



Humanities at Widener

In Memoriam

Seynabou Ba

1978 – 2021

Class of 2001



Seynabou Ba, Widener University French program alumna class of 2001, passed away on July 6, 2021 following a long battle with cancer. A native of Manhattan, Seynabou attended a French school in New York before coming to Widener. Her parents, originally from Senegal, worked for various national missions to the UN. She came to Widener with several friends with whom she had attended high school. After graduating from Widener, Seynabou began a career in the financial services industry working for Bloomberg L.P. as a bilingual database associate. Later, after completing medical school and realizing that medicine did not suit her, she returned to finance and eventually rose to the level of Vice President at the NYC investment bank of Blaylock Van LLC. The only woman in the trading room at her firm, Seynabou maintained a sense of humor and managed to thrive in a field dominated by men. A fierce advocate for young people afflicted with cancer, Seynabou served on the board of Stupid Cancer and was the inaugural chair of the Young Professionals Committee and Scholarship subcommittee for the CancerCare which is establishing a scholarship in her name. She was a great mentor to Widener French students as well as a close friend of mine. She is survived by her mother and six siblings. She will be greatly missed.
-Stephanie Schechner, Professor of French

Lovers and Madmen: Visions of A Midsummer Night's Dream

Widener's Own Lone Brick Theatre Stages an Adaptation of Shakespeare's Beloved Play as part of the 2021 Philly Fringe Festival

An Evening of Early Autumn Laughs, Whistles, Cheers

I immersed myself into the light afternoon traffic Sunday September 19th, ready to be absorbed by the serene woods of Taylor Arboretum, where *Lovers and Madmen*: the adaptation of Shakespeare's *Visions of a Midsummer Night's Dream* played. Once there, an air spirit led me to the scene before the palace of Theseus, Duke of Athens. Spotlight by the sun beaming through the opening trees, Theseus possesses his future bride upholding her, spinning for the round spectator view. The young lovers chase and dance with one another, coming and going through the narrow paths between the woods. Swiftly I am pulled into scenes by the play producer and director himself, Peter Quince, to act like Snug, the lion. Surprised, I may have tried to roar. The audience led by Fairies into different scenes, thus experiencing separate ongoing parts of the play, moving through the enchanted woods, often burst into laughs when the "ghostly" presence of Hermia running after Lysander and Helena after Demetrius and Demetrius after Hermia cut through the scenes with beaming screams: "Demetriuuuus!", "Lysandeeer!"; "Helenaaaa!".

While woodland, Victorian, and contemporary composed costumes themed in one, the play within the play Peter Quince led followed a similar pattern. For example, between script and under-toned "out of script" remarks, about Theseus, in the closing scene directed to the audience: "What is wrong with this guy?" Quince's character brought the contemporary spectator in, providing a comedic blast throughout the play. Nick Bottom steals the show ending with his passion-full interpretation and the tragically funny self-inflicted death, as Theseus dressed in a dark business suit lols the play, within the play. The spectators love it! They laugh and whistle, filling the air with cheers. Fully immersed in the new *Midsummer Night's* world, I applaud the amazing actors and producers of this memorable play, compete with colorful vibrations the leaves changing over a well-hidden water stream were perhaps Shakespeare's spirit currents through Taylor Arboretum.

-Shpresa Ymeraj, English and Creative Writing Major, Class of 2023

Taylor Arboretum Transformed into Enchanted Forest

There is an expectation that young men in their twenties should not enjoy theater productions, especially those of Shakespeare. When I told my friends that I would be attending *Lovers and Madmen: Visions of A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Taylor Arboretum, there was an overwhelming response of lethargy and a sentiment that I would be better suited doing anything else with my time. I am glad I was able to ignore the disparagement of my peers because the evening I attended the play was one of the most enjoyable experiences in my recent memory.

When I arrived at the arboretum, I was surprised in the best ways possible. I had never been to an arboretum before, and the environment was full of pleasant sensations. The smells, sights, and sounds of the plant life made for a wonderfully enchanting setting. Since I saw an evening showing, the natural stages were bolstered with vibrant lighting from various sources – strings of lights, hanging lanterns, and even glowing costumes – which emphasized and animated the play's theme of fairies.

The attention to detail and dedication on behalf of the actors created an immersive and engaging performance. To by no means detract from the main plot, my favorite moments were those in which the audience was guided by the actors from scene to scene. As we were escorted to the next point of interest, the actors could be heard gossiping, fighting, or laughing. On occasion, our train of excited onlookers would cross paths with the rowdy Mechanicals – who would inevitably question our clothing choices or simply stop to make dirty jokes - or confused members of the Athenian Court. These encounters added to the palpable atmosphere and provoked many laughs and smiles.

Attending *Lovers and Madmen: Visions of A Midsummer Night's Dream* was an overwhelmingly positive experience. Every aspect of the performance was centered around creating an engaging and vibrant atmosphere. If you are ever on the fence about attending a production like this one, please do not let social expectations prevent you from enjoying yourself.

-Seth Glickman, English Major, Class of 2022



Faculty Spotlight

Ilene D. Lieberman, PhD
Gabriel Lukas Professor of Fine Arts

Imagine a flash. A blink. A lightning bolt that shoots suddenly through the sky. Then a split second later, it's done. Finished. That's how quickly the last 36 years have gone. One day I'm starting my time at Widener, worrying about how many slides we will need for classes, and then suddenly it's time to fold my tent and ride into the proverbial sunset. Who knows where the time goes!

As the sole full-time art historian in the Humanities Division for all these years, I've shared my passion for the arts with countless students, giving me a unique opportunity to shape courses and to expand our gaze to incorporate new visions and voices. Along with my department comrade- in-arms Mara Parker, I have crafted interdisciplinary courses and a major in the Visual and Performing Arts. In this endeavor, I've tried to contribute to our students' ability to see and to hear anew, to connect to something fundamental, yet ever-changing—all that we express through visual art, music, and dance. As proud as I am to have been a part of this faculty, to have participated in new programs and avenues of exploration, I have but one lasting regret: not finding the means to stop the brutal elimination of fine arts scholarships and our art gallery space. To my mind, these misguided efforts fail to take into account what we have all most recently experienced during the COVID pandemic: that the human connection explored in the arts underpins all that is worthwhile.

It's thrilling to be back among our students and colleagues, thus ending the long, long months of pandemic isolation. The lockdowns allowed for much reading, listening to music, looking at art (albeit second-hand!), and moving within the natural world, all of which sustained me. I will continue the same pursuits as my Widener career ends, but I will also push myself to explore new places and adventures.

My firm belief is that what we do in the Humanities gives us the tools, the energy, and the compassion that allow us to flourish and overcome adversity. Teaching and more importantly learning with you all has afforded me constant support, delight, and sustenance over my time at the university. My quest for greater human connection will continue through travel—remember travelling?—so that I might visit old haunts and new, museums and the natural world both, never ceasing to experience and appreciate the beauty all around us. Thanks to all colleagues and students who have brought joy to this part of my journey, who have shared their ideas and aspirations and have made the time fly.

Scenes from *Lovers and Madmen*



Humanities Events Fall 2021

September 27: Media Publication Meet-and-Greet. Hosted by Blue & Gold, 5pm, LC Courtyard

September 28: History Club, First General Member Meeting, 3:30pm, UC Room C

September 28: *Lady J*, Film Night with the French Club, 6pm, Freedom 122

September 29: Writing Workshop. Hosted by Widener Ink, 4pm, Freedom 215

October 16: French Homecoming Dinner, 5-7pm

October 16: Homecoming Open Mic 7pm on Zoom

October 21: Sherrie Flick reading, 7pm on Zoom

November 15: Visiting Lecture, Dr Lauren Nixon 12pm on Zoom.

November 16: Flash Fiction/Prose Poetry Reading with Jose Hernandez Diaz, Marcela Fuentes, and Tara Lynn Masih, 7pm on Zoom.

November 21: Celebration of the Arts, Concert and Dance Performance, 4pm, LC 1

Want to learn more about Creative Writing, Dance, English, French, History, Italian, Music, Philosophy, Spanish, and Visual Art at Widener?

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