



**Sunday Night at the Movies:  
Behind the Lens with Penn Student Film Festival Winners  
Panelist Bios**



**Peter Decherney (faculty moderator)** is Professor of Cinema & Media Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He holds a secondary appointment at the Annenberg School for Communication and an affiliation with the Center for Technology, Innovation, and Competition at Penn Law School. He is the Faculty Director of Penn's campus-wide Online Learning Initiative and Director of the Cinema & Media Studies Program. He is the author or editor of six books including *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* and *Hollywood: A Very Short Introduction*. Professor Decherney has also written for *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and other publications. He is an award-winning film director, whose films include a documentary about Myanmar's film industry, a virtual reality documentary about a Kenyan refugee settlement, and an 11-episode virtual reality docuseries about Puerto Rican artists after Hurricane Maria. He is currently completing a documentary about the Jewish community in northern Ethiopia. Professor Decherney has been an Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Scholar, a fellow of the American

Council of Learned Societies, and a U.S. State Department Arts Envoy to Myanmar. He is an award-winning teacher, whose open online course on the history of Hollywood has enrolled over 50,000 learners.



**Nicola M. Gentili (Penn Student Film Festival Curator)** is the Associate Director of Penn Cinema & Media Studies Program and the Director of the Penn-in-Cannes summer program in France. He graduated at the Law School from "La Sapienza" University of Rome in 1985. As a lawyer, he worked for an International Law Firm in Rome specializing himself in all matters of Italian Civil Law. At the same time, he worked regularly as a film critic for several Italian Cinema publications. Arriving to the United States in February 1992, he was appointed adjunct instructor in Italian at Temple University and Drexel University. He has been a Lecturer in Italian for the University of Pennsylvania between 1994-2006, where he established Business Italian courses. He co-directed Penn-in-Florence from 1996 to 2006. He joined Harrison College House in 2007 as a House Fellow, where he also teaches Cinema & Media Studies courses in residence.



**Josh Goldsmith (alumni panelist)** is a writer and producer for television and film. Along with his wife/writing partner Cathy Yuspa, Josh served as showrunner and executive producer of the long-running CBS comedy *The King of Queens* (starring Kevin James and Jerry Stiller). On the feature side, Josh and Cathy wrote the movies *What Women Want* (Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt) and the romantic comedy *13 Going on 30* (Jennifer Garner and Mark Ruffalo). They have written and produced TV pilots for NBC, ABC, CBS and FOX and have written for several network series, most recently *The Goldbergs* on ABC. They are currently the co-creators/showrunners of a ten episode streaming series, *The Mighty Ducks: Game Changers* (Emilio Estevez, Lauren Graham) for Disney+. Current screenplays include a script for Warner Brothers set in the intense, cutthroat world of pre-teen dance troupes, and a project for Dreamworks Animation. They are also adapting *13 Going On 30* into a Broadway musical. Josh and Cathy created and executive produced the ABC comedy *Big Day*, as well as FOX comedy *'Til Death*, for which Josh directed several episodes. He and Cathy also composed *The King of Queens* theme song. Josh received an MFA from the film school at the University of Southern California, and as an undergraduate studied theater at the University of Pennsylvania.



**Heather Zeegen Lieberman (alumni panelist)** is an independent film and television producer in Los Angeles. She is currently working on several television and film projects at companies such as HBO, Universal, and Lionsgate. A graduate of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, Heather began her career at ICM and Twentieth Century Fox. In 1996, she landed her first executive position at Original Film, where she produced *Cruel Intentions* (Reese Witherspoon, Ryan Phillippe, and Sarah Michelle Gellar). Made for a modest budget of \$11 million, the film went on to gross over \$75 million worldwide. She also helped create Universal Pictures' *The Fast and the Furious* franchise (Paul Walker and Vin Diesel), producing the original and the second installment, *2 Fast 2 Furious*. The films went on to gross well over \$100 million each. While at Original Film, Heather also produced *The Glass House* (Diane Lane and Leelee Sobieski). During her 10 years with the Sony-based production company, she developed and produced several television projects, including *Manchester Prep* (Amy Adams), for Columbia/Tristar and Fox. She also produced *Cabin by the Lake* and *Class Warfare* for the USA Network.



**Nikki Silver (alumni panelist)** is an Emmy-award winning producer and a founder of With a Twist and ToniK Productions. Most recently, Nikki executive produced the 2019 Sundance Film Festival feature *Premature*, directed by Rashaad Ernesto Green. In 2018, she produced *Monster* (Jennifer Hudson, Jeffrey Wright, A\$AP Rocky and Nas). The film, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, comes out on Netflix on May 7, 2021. Nikki previously produced *The Giver* (Jeff Bridges, Meryl Streep, Katie Holmes and Alexander Skarsgård) and *The Watsons Go To Birmingham*, a co-production with Walmart and Proctor & Gamble which premiered on The Hallmark Channel. For PBS, she helmed the documentary *Teenage Witness* (narrated by Richard Gere), following 83-year-old Holocaust survivor Fanya Heller, and the 2011 American Masters film, *Jeff Bridges: The Dude Abides*, on the life and family of Jeff Bridges. For Showtime, Nikki created and produced *What's Going On?*, a documentary series made in association with the United Nations and hosted by top celebrity activists including Michael Douglas, Angelina Jolie, Richard Gere and Laurence Fishburne. For Viacom's the N, she adapted Jacqueline Woodson's *Miracle's Boys*, a live-action mini-series directed by Spike Lee, Ernest Dickerson, LeVar Burton and Bill Duke. Nikki began her career in children's television producing the beloved

*Reading Rainbow* for PBS. The series won 24 Emmys, including Best Children's Series for five consecutive years. Nikki is based in New York City and received her BA from the University of Pennsylvania.