

RowanAdvances

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Amplifying impact through the story of sound

Two unique funds established by one passionate donor will benefit hundreds of Radio, Television & Film (RTF) students at Rowan University.

Keith Brand, the Radio, Television & Film Chair in the College of Communication & Creative Arts has generously contributed \$200,000 to create The Keith Brand Endowed Scholarship Fund and The Eldridge Johnson Memorial Lecture Fund.

Brand chose to establish a scholarship specifically to recruit the best first year students into the RTF program to offer four years of valuable support in the field. His creation of a Lectureship Fund will not only bring light to the history of sound in the region, but will also illustrate the extraordinary field in which RTF professionals operate.

“I’ve had the idea of a lectureship for years,” says Brand. “I teach courses in sound and audio recording and one of the things that is unique about New Jersey is that the seminal developments of

sound and audio actually happened here.”

Brand was intrigued by the very intricacies and complexities of sound through the music emanating from his radio at a very young age. After earning his undergraduate degree from West Virginia University in technical theatre and his graduate degree from Temple University in educational media, he spent 27 years on the radio at WXPN in Philadelphia, PA with his own weekly radio show. He later found an outlet to further share his love of music through freelance journalism for National Public Radio.

“For me, music and NPR really exemplified an attempt at excellence in storytelling using only sound,” said Brand. “They crystalized my interests in sound as a storytelling medium, and that’s what we do in Radio, Television & Film—we are story tellers.”

Brand spoke enthusiastically about the beginnings of audio and sound in Camden, New Jersey and a man with the determination to start a business there. By the 1920s, that business became one of the largest communication companies in the nation, pioneering some of the most popular developments in sound recording and the creation of one of the first major record labels at the time.

That man? Eldridge Johnson.

Johnson was the founder of the Victor Talking Machine Company, based in Camden, NJ and one of the premier communications corporations at the beginning of the twentieth century. They later merged with the Radio Corporation of America and had a powerful presence in southern New Jersey for many years.

“To fund this lectureship in honor of a man who I don’t feel has been recognized in American culture or American science is very special to me,” adds Brand. “I’m very excited to use this fund to bring in lecturers who exemplify the major role sound and audio play in technology development and other aspects of our lives while also recognizing that a lot of these developments began in southern New Jersey through Eldridge.”

Brand teaches his students about Eldridge Johnson in addition to the development and history of sound recording technology. “It is always important to know from whence we came. How do we know what we are unless we know what we came from?”

“I think Rowan is a great investment for this,” concludes Brand. “I believe in this institution. I believe in what we are trying to do for the students in this region. It was kind of a no-brainer for me to make a planned gift of this caliber where I can leave a legacy to benefit the students at Rowan for many years to come.”