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A photograph of a man in a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, playing a double bass. He is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The background is a dark, paneled wall.

THE
Radford
EXPERIENCE

The Power of Thought RU LAUNCHES NEW DEGREE IN DESIGN THINKING

By Keith Hagarty

The power to create ... the power to innovate ... the power to generate successful solutions to a variety of problems—this is the power of design thinking.

Radford University's College of Visual & Performing Arts (CVPA) launched its Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in design thinking, marking the first graduate program offered by the Department of Interior Design & Fashion (ID&F).

Starting in fall 2012, the M.F.A. in design thinking will be administered completely online, with students having the option of completing the program either part time in four years, or full time in two.

"We're so excited!" said Holly Cline, interim chair of ID&F. "The online component will allow anyone in the country or the world to complete this degree."

The M.F.A. in design thinking is a leadership degree path intended to augment any bachelor's degree, meaning that the prospective student does not need an undergraduate degree in design to enroll in the program.

In his book "Design Thinking ... What is That?" author and award-winning industrial designer Mark Drienski says, while the term "design" is often used to describe an object or end result, in its most effective form it is not a noun at all but rather a verb meaning a process or an action.

Using the work of Drienski and other "design thinking" experts as a springboard, Cline said, a team of designers, artists and instructors familiar with this type of thinking process collaborated to create the new graduate program, which has a strong emphasis on the power of thought. "It's how the design process embodies good decision-making," she said.

My TRUE Passion

By Justin Lang '01

In 2001 I graduated from Radford University with a degree in theatre. All throughout college, my family thought that I was chasing a pipe dream by deciding to make a living playing with lights and working in the theatre. "Yeah right," they'd say. Even before I came to Radford in 1997, I knew what I wanted to do—I wanted to paint the stage with light. Light is a fascinating medium. But lighting design requires passion and a knack for detail. It means analyzing and evaluating the slightest differences in the temperature and color of light. It sounds boring when you have to put it into words, but it's not. Onstage is where the magic happens: painting with light has the ability to change your mood and perception.

Before Radford, I had barely any skill with lighting. I thought it was fun making lights flicker and change colors, and chasing actors onstage also helped, but it wasn't until Radford that I honed my skills and found my true passion for lighting. I took every lighting design class Radford had to offer by my junior year, yet I wanted more. Begging and pleading with my design professor, Carl Lefko, I was able to do an independent study the spring semester of my last year and allowed to design the first musical Radford had produced in 10 years. It was an amazing experience, one I will never forget.

Who would have guessed that the one thing I think about every single day came from my least favorite class at Radford? To graduate with a degree in theatre, you have to have your core education classes as well as those pesky classes within your college. I took Acting 301 with Chuck Hayes, and I'll never forget it. I've always said that you will never catch me onstage with an audience in the house. I made that clear on the first day of class. "I am not an actor," I said. "I just need to pass." But Chuck instilled in me something that stuck with me and has served me well over the years: "To be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late ... and to be late is to be dead." To this day, I can still see Chuck in front of class, giving this speech with such passion and force.

It has been 10 years since I graduated from Radford, and my love for light and theatre is still strong. While I don't design much lately, I am still neck-deep in the industry I love as the editor of Projection, Lights & Staging News magazine, sharing with industry professionals a passion for lighting that I developed while in the heart of the Blue Ridge. I miss those steps in front of Pridemore.

Justin Lang '01 is the editor of the Las Vegas-based magazine Projection, Lights & Staging News.

