



# PASSION IN PRACTICE

CAMD TAKES A LOOK AT TWO OF ITS ALUMNI TO EXAMINE THE ENDURING INFLUENCE ITS PROGRAMS HAVE HAD ON THESE SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE.

# PAULA RIES



**W**hen PAULA RIES, AS'05, was growing up on a farm in southwest Indiana, her mother made a little extra money by sewing. One day, drawn to an especially beautiful piece of fabric, Ries cut a small swatch to make a doll's dress—directly from the center of a large piece.

"I only did that once," Ries said, laughing.

Little did she know then that a passion for design would later bring her award-winning costumes from Hollywood to off-Broadway and back to her alma mater at Northeastern.

Though Ries originally had her eye on fashion design, as a student in the Department of Theatre, she realized that costume design was her calling. "It had everything I loved about fashion and then the extended part,

that things you designed you could go see later on stage," Ries said. And she enjoyed collaboration. "In fashion you're mostly working on your own projects. In theatre you have a whole group of people to bounce ideas off of."

As a student, Ries designed costumes for all but two student productions as well as two mainstage shows in the Studio Theatre. She also studied abroad in Italy, an experience she described as "eye opening" and "fabulous."

"Anyone who wants to do costume design needs to go to Europe," she said. "You're exposed to all the things you see in art books that you don't usually get to see in person." For instance, Carnival in Venice, with people wandering the streets in full 17th century dress, "was amazing for a costume designer."

Ries also sings the praises of the liberal arts education she received at Northeastern.

"It makes you more creative and opens up your mind," she said. "It helps you think in different ways and really develops your ability to solve problems."

After graduation, Ries moved to California and put those problem-solving skills to the test. She worked at a bookstore while designing costumes for little-known films with small budgets, such as one in which she had \$500

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to create authentic military designs and “crazy futuristic assassin’s wear.” She thrived on the creative challenge, and ended up using a yoga mat someone had discarded in her building’s laundry room for ersatz armor. “Sometimes it’s more fun to have to really think outside the box,” she said.

Then suddenly, at 30, Ries was diagnosed with cancer and moved back to her family’s home in Indiana during treatment. “I don’t think she really realized how serious it was,” Ries’s mother Martha recalled. “People in our community call her a miracle because of what she went through.”

Still, through treatment and recurrences in 2009 and 2010, Ries made her way through graduate school at Carnegie Mellon, where she graduated with an MFA in 2013. “You know the universe has other plans for you,” she said. “But I decided this is what I want to do with my life and it’s going to be hard but I couldn’t see myself doing anything else.”

And she’s been going strong ever since, designing costumes for the stage and screen,

including the acclaimed off-Broadway show *Mayhem and Majesty* and the hit television show *America’s Got Talent*.

Now, as the costume shop manager in CAMD’s Department of Theatre, Ries has found a home at her alma mater designing costumes for department productions and inspiring students to follow in her footsteps.

Her own mentor and now colleague, associate academic specialist and award-winning costume designer Frances Nelson McSherry, said Ries had impressed her so much when she was a student that she “hunted her down” to take the costume shop position. “I knew that she was by far the best person suited for this position,” McSherry said. “I’m so pleased to have known her when she was a student here and then to watch her through graduate school and then come back to Northeastern and pay it forward.”

As Ries said, “It’s even better than I dreamed up.”

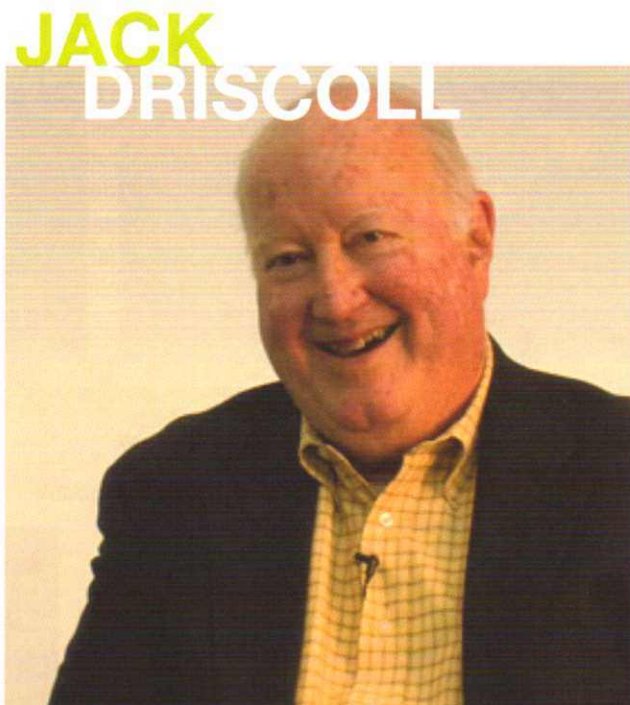
While a student at Northeastern working nights at *The Boston Globe*’s sports desk, JOHN “JACK” DRISCOLL, AS’57, and the other reporters would play a game with the carbon copies from each other’s type-written stories. For every word they could delete from each other’s carbons without hurting the story, they’d get 10 cents.

It was a valuable collaborative exercise in the economy of language. As Driscoll put it, “It’s good discipline, group learning.”

Indeed, whether at the helm of a Pulitzer Prize-winning newsroom or in the vanguard of digital media and citizen journalism, collaboration and communication are threads that connect Driscoll’s major pursuits throughout his 60-year journalism career.

Driscoll got his start in journalism covering high school sports for *The Boston Globe* in his hometown of Melrose, Massachusetts. He is the first to admit that he often missed descriptive details from football games because he was reporting them from the bottom of a dog pile on the field.

While studying journalism and English at Northeastern, he earned his way through college by working nights at the *Globe*, where he made industry connections that provided the foundation for the rest of his career.



JACK DRISCOLL, COURTESY OF MIT CENTER FOR CIVIC MEDIA

“College did what it’s supposed to do as well, which is give me a very broad basis for learning in a variety of areas,” he said. This breadth of knowledge was a particularly valuable asset for a journalist. The skills he developed in his classes coupled with the hands-on professional experiences he gained through his co-op at United Press, now UPI, provided an education that sustained him, he said. **CONTINUED ▶**