

# Fordham Footsteps: Kristina Dominick, FCLC '09, Interview Transcript

Matt:

Hey listeners! We have another bonus episode for you.

Sara:

We spoke with Kristina Dominick in November 2019—one of our very first interviews for the podcast.

Matt:

She's been busy since then and now has a podcast of her own. Check out "With the Band: The Stories Behind Music" wherever you're listening to Fordham Footsteps—or your other podcasts. Kristina seeks out conversations with Latin musicians in NYC spanning the genres of salsa, jazz, folkloric, and even opera.

Sara:

Now enjoy our conversation with Kristina Dominick, Fordham College at Lincoln Center, Class of 2009.

Sara:

Welcome to Fordham Footsteps, the podcast that features Fordham alumni and discusses their path from student life to their current career. Some will have a direct correlation to their majors and others will describe how they took some unexpected turns.

Matt:

Either way, expect an insider's guide to certain industries and some great stories from our esteemed alumni. I'm Matt Burns, associate director for young alumni and student engagement.

Sara:

And I'm Sarah Hunt Munoz, senior director for strategic initiatives. With us today is Kristina Dominick, Fordham College at Lincoln Center class of 2009. Welcome.

Kristina:

Hi. So happy to be here.

Sara:

Great. So you were a communication and media studies major-

Kristina:

Yes.

Sara:

... back in the day?

Kristina:

Yes. I started as a communication and media studies major with a minor in theater, but quickly dropped that minor. And by the end of my four years, ended up as a double major in Spanish as well. I studied abroad in Spain my junior year, spring semester and by the time I got back, I was able to take two more classes and have a double major in Spanish as well.

Sara:

Nice.

Matt:

So kind of a why not?

Kristina:

Yeah. Totally a why not? Yeah. I loved my study abroad experience in Spain. I highly suggest everyone to take that step and explore.

Sara:

What did you want to do in media when you were a student?

Kristina:

I guess I wanted to be in TV production or maybe broadcast journalism, but my first internship clarified that I didn't want to do that. It was sophomore year and I interned at The Martha Stewart Show, which I don't think is around anymore, but at that time it was a wonderful show and learned everything from writing segments to preparing and producing and then showtime. I loved the scheduling of it. I have a theater background and it was a lot like prepping for a play, but in fast speed, but I couldn't see myself really writing segments and being a producer. I realized I didn't want to go down that path. And then my second internship was actually at Brides Magazine, but working for a specific fundraiser. We gathered donated wedding gowns and resold them. All the proceeds went to support stage four breast cancer patients.

Sara:

Oh, that's fantastic.

Matt:

Wow.

Kristina:

It was a huge project. And again, I was probably going into my junior year. It was a summer internship into the fall and just working on that project and the outcome of feeling like all of my hard work went to support people in need really clarified that I wanted to be in the nonprofit sector.

Sara:

Okay. And what do you do now?

Kristina:

So I work at the 92nd Street Y.

Sara:

Okay.

Kristina:

That was actually my first job out of college. I worked there for three years. I was the executive assistant for the fundraising department. Loved it. But then I moved to the Joyce Theater doing fundraising. It's a small dance theater in Chelsea. So that was my first fundraising role. And then I was asked to come back to the Y about four years ago. A position opened up, fundraising for our school of the arts. So it's a visual arts, music and dance school. And that was right up my alley so I took it. And I've been back for four years.

Sara:

Did you maintain relationships with people at the time that you [crosstalk 00:03:10] had left thinking that you might be able to come back or that they might be able to give you some pointers down the road?

Kristina:

Yeah. So the 92nd Street Y is a very diverse, vibrant community center. It's a cultural and community center on that [inaudible 00:03:22] side. And there is a full gym, classes in music, art, dance, language, literature, and then lectures in the evening with political leaders, actors, authors. It's really a unique place. There isn't another place I think like it in New York city. So obviously I kept up those connections. And a lot of the program directors that were there when I was first there are still there.

Sara:

Oh, great.

Matt:

Wow. So going back to that minor in theater, why did you drop it?

Kristina:

I grew up as a theater kid, specifically musical theater. I love to perform, but when I started at Fordham, I just wanted to keep it so that I could maybe take some classes and explore, but I knew I didn't want to do that for my career. So I took an incredible, I don't know what it was called, maybe acting 101 my freshman year. And it was with a bunch of Alvin Ailey dance program seniors. It was a wonderful course, but I knew I didn't want to go into theater as my career.

Sara:

What about the Spanish angle? Do you use that in your day-to-day at all?

Kristina:

Totally. Well, I don't really use it in my job, but I have a love for Latin music and I actually dance salsa on the side.

Sara:

Okay.

Kristina:

So when I returned from Spain, I took two courses. One was called the Latino experience in New York, and one was called Caribbean literature in New York. Fabulous classes. And I don't know if it's really helped, but added to my love of Latin music and just enriched my experience living in New York.

Matt:

So working in development is interesting, tough to describe your job in a sentence or two, but talk us through a day-to-day, what's it like at the 92nd Street Y?

Kristina:

Sure. So a day at the Y is always interesting and always busy. When you arrive in the morning there are kids going to nursery school. There are also seniors that are part of our senior program. You'll see artists going to their painting or ceramics classes. And I get to fundraise specifically for those in the school of the arts, which is a full music, dance and visual art program. Mostly working with women who have maybe taken a ceramics class there for 20 years and the classes turned from a hobby into their second home. They've created a real community there with friends that have seen them through marriages, divorces, kids, their entire life.

Kristina:

So it's really creating connections with those patrons that eventually become donors. I also get to work on specific projects that program directors are interested in. For example, our jewelry center is the largest in the nation. Many people don't know that, but we provide 60 classes a week from beading necklaces to traditional goldsmithing. So really all range of skill levels. But the director there had an idea. We have one month where there are no classes and he had had an idea for an international residency. He had been to residency programs in Europe, but he didn't know of a residency program for a jeweler in New York. So he told me this idea. I was able to clarify the vision and find a donor who started supporting that program.

Sara:

Great.

Kristina:

So now we've had three years of that program. We've had three artists, one from Estonia, one from Amsterdam and one from Sweden. And it's been really rewarding to see the project as an idea, and then getting support and then making it a reality.

Matt:

Yeah, it seems interesting. It's like you got to be present for the entire life cycle of the [crosstalk 00:06:51] gift there. So what is the team like there? Is it a small operation? If you're able to see all sides of it like that.

Kristina:

It's a pretty large team. As far as development teams go, I think we're more than 30. We have a team for individual giving, which is what I work on. So that's working with individuals who support. We have an institutional support team. And so those are people who fundraise for government support foundation and corporations. And then we have a special events team. We have a wonderful gala in the spring and various events throughout the year.

Sara:

Where did you get your exposure to the world of fundraising?

Kristina:

Funny story, my student worker job at Fordham was in the office of alumni relations. And I ended up working at a lot of donor cultivation events and really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed seeing, like you were saying, the life cycle of someone who benefited from their Fordham education, that they felt the need to give back. And I heard so many stories and really liked seeing that cycle.

Sara:

It's interesting that a student worker job could lead to a career.

Matt:

100%.

Kristina:

Yeah.

Sara:

So you're still doubling in theater and the arts, which is nice. You had an internship at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, I believe.

Kristina:

Yeah. So I interned there right after my senior year of college, right in that summer before I started at the 92nd street Y. And I interned in the education programs. So they have a program where teaching artists work with teachers in public schools to really provide arts education for public schools that may have unlimited arts education. And actually at the 92nd Street Y we have a wonderful education program that does the same. We serve more than 16,000 kids in New York city public schools, all five boroughs. And I didn't know that having that internship right after my senior year would then lead to working in an organization that does a similar thing, but maybe that clarified my interest in that-

Sara:

Sure.

Kristina:

... programming.

Sara:

What drew you to the Lincoln Center campus when you were looking at schools?

Kristina:

I toured both campuses and loved both, and I actually ended up being on Rose Hill campus. Every Tuesday night I would sing in the choir, which I loved. But I liked being in the city and having our small community of Lincoln Center, but in this thriving city. So I loved going to concerts, seeing Broadway shows, having all of that at my fingertips.

Matt:

Interesting hear you say that you felt drawn to you doing work that supported people in need or you're impressed by folks that did that. What about your time at Fordham helped inform that?

Kristina:

I've been groomed in Catholic school my entire life, and the sense of giving back and service was always really relevant. And it's funny now working at a Jewish organization, the same theme carries through. We always talk about [foreign language 00:09:47] which is giving back to help repair the world. And that's such a Jesuit theme as well. So I think that sense of service really carried through my Fordham years into my career.

Sara:

Are there any professors that you had during your student life that you still think of fondly or that influenced what you're doing now?

Kristina:

Well, my advisor was Fr. Tuite. He was wonderful and I took his film class when, I guess I was a junior or senior. And he was also my advisor and he actually helped me when I wanted to double major in Spanish, kind of figure out my course load and figure out what counted, but he's a gem.

Matt:

So that's your time as a student. Still a young person in the working world, but with 10 years of experience under your belt, are there mentors you look to now or other individuals who help you figure out what those next steps are?

Kristina:

I have a really incredible boss at the 92nd Street Y right now. She's a problem solver. She's just a strong female leader and she leads in a way that our team feels very connected. I've learned so much from her, not just about fundraising, but how to manage and how to work on a team together.

Matt:

Well, I was going to ask you, so what's next for you?

Kristina:

I'm working on some really interesting projects at the Y right now, some large, hopefully transformational gifts. So I'm excited to continue there and continue to develop relationships. In major gifts, which is the area that I work in, you'll learn that it takes time to develop a donor-

Matt:

Cultivation.

Kristina:

... cultivation. Yes. So now I've been in this role four years and it's interesting to really see. When I started, meeting a lot of the donors was a new experience for them, but now building those relationships, hopefully I can start to see larger and more transformational gifts for the program come in.

Sara:

What advice do you have for students who are considering a career path, maybe in fundraising, maybe in Spanish, maybe in theater. What advice would you give to students knowing what you know now?

Kristina:

Okay. So this may be controversial, but I will say embrace the core curriculum because I being a freshman and sophomore, I really wanted to dive into my major so I put off a few core classes until my senior year. And I would suggest the opposite of that, really taking your core classes in freshman and sophomore year... I took art history in my second semester, senior year. And at that point I was really focused on applying to jobs. I didn't really focus on that class, but I think if I did take that class freshman year, I would have really enjoyed it first of all, I learned so much more.

Kristina:

And I think I would have maybe continued taking classes in that field. Now working with so many artists and also donors who are art collectors, I'm always grasping for knowledge and trying to learn as much as I can, but I wish I had taken that time freshman and sophomore year to take all the classes that were offered to me and-

Sara:

And build a foundation.

Kristina:

Yeah. To really build a foundation. I think we're so overwhelmed as a society right now. And I think those freshman and sophomore years is really a time to explore. When you go in as a freshman you shouldn't be expected to know exactly what you want to do in your career. And I think looking back, each year honed what I wanted to do on my career path, even more. So embrace the core curriculum.

Matt:

I love it.

Sara:

Fr. McShane would love to hear that.

Matt:

He would love it. Right? Do you find any time to perform still?

Kristina:

Yes. So when I was a sophomore at Fordham they were giving a free salsa class on Tuesday nights. I actually used to go from class to salsa class here to Rose Hill for choir. It was busy day, but I loved it. And I still from that first class take salsa classes and there's a thriving social community in New York city. And I have performed with a team, not so much right now, but I've enjoyed it.

Sara:

Great.

Matt:

I'll ask one other thing with that, do you think finding the chance to perform yourself informs your work supporting the arts?

Kristina:

Oh, totally. I think fundraising specifically for arts programs and working with artists, I can understand their process. So when they're describing an idea to me, I can understand where they're coming from and then use my knowledge to translate that into something the donor may understand.

Sara:

Great. Well, Kristina, thanks so much for coming in. This was really interesting.

Kristina:

Thank you. I've enjoyed my time.

Matt:

And that's another edition of Fordham Footsteps.

Sara:

Fordham footsteps is brought to you by the Fordham University Alumni Association.

Matt:

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