





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 l'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

"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

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.





# **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

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 ound 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,"

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

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."

**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, Carev 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.

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."

# **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

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,"

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

"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

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

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 familylike 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."



66

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."

Charlotte Grace Smith director of SALT's upcoming production, 'The Female of the Species'

66

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.

STUDENT DISCOUNT AVAILABLE

- ADVERTISEMENT



# **Opinions**

# Quote of the week

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

- GABOR MATÉ



Illustration by Victor Romanko.

# IRL with 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

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

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.

# **Humor: Sleep Study**

# **DYLAN HOSTETTER**

**Contributing Writer** 

Now, you are probably thinking, "why would anyone decide to do a sleep study on themselves?" Or maybe you are not thinking that — but you should be, because that is what I am thinking, and it would be nice if we were on the same page.

I promise it was only meant to be a simple experiment to optimize my REM sleep. That is the deepest stage of sleep for anyone out there not currently involved in a sleep study. I intended

to change my body's cycle entirely, to sleep less each night and nap more during the day.

I hope you are not one of those people that thinks napping means you are lazy, for you see I am taking "power naps." Full REM sleep in small increments, baby the kind of naps you wake up from with lines on your face and drool soaking through the pages of your jumbo sudoku book.

I do not remember exactly when things began to take a turn for the worst, but the

signs were mounting. It turns out sleeping only two hours a night makes it quite difficult to make it to 9 a.m. classes and to meet their assorted deadlines. My GPA dropped from a 3.6 to a 1.9, and it has only been a week and a half.

I brought these concerns to my professor who originally assigned this study, but he was not overly concerned. I am honestly beginning to think he might not be a real professor at all. That would explain why I am the only person in his class and why he carries all his papers around in a plastic bag from Circle K.

But I did not have time to argue because I had a club meeting to get to, so I gave him his weekly stipend of \$20 — I also did not know we had to pay professors directly — and made my exit.

The club meeting is where things really got wacky. I am not sure why exactly I joined the fencing club in the first place, but as you can imagine, holding a pointy stick while operating on two hours of sleep — and a "power nap," mind you — may not be the best idea.

The tension mounted when the club

president revealed it was tournament week, and I was quickly paired off for the first round. Despite the adrenaline rushing through my veins, at the sound of the first whistle I was fast asleep. To my astonishment, though, I am apparently a sleep-walking, olympic-level fencer.

I was feinting and parrying like nobody's business, all the while being completely knocked out. But you see, my luck caught up to me, because during the first moments of the championship round, I awoke. And as it turns out, I am quite inept with a sabre

My day ended how you may imagine - in the hospital. I am writing this now in the hopes that anyone out there could front me the \$20 to pay my professor for next week, as it seems I will be stuck in the ER for the foreseeable future. I really do

when conscious.

not want to fail his class, it is the only one I am currently passing.

He can be found in the alleyway behind the Chipotle; he will be wearing a Nirvana t-shirt and a Pittsburgh Pirates hat turned backwards. I thank you in advance.

Illustration by Killian Goodale-Porter.



# Final Girl trope is horror's feminist rebrand

# **OLIVIA JAZWICK**

Contributing Writer

As a self-proclaimed movie buff, Halloween is one of my favorite times of the year. Sure, I love going out dressed up as my favorite movie character and drinking red punch labeled "Fresh Blood," but most of all, I love to watch a good horror movie.

The horror genre has always held a special place in my heart, I'd argue it's the art of film at its finest. From the ominous music and iconic cinematography to the extreme range of emotions that actors portray, horror can deliver its audience an adrenaline rush without asking them to leave their seats.

Alongside the jump scares and gore that we've come to love, one of the hallmarks of a great horror movie is the "Final Girl." We all know and love her; she's the protagonist who saves the day while covered in the blood of her enemies. But where did she come from, and what does she represent?

To understand the origin of the Final Girl, we have to look at horror movies from before she was born.

In the 1930s, horror was making waves in the film industry with the release of movies like "Dracula" and "Frankenstein" in 1931. But these movies centered on male leads whose duty was to rescue the damsel in distress from peril. By the early '70s, however, a change was taking place.

In 1963, Betty Friedan released a book entitled "The Feminine Mystique," which was heralded as one of the catalysts of the second-wave feminist movement. The feminists of the '60s and '70s differed from their ancestors — the suffragettes of the 19th century — in that they concerned themselves with shedding light on systemic issues of race, domestic abuse and gender equality, rather than just political

It's not a coincidence that after the beginning of second-wave feminism, there was a change from the damsel in distress trope to the Final Girl. She was a reaction to the shifting mindset of women everywhere who wanted to see an empowering heroine on the silver screen, especially in a film genre that often fetishizes female pain.

Women have always been associated

existence of film. Childbirth, menstruation, virginity, the myth of hysteria; to be a woman in society is emotional labor, and still, we are seen as weak. In reality, women hold the weight of the world on their shoulders, and they do it with a smile on their faces. Final Girl is about dispelling the myth of women not being in control of their narrative.

Enter the blood-caked and maniacally laughing Sally Hardesty in 1974. "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" is not only one of the most well-known slashers, but it's also one of the first depictions of the Final Girl as we know her today.

Sally Hardesty opened the door for girls everywhere to be the hero of their story, whether in the everyday sense or in narrowly escaping Leatherface and his bloody chainsaw.

In 1979, Sigourney Weaver furthered the narrative with her character Ellen Ripley in the critically acclaimed sci-fi thriller "Alien." This time, it wasn't about the fetishization of female pain or rage, it was a battle of wits and ability.

Weaver's character represents a woman fully realized, a tough and capable outsmarting an alien that attempts to take over her ship, "The Nostromo," and saving her space cat, Jones, in the process.

The '80s soon ensued with Final Girl at the forefront of horror and brought to cinema some of the most iconic characters we know and love today. "Friday the Thirteenth,""A Nightmare on Elm Street" and "Hellraiser" were just a few of the franchises that showcased Final Girl and dominated theaters at the time.

Nowadays, Final Girl is everywhere, and she reflects a lot of the same ideals of third-wave feminism.

Jordan Peele's "Nope" feature KeKe Palmer as a Black lesbian hunting down a territorial space alien, Ti West's "X" gives us Mia Goth as a confident sex worker with the dream of being a movie star, and Ari Aster's "Midsommar" touches on mental health and domestic abuse hidden in the plot about the indoctrination rituals of a Swedish pagan cult.

If I'm being honest, I could go on for hours naming more iconic Final Girls, but I just suggest you watch them for yourself.

Illustration by Bailey Wood.



# pinions

# Quote of the week

"I believe the children are our future."

- WHITNEY HOUSTON



# IN FACT.



# **KOFI MFRAMA**

**Opinions Editor** 

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.

Illustrations by Vivian Trinh