological treatment has its merits, but no research confirms that it is always necessary, especially for minute problems.

The harmless pros of therapy are talking through your problems with someone. This is almost always a good thing. Still, most people will not need to pay hundreds of dollars an hour to a therapist to deal with their problems. Most people will find some way to cope with their stress on their own.

So if therapy is not essential, why are we hearing so much about it?

The world is kind of a hellscape right now. A lot of people are feeling more stressed than ever before. Our capitalist society's solution is to place the burden on the individual to heal instead of, you know, solving the actual problems creating our stress.

Most people's mental and emotional problems could be solved through community and societal fixes. Instead of working toward that, we tell them to go to therapy and recite mantras. While this

can help us cope, it does not actually help us in the end.

Capitalism recognizes that many of its workers are sick. Instead of self-deleting, it pushes them towards wellness and therapy as a loose bandaid. As a bonus, this becomes a booming industry to make a quick buck off the pain and suffering that capitalism itself has caused.

Are you struggling to pay rent? Go to therapy. Are you stressed out and lonely? Go to therapy. Are you sick of working? Well, obviously something's wrong with you, and maybe you should go to therapy.

When the answer to everything becomes “go to therapy” and everyone needs it — when, typically, we do not — you have to question if the system is broken and not the individual.

The answer is yes, by the way. Of course, the system is broken.

Capitalism does not want you to know that, though. It wants you to continue dedicating your lives to your corporation and bow down to the god of profit.

Do you not understand that everything you do is to make somebody money? Even, and especially, your attempts to heal yourself?

Therapy may not be for everyone, but it is certainly for capitalism.



# CT Opinions

## Quote of the week

"I believe the children are our future."  
— WHITNEY HOUSTON



# THE CHILDREN ARE, IN FACT, BEING LEFT BEHIND

**KOFI MFRAMA**  
Opinions Editor

**M**y mother never read to me as a kid. She didn't have time to. After her 12-hour nursing shifts, she would come home tired to the bone. By the time she made us dinner and situated my brother and me, barely managing to steal some minutes for herself, the day had seemed to run out of hours.

Though she may not have been able to devote as much time to our learning as she would have liked to, her belief in education echoed through the halls of the tiny two bedroom apartment we lived in. As a result, my brother and I excelled in school despite our lack of resources.

Recently, videos of educators lamenting their students' educational shortcomings have been all over my social media. TikTok user @qbthedon seems to have catalyzed this conversation. In his initial video, he claims that his 7th grade students are still performing at a 4th grade level.

He also states that it is incredibly difficult to make a student repeat a grade if they aren't meeting the proper learning benchmarks.

His situation is no anomaly. Many other educators used his video to express their own concerns with their students' academic progress.

There's plenty of evidence to prove their claims.

At the beginning of both the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years, public schools reported on average half of their students were behind grade level, according to a survey by The School Pulse Panel.

It's easy to blame this issue on the COVID-19 pandemic but public schools reported that 36% of their students on average were behind grade level prior to the pandemic, per the same report.

En-large, those who saw that initial TikTok video and took part in the dialogue placed blame on parents for not being involved enough in their child's education. Unlike the parents they criticize, my mother was always cognizant of how we were performing in school. She knew the report card schedule like the back of her hand — asking us what needed to be done to correct a bad grade and congratulating us when we did well.

But being an involved parent is no easy feat. As the country continues to plummet into economic disarray, parent involvement becomes even harder.

Inflation and cost of living have increased so much that parents are working more and more to keep up, according to Bankrate and The Wall Street Journal.

Every hour spent at work, scraping up just enough dollars to barely get by, is an hour taken away from investing in your child's education by simply being there to offer guidance.

It's easier to place an iPad in your children's hands after a long day at work than to devote emotional energy into raising them.

Moreover, the fundamental miseducation of our youths is sewn deeply in the fabric of our society — and the way we've formulated education.

No Child Left Behind, an educational program brought forth by former President George W. Bush in 2002, made schools more data-driven and learning more testing-focused, according to Business Insider. Though it may no longer be in practice, its impacts still remain.

Many people agree that our current education system is incredibly data-driven with 64% of students in a Washington Post survey saying too much emphasis is placed on testing. A majority also said the best way to measure the success of a school is not through tests but by whether students are engaged and feel hopeful about the future.

Additionally, student experiences have been dampened by overcrowded classrooms and antiquated teaching methodologies that don't prepare them for the modern world. Teachers are leaving academia due to low pay and poor treatment. Schools are underfunded and many of the funds they do receive are egregiously mismanaged.

Education can only be truly reformed when society stops denying children the autonomy they deserve. Instead of building spaces where children can learn and be challenged in an empathetic and fruitful way, they are unfairly punished, pathologized, medicated and dehumanized.

My mother sacrificed so much to invest in our education. However, if she was unable to, that shouldn't have impacted the quality of our learning.

The systems in place are incredibly unempathetic to parents and children alike. The repercussions of this societal cruelty will reveal themselves when we pass along our world to a generation failed by modern education.

