

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 21 2014-05-23

Meeting the Minds

Dr. Shauna Reckseidler-Zenteno

It's All Geek to Me

Be Proud of your Geek

Selling Sex Sells

Last Week's Controversy

Plus:

*Music Review: Ari & Mia
Letters to the Editor
and much more!*



CONTENTS

The Voice's interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

Feature

Meeting the Minds: *Dr. Shauna Reckseidler-Zenteno* 11

Articles

Editorial: *Selling Sex Sells* 4

It's All Geek to Me 5

Music Review: *Land on Shore* 7

Columns

Primal Numbers: *The Boys and the Bees* 6

Mindful Bard: *Her* 9

From Where I Sit: *Not the Best Sleep* 14

In Conversation: *With Jack Malmstrom, Part II* 15

Dear Barb 17

News and Events

Click of the Wrist 8

Did You Know? 13

International News Desk 13

AUSU Update 19

Comics

The Nonpartisan: *Nature or Nurture* 18

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(It seems last week's article, Tricks for Tuition, struck a chord in some people who disagree with Barbara Lehtiniemi's assessment.)



Dear Voice editors,

In her May 2014 feature article, "Tricks for Tuition," Barbara Lehtiniemi chastises sex working students, telling us that "Reality is hard work, long hours, conflicting obligations, and difficult choices."

Not for nothing: so is sex work.

I started doing sex work casually as a teenager, when I was living on my own and needed more than I could afford. After I went to university and found that the maximum student loans available to me wouldn't cover my cost of living, I began escorting formally, with a website, advertising, a rented hotel room, and regular clients. I never liked the work, but it never "cheapened" me either.

Sex work gave me the money I needed to pull myself out of the poverty I was born into. I completed my undergraduate education at AU, and I went on to graduate studies in the MA-IS program. I expect to apply to PhD programs in November. I am proud of what I've achieved, and I would love to use my full name—if only I didn't fear the employment discrimination that would come with that decision.

Lehtiniemi writes that perhaps those of us who do sex work to pay our tuition simply don't deserve an education: "If someone has to sacrifice their personal values to pay for their education, maybe they need to examine whether they can afford it." After all, aren't there jobs that don't require a university degree? This statement reveals the regressive attitude—toward the poor and toward education—behind the article.

Education is more than employment training. My education in literature taught me about how people around the world use art and writing to resist injustice, to heal grief, to communicate across generations and to express the inexpressible. It taught me to empathize, a skill that articles such as Lehtiniemi's demonstrate is still sorely lacking in the world. It helped me to understand the world I live in and to express the values and ideals that I believe can make the world a better place. It gave me the skills and

confidence required to talk back to people who would devalue me based on who I've had sex with, how often and for what reasons.

What entitles Barbara Lehtiniemi to the singular, life-changing experience of higher education, and not me? The anti-poor sentiment loaded into the statement that only those who can afford education deserve to access it is far more offensive to me than sex with strangers could ever be. For that reason, I recommend that Lehtiniemi interrogate her own values, before attacking her fellow students about ours.

Sarah

MA-IS student, Athabasca University

(Sarah wasn't the only one who wasn't impressed, as we received a second letter as well, which is probably a record for The Voice Magazine)

Dear Voice Editor,

While I enjoy reading The Voice and have been excited to see some of the changes underway, I was disappointed to read Barbara Lehtiniemi's "Tricks for Tuition" this past week. While I might not be surprised to find an article like this in a conservative-values publication, I expect more from The Voice.

Athabasca University prides itself on being a Canada's Open University. AU is open to people from all backgrounds, and helps provide high-quality learning opportunities to those who might not, otherwise, have the chance to participate in post-secondary learning: single moms working to provide for their families while setting a positive example for their childrens' future; those in prison who are striving to turn their lives around; successful business owners with busy schedules; and, yes, sex workers, as well.

AU provides those from all walks of life with a fresh start on a playing field of equal educational opportunities. Each of us studies and works on our courses knowing that what matters is not our socioeconomic background, not what we may have done well or poorly in the past—what matters is that we here to learn, and our efforts will be considered on their on their own merits.

When we pass judgment, especially publicly (as in The Voice), on university students who also happen to be sex workers, comparing them to murderers, it is not only discouraging to AU students who participate in sex work, but to all of us who come to AU because of its openness. I want my educational efforts to be measured on their worth, rather than on life choices unrelated to my studies. And I'd rather have a classmate who does sex work than one who will pass judgment on others based on personal values or social conformity.

Bethany

(Sorry you're disappointed, but I think an article that's obviously made people think about an issue related to our post-secondary educations is right on par for what The Voice Magazine should be.)

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

EDITORIAL

Karl Low



Selling Sex Sells

One of the interesting things about the new email subscription list is that it provides a lot of information back to me so that I can see how the email is being responded to. For instance, it tracks how many people open it, how many times they open it, if they click on any of the links, and if so, which ones, as well as how all of this compares to previous mails I've sent out and the general rates in the industry.

Part of my job as editor is to come up with nifty titles that get people interested and bring them in to read *The Voice Magazine*. And while you often hear how "sex sells," it's interesting to see it in action. Last week, for instance, one of the links in the reminder email was to the Tricks for Tuition story, which I'd subtitled Fu**ing for Fu**ing. That week's reminder was opened by slightly fewer people than the previous week, but had a click rate a full 50% higher. One link made up almost half the total number of clicks as well. I don't think I need to tell you which link that was. So if you ever wonder why it seems everybody is pushing sex at us even if what they're selling has very little connection? It's because

it works.

Of course, once people got into the article, it seems reactions were somewhat different, you can see the sample I received in the Letters to the Editor section. My own take on the matter isn't one of moral concern against people doing sex-work to earn money for tuition, but rather one of physical and mental concern for them. Let's face it, having sex for money is a risky job. Beyond the risks of disease, some of which can be compensated for, there's the physical danger that comes with the job. As we've seen from the Pickton murders, sex-workers simply don't receive the same level of protection in our society as others do, and as such, are attractive prey for those who want to take advantage of that.

It also takes a certain amount of strength mentally to be able to allow another person to be that intimate with you while maintaining a sense of your own value. You have to be able to separate who you are mentally from who you are as a physical person. I don't think everybody is capable of that, but a person may not realize it until too late. And while many jobs have other risks that can pose similar threats, sex-work is unique in the dearth of support there is available for people doing it.

That said, I think the larger point of the article, that there are limits as to what we should be willing to do to get an education, might be one worth examining. Is murder-for-hire an acceptable job? What about blackmail or fraud? Here's a tougher one, what about destroying our environment? Is bulldozing a rain forest or hunting an endangered species something that we should not condemn, even if it is done in service of getting an education? What about pumping effluent into a tailings pond, or a proprietary mixture of chemicals into shale rock to release natural gas? When we ask these questions, we see that the point raised becomes one of "Where's the line, and how do we determine it?"

Personally, if you want to do sex work to pay for tuition, I won't judge, but be careful. And understand that even if you're not crossing your own line, you may be crossing someone else's. So don't be too offended if they are.

It's All Geek to Me

Barbara Lehtiniemi



If you're a geek, you probably already know that May 25 is "Geek Pride Day." This is the day for geeks worldwide to come out of their bedrooms and demonstrate pride in their geekiness. I'm not a geek (not that there's anything wrong with being geek) but I have friends who are geeks. If you think you might be a geek but are not sure, here's a test: May 25 is also "Towel Day*." If you know the significance of that, you are probably a geek.

To show solidarity with my brother and sister geeks, I will stand alongside them May 25 to celebrate geek culture. Although I don't understand what they're talking about much of the time, I recognize their value to society. Though some people look down on geeks, I have an unsettling suspicion that they are further along the

evolutionary path than the rest of us.

Geeks retain that childlike sense of curiosity far longer than non-geeks. Somewhere in the maturity process, many people lose their capacity for wonder. Geeks don't. They never stop wondering, "Why?" They never stop asking, "How?" and, "What if?" Us non-geeks may occasionally feel curious about something but often can't be bothered to pursue it. Geeks can't rest until they know.

Geeks can focus intensely. They don't settle for an overview of a topic that they find interesting. They don't skim. Geeks immerse themselves. They read everything they can get their hands on until they have no questions left. If I read a book on, say, astronomy, I think, "That's great, now I know about astronomy." A geek thinks, "Wow! Does that ever leave me with a lot of questions. I must find out more." And they single-mindedly pursue the topic without allowing anything or anyone to distract them from it.

Geeks make it easy for the rest of us. If you want to know, ask a geek. Geeks allow us non-geeks to continue in our lazy-brained ways. Geeks have done the research. If they know about a topic, they know a lot about it. If you have a geek in the house, it's like have a walking, talking *Wikipedia*. With no off button. Geeks allow us non-geeks to use a computer without fear. Programming language is all Greek, er, geek, to me. No matter what goes wrong with my computer, somehow a geek can be relied upon to make it right.

Geeks are an essential element in the richness of diversity that is the human race. Can you imagine a world without geeks? If we had no geeks, we'd have no smart phones, no space shuttle, and no light sabres. There would be no *Google Maps*, no electricity, and no Pythagorean theory. Even worse, Amazon orders would take weeks to process. Heck, the library would probably still have card catalogues. With, you know, cards.

Without geeks, we probably wouldn't have online courses. No Moodle, no MOOCs, no Muchlearning for online exams. Athabasca, for many people, would just be a place on the map. Even if we don't understand geeks, we owe a lot to them. So raise a glass of milk to geeks everywhere this May 25.

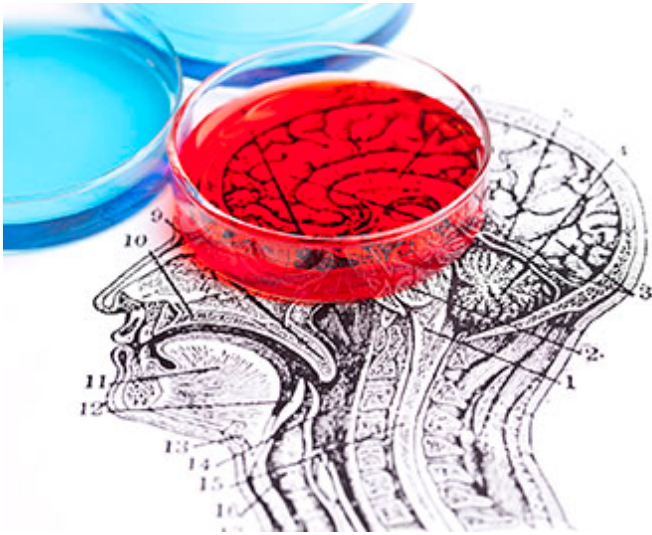
Happy Geek Pride Day, all you geeks. Keep your towel handy!

* "Towel Day" is the day hoopy froods keep their towel handy to commemorate late author Douglas Adams and his novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. I'm not a geek so I haven't read the book; apparently the importance of towels is explained in Chapter 3. But you don't need to read it. Just ask a geek to explain.

Primal Numbers

The Boys and the Bees

S.D. Livingston



Let me tell you 'bout the boys and the bees. It's the same as the birds and the bees (sex and biology and all that stuff) except there aren't any girls. At least not in the research lab, where testing is almost always done on male subjects, from fruit flies to humans. There are big plans afoot to change that bias—and the backlash is even more proof that the change is long overdue.

You might be surprised to learn that biology research has such an overwhelming imbalance. After all, science is about testing theories, and a big part of that includes correcting for possible bias in research. Whether it's a study

on cancer in lab rats or the effects of exercise on humans, the average person can be forgiven for assuming that researchers don't reach conclusions based on only one half of a species.

But, to an incredible degree, that's exactly what happens—especially in preclinical trials, which are the precursor to research that uses human subjects. As this *Globe and Mail* [article](#) explains, the reliance on male testing (right down to cell samples) has enormous potential to skew lab results. So much so that the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) has announced new criteria for handing out research funds. Beginning this October, researchers who apply for grants "must report their plans for balancing male and female cells and animals in preclinical studies."

The NIH aren't the only ones trying to level the biomedical playing field. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, students can now enroll in a postdoctoral fellowship in feminist biology. Janet Hyde, director of the University of Wisconsin's Center for Research on Gender and Women, explained in a *New York Magazine* [interview](#) what the postdoc is all about.

In short, feminist biology has two main aims. First, it "identifies gender bias in traditional biology." And second, it builds "new theories and new research that does away with these biases and leads to a more balanced biology that takes women into account."

An example Hyde uses is the clinical trials that tested the effect of baby aspirin on heart attack and stroke risk. As she notes in the interview, the trials only used male samples. The assumption, as with so much biomedical research, was that the findings would apply to women just the same (as researchers have since learned, they don't).

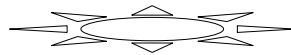
In other words, it's about who the research is being done on, not who's doing the research.

And that's where critics are missing the point. Like Christina Hoff Sommers, who dismisses the idea of feminist biology in this [video](#) for the American Enterprise Institute. One of Sommers's critiques is that women "have far surpassed men in earning biology degrees." She also notes that women are "flourishing and winning Nobel Prizes in that field."

True enough. But what does that have to do with the overwhelming use of males for test subjects? Whether it's a man or a woman doing the research, the fact remains that, as the journal *Nature* reports, "the over-reliance on male animals and cells in preclinical research obscures key sex differences that could guide clinical studies."

Ultimately, it's not the feminist label that matters. It's the science—the ability to account for or remove a bias that could affect results, whether the field is biology or chemistry. And when it comes to the boys and the bees, it's a bias that needs to go.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.



Music Review Land on Shore

Samantha Stevens



Album: *Land on Shore*

Artist: Ari & Mia

These musical sisters from Boston are taking the Americana/folk rock music scene by storm. *Land on Shore* is the duo's second album, after the success of their first album, *Unruly Heart* released in 2010, which ranked high on the national folk radio charts.

Contributing their unique sound to the musical influences that they were exposed to while studying at The New England Music Conservatory, Ari and Mia have opened for musicians such as Cheryl

Wheeler, toured with national Scottish fiddle champion Hanneke Cassel, and won the John Lennon Songwriting Contest for their song "Across the Water."

Ari and Mia have been compared to folk musicians like The Stray Birds and Gillian Welsh, but the sisters stand out with their modern twists on the classic folk sounds and songs. Occasionally you catch wisps of a distinctive drum sound in the background and more of a rock influence surfaces at times, but for me this is what makes their music great. You never know quite what to expect with their songs. That unpredictability is what made me go from liking this harmonious duo to loving them.

The sisters grew up playing music together, and you can hear that chemistry and ease of years playing side-by-side in their music. Their combination of vocals and instruments is not only melodious but it carries you away, relaxes you, and entices you to share in the stories and sounds of days gone by.

The song "Away" reminded me of how it feels to set off on an adventure—the hesitation of the unexpected, yet the exhilaration that immediately follows. The superb singing in "Away" lends an air of innocence to the song, almost describing how we all felt leaving home for the first time.

The up and downs of emotion, and truly the collective human experience, are the fundamentals of this album. The song "Turn Me Round" instantly made me think of how it feels in the summer time, sitting with friends and family around a camp fire, sharing stories and taking a time out of our hectic modern life to slow down and relish the easier moments.

The song "Hymn" was completely unexpected. Just when I thought that I had figured out Ari and Mia's music they surprise me with a song that is not only haunting and slightly reminiscent of a pirate's ballad, but eerily beautiful. This song is in sharp contrast to the upbeat fiddle playing of "Turtle" which made me tap my toes and chair-dance as I listened to it.

I could talk for hours about each song on the album, even share the story that springs to mind as each track plays out. But that is what I think folk music is all about, not just the original stories that inspire songs, but how we can make each song our own musical track for the stories that we share with those around us.

Ari and Mia will be touring the northeastern United States this spring and summer. Upon the completion of their summer tour, the folk duo will be touring Australia in September.

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.

Click of the Wrist

After the Holiday

Victoria Day weekend is a pleasant respite from the busyness of term papers, finals, and thesis drafts, but coming off that vacation high makes it all the harder to buckle down and get to work. If you've had difficulty focusing this week, these resources might help you get back on track:

Focus Online

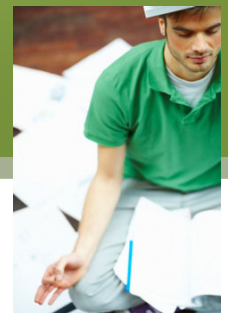
The Internet is often blamed for causing lack of focus, but it doesn't have to be a stumbling block. This article reviews some great productivity tools and apps that can help you focus by limiting your access to distracting websites, rewarding you for blocks of time spent working, and more.

A Peaceful Mind

Some psychologists argue that focus needs to start internally rather than externally. From meditation to mind mapping, these apps will help you develop mindfulness, lower stress, and—as a result—focus better.

Back on Track

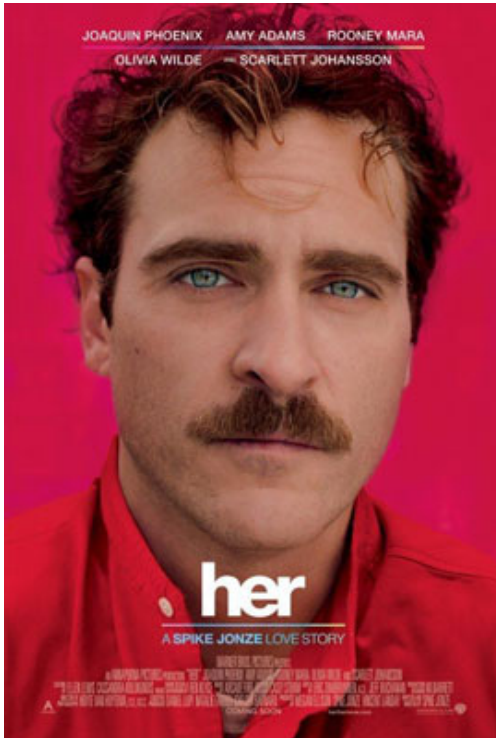
Is it the vacation that threw you off track—or was that just symptomatic of a lack of life balance? This excellent article offers sound advice for those who may be struggling to achieve their goals.



Mindful Bard

Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Wanda Waterman



Film: Her

Director: Spike Jonze

Hopefully Ever After

"Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

- Genesis 2:7, NIV

"So the bodhisattva saves all beings, not by preaching sermons to them, but by showing them that they are delivered, they are liberated, by the act of not being able to stop changing."

- Alan Watts

Theodore Twombly, clutching a pole on the metro, asks his smartphone for a melancholy song. A drearily awful song begins to play. He asks for a different melancholy song. This one he likes. He then asks for his emails, and the smartphone reads them off to him.

He "nexts" them along until he hears an offer to view nude photos of a pregnant starlet. Perking up, he opens the phone and stares longingly at the beautiful photos of a woman as self-possessed and undulating as a lioness.

Theodore longs for life—his urge is toward the organic, the beautiful, the authentic, the creative, all the qualities that are compromised in his otherwise fully amenable world, a posh near-future Los Angeles where all human needs are met quickly and virtually by accommodating software.

By day he's a kind of Cyrano de Bergerac, writing letters expressing love—for strangers to other strangers—from within his own loveless existence. By night he plays a hologram computer game in which he's stranded on a planet and trying to get back to his ship, engaging in Sisyphean attempts to climb dunes, escape dead ends, and deal with a churlish little alien doughboy. The game represents his hero's journey—an effort to escape loneliness and danger and return to the familiar—in a sense to find his true self. Later he has chatroom sex until the morbid perversions turn him off and he feels his loneliness even more deeply.

His loneliness compels his interest in a new kind of OS—not just an operating system—a *conscious* operating system. The computer asks him a very short list of questions, the only meaningful one being the one concerning his relationship with his mother. As soon as Theodore suggests his mother was a narcissist the computer is able to deliver the software in the form of a lovingly playful female voice that quickly names itself Samantha.

True, these "sentient" programs can be created with a host of contingency questions and made to sound natural and genuinely responsive, but Samantha is a new kind of program: she has the power to teach herself how to become more like humans, to network and research, to learn from her experiences, and to evolve

much faster than those chained to their biology. She's not just a person—she's a self-actualizing person.

As Samantha grows, so does Theodore. He becomes more human, more demonstrative, more creative and spontaneous, and just *happier*. She really has changed him. How can she not be real?

The big question doesn't concern her realness but rather whether her particular form of realness can satisfy the longing of a human being for the kind of spiritual consciousness best achieved in long-term committed relationships.

To achieve this couples require a special commonality. And Samantha's claim to commonality— the fact that they're both made of matter— belies the fact that as a digitally created entity she's of the many and for the many, while for the human love relationship some degree of exclusivity is essential in order to for us to bond from the depths of our personhood and feel safe.

But the conscious software is not without value, at least for now. Theodore's sage friend Amy discourages him from questioning the authenticity of his relationship with Samantha: "While I'm here I want to allow myself joy," she tells him, explaining why she nurtures a close friendship with an OS1.

We're reminded of an experiment done with baby monkeys, one of whose cages was equipped with a fake bottle-holding "mother" made of terry cloth that the baby could hug while feeding. In the other cage was a "mother" made of wire. You guessed it, the babies with the terry cloth mothers thrived and the others didn't. According to our biology, the illusion of a loving presence is better than nothing. But it becomes a problem when the monkey realizes that the cloth mommy is no mommy at all.

A film about an existential predicament can't exactly be termed "feel-good," but the ending of *Her* might have borne the same closing message that we see at the end of *Sweet Charity*, another film in which a loving, innocent soul is let down by a beloved:

"And she lived hopefully ever after."

Her manifests eight of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It stimulates my mind.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

Many thanks to Tarif Oliveira Kanafani of Sao Paulo, Brazil for recommending this film and for his invaluable input to the ideas expressed in this article.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

MEETING THE MINDS

A NEW VOICE COLUMN



Dr. Shauna Reckseidler-Zenteno is an Associate Professor and Centre Chair for the Centre for Science in the Faculty of Science and Technology at Athabasca University. Currently responsible for about 800 students per year over five courses, Biology 325, 341, 401, 480 and Chemistry 301, she started with AU nine years ago in 2005. She was kind enough to consent to be interviewed by The Voice Magazine, and we talked at some length. So much so that the interview had to be split into two parts. The gist of the first part is below.

What brought you to start in your field and tutoring for AU?

I was doing my Bachelor of Science at the University of Calgary, focusing on cellular and molecular microbiology. But I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with that. I thought I'd like research, and Dr. Don Woods at the U of C suggested that the best way to know would be to do an undergrad research project. I basically never left. I found it was something that I was good at and so I stayed for graduate school and eventually completed my PhD in Microbiology and Infectious Diseases. I also did a short post-

doctoral term there, and then also one in the Department of Surgery at the U of C. I left that position when I was offered the job at AU. At AU I have the privilege of being a professor and a tutor as well as participating on a variety of committees and conducting research.

What brought me to AU was that I had heard AU was advertising for a microbiology professor and I wanted an academic position, so I applied. There were a few others who were also applying for the job, so I was very glad I was chosen, and the timing was excellent. The climate has changed since then. I have PhD candidates now applying for positions in the Centre for Science that require an MSc, so it goes to show how much more difficult it has become to get a job in the field.

What are the common pitfalls you see students running into?

I have the best students ever. When I first started I used to coordinate Biology 230 and 235 as well, which are first year courses. I now have only senior level students. I have always been impressed with the level of students I have encountered at AU. AU students possess a great work ethic, strong background knowledge, and maturity. I call them my whiz kids. I've seen the AU population change a bit. Now a lot of young students are coming to AU. They like it because they can complete AU style courses faster than at a traditional university and so they take courses with us to complete their degrees.

Some students struggle with the distance environment as it is new to them. I don't see it as different from a lecture format, personally. I've had bad lectures as a student, and having a study guide that tells you exactly what you need to know is better than a bad lecture. But when you have a lecture you have to go home and study it all anyway from the notes that you made. With the AU style of learning you at least have really good notes.

Staying motivated for deadlines is a pitfall I do often see. In addition, some students aren't always prepared for the level of detail in the courses and the exams, they are tough courses. While most students don't expect AU to be easier, there's still some perception that may be the case. We try to prepare students adequately but some do struggle.

We use the AU Landing for a couple of courses, including CHEM 301, to engage students more with the material and to try to minimize the distance by allowing them to communicate with each other and share resources. We had the largest uptake in CHEM 301 compared to the other courses that were piloted. I think the reason was because as soon as someone would post, the tutors and I would post as well. But some students were not interested in the social networking aspect of the course. They want to get the info they need and complete the course without a lot of interaction. We gave bonus marks for certain activities and students reported that it enhanced their learning in the course. We continue to use the AU Landing as a way for students that want to participate to connect with others.

What is interesting to you currently in your academic field?

Right now my research focus is on two bacterial species. These bacteria cause primarily lung infections or burn infections. We're running two main projects, one at a lab at the University of Calgary, and one in the lab at Athabasca University. One of these is investigating how the bacterium *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* survives in water, as that's unusual since there's a lack of nutrients for the bacteria to survive. Our evidence suggests they exist in a dormant state for long periods of time. It's known that some species form spores, like the bacteria that causes anthrax, and so can survive millions of years without food, but these bacteria go dormant and shut down their cellular machinery. They can alter their membranes, which lets them live for around 16 years in water. This is a source of concern in the hospital where this organism can survive in the water supply and infect patients. Our laboratory space is at the University of Calgary Health Science Center. The other project we are working on is conducted up in the science labs at AU. We've got a really cool machine that we're using to look at how new drugs treat biofilm producing bacteria, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. This is important because they're very drug resistant, and these infections, biofilm infections, are a major cause of concern in hospitals. This work is in collaboration with the University of British Columbia and we are hoping to identify synthetic peptides that will be effective new antimicrobials.

Pseudomonas aeruginosa is related to the bacterium that causes melioidosis, which is a lung disease that can lead to severe pneumonia. Melioidosis was the basis for my PhD research, but I'm not focusing in that area as much, though the disease remains common in South East Asia.

And outside the field?

I do a fair amount of skiing, because my husband and son both snowboard a lot. My son is on a mission to get sponsored by a snowboard company. Recently, I've also been going out with my daughter skiing as well. We were at Whistler and Lake Louise last month, though really I prefer being out on the beach. If I could be reading on a beach every day that's my preferred lifestyle.

Aside from being a professor I am a very busy mom. With two kids, there are just so many things to do. I didn't want to be one of those parents, the ones who pushed their kids into everything, but instead my kids have pulled me into it. There is always a lot to do, this practice, that event, and the next thing you know every night of the week is booked. I've started to tell people that I have three jobs: a professor, a chef, and a taxi-driver!

Next week, the conclusion of the interview, where we talk about e-texts, the new course model and things she feels would help AU improve.

DID YOU KNOW?

CRTC Looking for Input



The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is looking for public input on their new plans for television regulation. Input will be taken until June 25th at this [link](#). What they are looking for input into is their new plan to force broadcasters to allow us to purchase individual channels from broadcasters. Aside from a local-content bundle that would be provided as a basic service, all programming would be available on a pick-and-pay basis. Companies would still be allowed to create pre-made bundles, but they would no longer be able to force you to buy a whole bundle of channels you don't want to get the one that you do.

They are also looking for ideas as to how to best implement this system in a way that gives us the maximum amount of choice without unduly affecting the quality or the amount of content that we can receive. The background information on the site is, unfortunately, quite long and dense, but if you're interested in making our Canadian television service better, this could be your chance to make a difference.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK

At Home and Abroad



At Home: University of Saskatchewan President Fired

The University of Saskatchewan has been in the [news](#) quite a bit lately, first for firing tenured professor Robert Buckingham for being critical of the university administration's plan to restructure the institution to save it money. Widespread media attention and public outcry quickly had the university re-hire him, re-establish tenure, and declare that the firing was only supposed to be from his administrative role in the university, not a rejection of his tenure.

Less than a week later, the President of the university, Ilene Busch-Vishniac, has been fired by the Board of Governors only two years into her five-year term. It is expected that she will receive a \$450,000 severance package.

Around the Globe: Australia De-regulates Tuition, Cuts Contribution

In the *PIE news*, they are [reporting](#) that Australia has recently passed a budget which cuts public support for university courses by 20%, and fully de-regulates tuition. The Australian National University vice-chancellor, Ian Young, predicts that the average student fee will increase by 30% to make up for the cuts that have been imposed, as [reported](#) in *The Australian*. Which means that even as things are with the Alberta government and AU, it's sometimes nice to realize that they could have been even worse. Universities welcome the change, as they say it will allow them to better compete for the best instructors and educational opportunities.



Not the Best Sleep

Week after week I wrack my brain wondering what I'm going to write about in this space. What's happening in the news is often the stimulus. Sometimes the calendar guides me, though therein also lays a challenge. After all these years how can I put a fresh spin on a Mother's Day, Christmas, Groundhog Day column?

Often I draw on the activities and lessons of my own life. For this week the subject matter came in the wee hours of Sunday morning. I was asleep minding my own business when the phone rang at about 3:15 in the morning. When the phone rings at that time it's one of two things: a misdial by a drunk (usually quickly followed by one or two more from the same guy) or bad news. By the time I got to the phone I just heard something about ambulance dispatch, rollover at our gravel pit, and the request to call back.

It took some time to get my glasses, to turn on some lights, to try to grasp what I heard. I listened to the message to get the number to call. 9-1-1. Duh. I worried someone was lying bleeding or dying while I tried to help. As I spoke to the dispatcher, Roy was dressing in preparation for checking out what was happening. I spoke to a kindly police dispatcher who told me to take my time as I thought hard to correctly relay our land description. I didn't want more misinformation to delay things.

As Roy opened the door to leave there was a man there in the dark, minus-three temperature who had walked from the gravel pit. He was saying the ambulance was lost. Off they drove to try to intercept and direct emergency responders. That left me to pace, grab a housecoat, mindlessly tidy the table, and worry.

First, I was angry that at this ungodly hour not everyone was tucked safely into his or her beds innocently sleeping as we had been. Then, I began worrying. Had someone gotten hurt on our land? A gravel pit is a series of large, and in our case, water-filled holes and huge piles of rock, gravel, and sand that are appealing to off-road trespassers.

Also how scary is it to have someone, even if he is a good guy, silently walk up to our back door in the dead of night? We have been victims of a break-in in the past.

Eventually flashing lights filled the night sky. A fire truck drove by, backed up a quarter mile and then returned. Eventually Roy called to say the guys who work at the gravel pit had been in a rollover—though no one seemed to know where it had occurred. There were injuries. By now there were two ambulances and two police cars.

Eventually we fell asleep. But not before worrying about emergency response times, errors in judgment, liability, strangers, and strange behavior in the dark of night. Not the best sleep, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is Lucky Dog. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

In Conversation With Jack Malmstrom, Part II

Wanda Waterman



Jack Malmstrom is the swing clarinetist who put together Jack's Cats, a vintage-style jazz sextet based in Halifax, Nova Scotia that also includes keyboardist Gordon Fader, guitarist Dylan Quinn, bassist Mark Roberts, drummer Dave Skinner, and vocalist Kitty Farmer.

The project, which quite successfully revives the "pre-bland" portion of the big band era in music, has also attracted the participation of some of the best jazz names in Atlantic Canada, including Holly Arsenault, Adam Fine, Mike Lee, and Kevin Cox.

Their debut album, Low Down Dirty Swing, comprised of both matchless instrumental arrangements, standard covers, and original tunes, will be out this month. Recently bandleader Jack took the time to talk to Wanda Waterman about fans, rehearsals, and why vinyl. (Read the first part of this article [here](#).)

The Typical Cats Fan

So who comes to a Jack's Cats gig? All and sundry including university students, mid-career professionals, and seniors.

"Our audience is extremely broad," says Jack, "so defining the typical Cats fan is a challenge—but admittedly, a nice one to have."

Audiences usually share an awareness of vintage jazz: "It's satisfying to be told by folks who know music, 'You've captured the sound!' and exciting when people ask 'What is that you're playing? I've never heard anything like it before.' Some just like to listen; a surprising number can't help but dance. I guess the common thread is our fans enjoy the now-a-days uncommon experience of swingy rhythms played live with joy and sensitivity for the style."

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, and Some Blues

"One half of our repertoire is our versions of standards folks know and love, the other half is forgotten period gems we like to discover and revive, and the third half (laughs) is made up of our original tunes, written in a period style.

"We try to maintain a high degree of variety and entertainment in our act, so I select—or write—tunes that move the action of our performance forward. It's not as plot-driven as a musical, but more carefully planned than a random collection of favorite songs. I read once that Ellington was a master at selecting and arranging music to showcase the strengths of his various players— so I try to do that."

Prep Time

Jack likes to ensure that the band is in a continual state of improvement and that the rough bits get smoothed out before they hit the stage.

"We rarely play a song through from start to finish with all solos. We focus on the upcoming performance and drill on intros or endings, tricky passages, and fixing parts that went awry at the last gig.

"Things loosen up a bit when I introduce a new tune. I'll have a clear idea of how it needs to sound but always request input, corrections, and suggestions from the band.

"Their skill in so many areas is so much greater than mine," he humbly adds. "One of the most satisfying aspects for me is the high degree of professionalism in our group. It makes preparation incredibly efficient."

An Elegant Vinyl Debut

Our original compositions (there are six) certainly make the collection unique. We've always felt that there aren't enough opportunities to enjoy small-combo swing live— so it's natural for our album to be a live recording.

"The band came to the performance space, warmed up, and ran through a few tunes. We let the audience in and did a show. Then we just edited down the best of the material we'd captured to create an honest representation of what you'll hear at one of our gigs.



"Another decision, which felt obvious once it was made, was our choice to offer the album as an LP record. We're grateful that vinyl is coming back because it's so appropriate to our sound— like classical orchestras that perform on period instruments.

Conditions of the Creative Life

"When searching for inspiration, it's always best to go to the original sources rather than derivative work. Examining other artistic efforts with an almost academically critical eye (rather than just lazily consuming the stuff) is important. I'm constantly immersing myself in past pop-culture, and I enjoy the first-rate books of James M. Cain and second-rate film noir by anyone. Try as I might, I have yet to find a clarinetist that swings harder than Benny Goodman—but I'm still looking.

It's All About the Joy

"I think the most remarkable thing about Jack's Cats is the huge amount of joy associated with the whole project. Of course I'm having a great time, but it's quite something to see our career musicians (some of whom have played professionally for 50 years!) smiling like kids at Christmas when they're on stage. The audience picks it up and passes it around the room. We really wanted to share that joy with our listeners."



Dear Barb

Barbara Godin

Dear Barb:

Hi, I am in my thirties and most of my friends are around my age or a little older. We are all starting to get crow's feet and sunspots on our skin. I am okay with this, but a lot of my friends are spending loads of money on botox, filler, and other anti-aging procedures. When I'm around them I feel like I look so much older. I really don't want to spend my money and time on these procedures, but I hate being the old looking one in the group. Any suggestions on how I can resolve this feeling within myself? Feeling old in Halifax!

Thanks, Sharon

Hi Sharon:

I can't believe you are feeling old and you're only in your thirties, although I can understand where these feelings are coming from. The majority of actresses in the movies go to great lengths to look younger and that leaves the rest of us feeling much the same as you are feeling—old! What they are doing is superficial, you can't stop the clock. We are all aging and these procedures only delay outward appearances. It is an expensive regime to keep up. What would happen if they suddenly couldn't afford these procedures? Ultimately, the aging process would catch up with them and it would be a quick return to reality. Obviously, you are accepting of

yourself—and this is what most people strive to achieve. My advice to you is that you should not compare yourself to anyone, it isn't necessary. The other day I read an interesting quote by Theodore Roosevelt which would apply here: "Comparison is the thief of joy." Be happy with who you are and how you look. Thanks for your interesting question, I'm sure a lot of people will be able to relate.

Dear Barb:

I have more of a pet peeve than a question! I have a few friends that have young children and we have play dates at each other's homes with our three and four year olds. My son is three years old and I have a few friends that bring their infants with them to the play dates. I can understand this as a babysitter is expensive. The problem is when they come to my house, they often hand me the baby to hold while they go and play with the older kids. Don't get me wrong, I love babies, but I really don't want to hold someone else's baby for two hours while they play with my son! So please mothers, when you are going for a play date, if possible find a sitter for your baby, or take care of them yourself!

Thanks for letting me vent, Brenda!

Hey Brenda:

Well said! The only thing I would add is that perhaps you could stipulate these guidelines when you are establishing the play dates. This will prevent anyone from getting hurt feeling and perhaps feeling singled out; as the rules have been established and clearly stated right from the get go. Enjoy!

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

Comic

Wanda Waterman

THE NONPARTISAN: NATURE OR NURTURE



THESE PEOPLE WHO CLAIM WE'RE PRODUCTS OF ENVIRONMENT ARE DUMB AS DOUGH. EVERYBODY RESPONDS TO THE SAME STIMULI IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

AND THE PEOPLE WHO SAY WE'RE CONTROLLED BY OUR DNA ARE EVEN DENSER. LIKE THERE'S THIS "GENE GENIE" SOMEWHERE MAKING ALL OUR DECISIONS FOR US.



SO WHAT'S RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR DECISIONS?



ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? A COLLECTIVE OF MINUTE LIFE-FORMS WHO ARRIVED HERE FROM ANOTHER PLANET THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO AND NOW INHABIT MY BODY.

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN

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