

Stephanie D'Abruzzo



Wikipedia

<https://www.stephaniedabruzzo.com/about/bio.html>

<https://www.fredrogers.org/2023/08/30/meet-our-neighbors-stephanie-dabruzzo/>

[https://scoobydoo.fandom.com/wiki/User\\_blog:TheAtomicLight/An\\_Interview\\_With...\\_Stephanie\\_D%27Abruzzo](https://scoobydoo.fandom.com/wiki/User_blog:TheAtomicLight/An_Interview_With..._Stephanie_D%27Abruzzo)

## How to Get to Sesame Street - For 50 years Sesame Street has taught children, thanks in part to a purple pipeline of talent

Sometimes Stephanie D'Abruzzo '93 acts her age.

But only sometimes, because every so often she's transformed back into a 4-year-old. All it takes are simple things: getting a hug and hearing her name. And when you work on Sesame Street, as [D'Abruzzo](#) has since 1993, your hugs happen to come from Mr. Snuffleupagus, and Big Bird says your name

'A Starry Night' gala show brings current students, famous alumni together onstage

"The world isn't in such good shape, according to Stephanie D'Abruzzo (Communication '93).

D'Abruzzo led the original opening number for "A Starry Night," the gala hosted by Stephen Colbert (Communication '86) to cap off the School of Communication's "CommFest" weekend. After keeping up with world news, she said she wasn't feeling up to the task of bringing the audience the "happy, punchy, bouncy" opening they wanted. Instead, the "Sesame Street" puppeteer asked the conductor, "Would you please play me something that speaks to the dystopian hellscape that is my soul?"

But Ana Gasteyer (Communication '89), of Broadway and Hollywood fame, joined her fellow alum onstage to remind her that it wasn't all doom and gloom. The fundraiser, she said, was meant to uplift and pay it forward — literally — to students who would become "the next generations of artists and storytellers."

"Life is rough, life is trash, but now we're coming together," Gasteyer sang. "We can sing, they have cash, so now we're coming together."

That "coming together" became a continuing theme in a night that centered on connecting all different members of Northwestern's School of Communication. The show, a star-studded celebration

of the school's legacy, was attended by nearly 3,000 students, alumni and faculty.

The gala — held in the brand-new Ryan Fieldhouse, which was transformed into a glimmering theater just for the occasion — was equal parts talent showcase, alumni reunion and fundraising effort to help catalyze the school's plan to add an MFA program in acting.

In his opening monologue, Colbert took some jabs at his alma mater, questioning the choice to build an NU campus in Doha, Qatar ("Some have called Doha the Evanston of the Persian Gulf"), poking fun at the simplistic name of the CommFest reunion weekend ("It just barely edged out 'Message Meeting' and 'Word Thing'") and breaking out his best Chicago accent to point out the absurdity of trying to teach "mellifluous speech" in the Midwest. The show, he said, would be both a celebration of the past 150 years of the school's history and a kickoff for a new chapter with the acting MFA initiative.

"Now tonight is called 'A Starry Night,' and it's an evening that's bound to be historic," Colbert said. "Partly because we're being sued by the estate of Vincent van Gogh. But mostly because tonight, we will be surrounded by some of the most talented Wildcat alumni of the past seven decades."

The night was chock full of crossovers between NU's past and present stars as alumni performed side by side with current students. Adam Kantor (Communication '08) took a night off appearing in the Broadway musical "The Band's Visit" for a return performance with a cappella group THUNK. Waa-Mu Show alumni and current members staged a medley of hits from the past decades of the student-written show. And past and present Mee-Ow comedians joined forces to revive sketches from previous years.

Some of NU's biggest Broadway names — including Richard Kind (Communication '78), Gregg Edelman (Communication '80) and Heather Headley (Communication '97) — had solo moments. Brian D'Arcy James (Communication '90) returned to the role he

originated in “Hamilton,” singing “You’ll Be Back” as King George III.

The show also honored alumni who had passed away. Garry Marshall (Medill ’56) — who directed the series “Happy Days” and movies including “Pretty Woman” and “The Princess Diaries” — received a personalized tribute from mentee Kimberly Williams-Paisley (Communication ’93), who said he was “the single most beloved alumnus in the history of Northwestern.” In a video, Marshall said he had hoped to be remembered as the “Norman Rockwell of television.”

“I never wanted to change the world,” he said. “I wanted to entertain the world.”

After Waa-Mu led a singalong of the show’s traditional finale song “To the Memories,” Colbert closed out the show by anticipating another 150 years of the school’s success, reminding attendees to buy their tickets to the next gala — in the year 2168.

S. Jenell Trigg (Communication ’78), who attended the event, said though she ended up on the legal side of the entertainment business, she still feels a strong connection to the school. She said NU values every aspect of the creative process and has a strong tradition of investing in “art for art’s sake.”

“There’s a legacy here that is unmatched, and there’s a legacy that you want to continue to be a part of,” Trigg said. “And to me that’s important, particularly when art is cut out of middle schools and high schools because of budget, but yet art is what makes humanity.”

## From Sesame Street to Broadway - Puppeteer Stephanie D'Abruzzo (C93) plays a monster of a role in the acclaimed musical Avenue Q

### STEPHANIE D'ABRUZZO '93

Northwestern theater students got to play with puppets during a special class taught by Tony-nominated actor and puppeteer Stephanie D'Abruzzo in February. "The suspension of disbelief is the cornerstone of puppetry," the radio/TV/film alumna said. "We all know Elmo isn't real, but when it's brought to life by a skilled and talented puppeteer, then he can be as real as any human being." D'Abruzzo, who lives in New York City, also conducted two firesides at the Communications Residential College, where she lived as an undergrad. (See "**From Sesame Street to Broadway**," winter 2004.)



Student puppeteers bring Avenue Q to Northwestern

