



finding the job you'll love

### groovy companies

#### Bongiorno Productions

##### Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiomo And Jerome Bongiomo

Marylou and Jerome Bongiomo first met over a fetal pig when they were biology lab partners in college. They both entered graduate schools in the sciences but left those programs after several years to pursue their passions as artists. Now married and partners in their company, Bongiorno Productions, Marylou and Jerome are award winning, Emmy nominated filmmakers.

They create fictional and documentary films and also exhibit their video installations in museums and galleries. Currently, their black and white 3D film, *New Work: Newark in 3D*, is showing at the Newark Museum in Newark, NJ.

As part of its yearlong Centennial celebration, the Museum commissioned Marylou and Jerome to create a film about their home city. Their film captures the beauty, the historic architecture, and the energy of the city. In these interviews, Marylou and Jerome offer concrete and passionate advice for those contemplating a career in film and for anyone who wants to find a career that they love.

#### Companies:

- SeamlessWeb
- Spotlight
- Bongiorno Productions

#### Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiomo

When you were a young girl, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A writer.

Were you interested in filmmaking when you were young?

I didn't do any filming in high school or college whatsoever. **I wasn't even a film buff.** I did like photography and was fascinated by photos my father had taken and developed himself.

What did you study in college?

**Jerome and I were both biology majors** and serious lovers of the arts - particularly the visual arts, like painting and sculpture. Film was completely off the radar. It was just recreation.

What was your next step after college?

I spent two years in a graduate program in neurophysiology. It was stimulating because I could flex my muscles intellectually, but I missed interacting with people and **I didn't like the isolation of the lab.** I left after two years to pursue play writing; Jerome left medical school to write music and play in his band. We got married, and were both science teachers when I decided to apply to film school.

What prompted you to apply to film school?

We met an actor in a short play we had written. We decided to make a short film together and that is the film I submitted to NYU graduate film school. I sent it close to the deadline and I didn't really think anything would come of it. **Being accepted changed everything.** I sometimes wonder if I hadn't been accepted to film school if I would have pursued filmmaking so intensely or would I have chosen another form of expression.

Tell me about your film school experience.

NYU was an immersive and wonderful experience. We were in class six days a week and filming on the 7th day. And I loved it! Jerome was still teaching and playing music in his band. We did a two for one at NYU. He would come to some of my classes at night. He learned how to shoot and how to edit so we both were able to get the skills to do what we are doing now. **At first, we thought we would be fictional filmmakers** but we now also make documentaries.

Some of the science we learned we are also able to apply in our work, for example, in a film we did about Venice and New Orleans. With our new 3D film, *New Work: Newark in 3D*, we made an art film. We are always wondering if there's another interesting area we can step into and experiment with.

**It seems that you are always following new paths in your work.**

**We create something new** all the time driven by what we are passionate about. We love museums and they have guided us in so many ways. We migrate towards whatever we love, and seek great mentors. I always encourage young - and older - people to reach out to mentors, not necessarily famous people or those in their field, but people they really dig.

**What is the best part of your job?**

There are so many "best parts." Being able to create something and then seeing it - this idea that is of interest to me - become of interest to other people. **There is a tremendous power in knowing you have impact...** Working with actors is my great joy... Also film magically unites what Jerome is good at and what I am passionate about into something we can do together. I like the fact that we can edit our work as much as we need to. It's incredible to take your work and mull over it as a painter might over a canvas. We take our work all over the world and create an audience for it. We get to interact with audiences and share universal themes.

**What's your advice for our readers who are interested in working in film but who have not gone to film school or majored in film in college?**

I wouldn't recommend film school immediately. You should go when you really need it. When I was in graduate school, there were doctors, lawyers, business people - all wanting to make films. But they all had to create something first - based on their life experiences - to get accepted.

If college graduates want to enter the film world, they can work at their usual jobs, but they should get into a community like a writing program, or a documentary or fiction seminar, and work in that environment. **Take free classes or do internships** where you're under someone's guidance. You can also choose to work in film production.

**What guidance do you have for those who are majoring in film in college?**

I would highly recommend that they find an internship. There are websites with serious opportunities for this work. They require low commitment; some are paid, some are unpaid. Some will have gofer work but some actually have interns doing real work. There are internships that offer college credit, so define what you're looking for and go find it. **Internships are also great networking opportunities.**



### Jerome Bongiorno

**When you were a child, what did you want to do when you grew up?**

**I liked lots of stuff.** I was always into science, into music, into art. I was always in bands. I loved to paint and draw.

**I understand that you went to medical school and then left.**

I went to medical school for a couple of years. It wasn't all I wanted it to be. I wanted to continue to play in bands so I put medical school

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>aside and kept doing the band thing. It was getting better and better, and <b>we almost got the band signed to a label.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>How did your parents deal with you leaving medical school?</b></p>   | <p>I thought, "What do you have a burning desire to do?" Mine was to make music. And if you have a burning desire to do something, how could you possibly do anything else? <b>You better go do it and do it quickly.</b></p> <p>I knew my parents wouldn't like it but they weren't totally surprised because I was always into music and art. In fact, years later, I was accepted to the New York Academy's Graduate School of Figurative Art but Marylou had just been accepted into film school and I was in these bands and the timing wasn't right.</p>   |
| <p><b>What type of music did you play?</b></p>   | <p><b>We had a rock band.</b> We played Neil Young type music but all original. I started out playing guitar but I played bass in the band.</p>  |
| <p><b>How did you get involved in making films?</b></p>  | <p>The film school put it all together: the visual and the sound. They are both necessary. So that is what really excited me about doing film. <b>I got to play in both worlds.</b> Filmmaking has a lot of science to it, a lot of technical work, and it is important to be logical about it all. In making films and writing scripts, you have to experiment with stuff and figure out the logic in what you are doing.</p>   |
| <p><b>What is the best part of your work?</b></p>  | <p>When you're in the middle of the work and you are trying to figure out what you are trying to do. <b>When you find the logic in it,</b> it is very satisfying.</p> <p>For example, with our documentary Revolution '67 about the Newark riots, we needed to make a coherent statement about Newark and we weren't sure at first what our message would be. People said Newark is on the way back; others said it is not. We live here but it is hard to know the true story without a deep look at it. When we interviewed people and did research, we realized Newark is having major problems. So we had to figure out why is it in such sad shape.</p> <p>The answer is that is it all about poverty. Until that changes, Newark will not be different. Once we started to see that picture, we understood what the documentary would be about. We are sitting on firm ground once we know what our message is going to be.</p>  |
| <p><b>What is your advice for young people considering their future careers?</b></p>   | <p><b>Do what you are passionate about.</b> Start now. Start this afternoon.</p>   |
| <p><b>What about the college senior who has been studying accounting but now realizes film making is his passion? How does he get started?</b></p> | <p>You have to get yourself involved in the scene. There is no book that will have the answers. You have to get involved and you have to put in the time. If you're not a rich person, you have to find a way to support yourself in the meantime.</p> <p>College kids should ask artists, "How do you pay your rent?" That will tell them how they are being artists. For those who don't have the money, how do you do both at the same time? You have to be willing to battle that out. We both do this so we have two people working on this at the same time.</p> <p>You have to try it. Does it make any sense to go through life saying, "Gee, I always really wanted to do that?" And you don't do that?</p> <p>You need to do what you are passionate about 24 hours a day 7 days a week. There is no time for anything else. If you want to give it your best shot, you can't do anything less.</p> <p><b>You have to do what you are interested in.</b> You only go around once! People spend the best part of their lives doing work that they don't enjoy in places where they are unhappy. Why would people put up with being miserable? Do what you are passionate about.</p> |

visit: [Bongiorno Productions](#)

 [back](#)

© Groovy Careers | all rights reserved