



Shaun Hoffman with Glasvegas on U2's 360 world tour stage at London's Wembley Stadium.



The Chance Worth Taking!

By Christina Young, Director of Alumni Relations

Inspirational speaker Harvey Mackay once said, “Life is too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so love the people who treat you right, forget about the ones who don’t, and believe that everything happens for a reason. If you get a chance, take it. If it changes your life, let it. Nobody said life would be easy, they just promised it would be worth it.” This alumni’s story speaks volumes about what taking one chance did for his life – he is living proof as to why it was worth it. Introducing **Shaun Hoffman ’02**.

The Franklin Pierce Days

Shaun grew up in Canton, Mass., and attended Canton High School (CHS). His connection to Franklin Pierce started while working in the CHS Theater Department in lighting, where he met **Bryan Perrault ’95** who worked on sound. When discussing Shaun’s options after graduating from high school, Bryan encouraged Shaun to apply to Franklin Pierce. A week after sending in his application, a postcard arrived asking Shaun to take his SATs. “The rest rolled like clockwork,” he says.

Shaun reflected on his first days on the Rindge campus. “All I knew of college life was what I had seen in the movies – which wasn’t much. I think what made me most nervous was that I didn’t know what it was going to be like or where I would end up – where I would fit.”

But find his fit he did – in the Theater Department and with the Basketball Team. Thanks to his favorite professors, Bob Lawson, Nancy Stone, Lee Dunholter, and Rich Silvestro in the Theater Department, Shaun’s love of behind the scenes work was put to good use at Franklin Pierce. Shaun came to theater as a “techie, not a performer,” says Prof. Lawson, “and that’s definitely on the rare side, because at that age, most come to the theater as performers. And Shaun wasn’t just a techie by default, but someone with a real passion for the tech side, from lighting to stage management. Shaun arrived here at the early stages, when we were getting really adventurous in the work we were making. I believe the first show he was involved with was *Poison Heart*, a very complex piece of theater in all ways, which he was involved with in multiple aspects.”

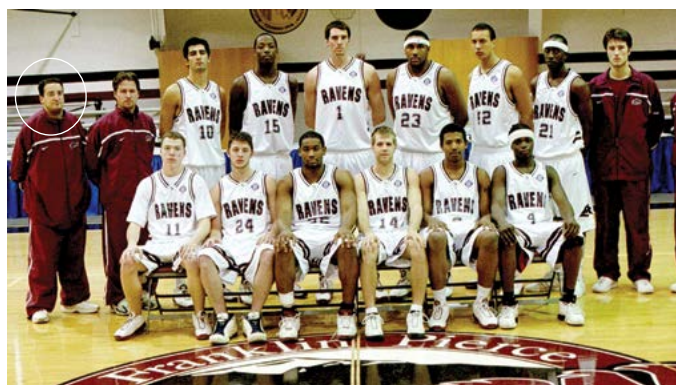
Poison Heart went on to a regional festival of the Kennedy Center/ American College Theater Festival (ACTF). “It was very much like taking a show on the road, necessitating alterations in the set, staging, lights – all of it – to accommodate a very different theater than the Warehouse,” Prof. Lawson said. Shaun was so successful with his work in the Theater

Department that they sent him to one of the ACTF regional festivals to stage manage 10-minute play projects “which, again, demanded a lot of creative thinking on your feet in a tight time frame,” according to Prof. Lawson.

Professor Nancy Stone remembers Shaun being a student with many interests, and as one of the students who liked to stop in during office hours just to talk. “Most students come to office hours when they have a problem, and while Shaun did that too, mainly he just wanted to talk about the current production we were working on, or current events, his beloved grandmother, or shows he might have seen in New York,” she says fondly.

But theater was not the only love Shaun had while at Franklin Pierce. Shaun roomed with several basketball players over the years, including **Donald Edge '00**, **Donald Johnson '01**, the late **Kevin Scott '02**, **Voir-Yulo "VJ" Kwity '03**, **Mike Fortier '04**, and **Alfonzo Payne '02**. Alfonzo's first introduction to Shaun was as “Pizza Man” at the Franklin Pierce home games. “While I didn't know him personally during the first few months, I was amazed at how full of energy and spirited this young man was,” Alfonzo said. “I mean, for anyone to run around the Fieldhouse in a full costume where there didn't appear to be a thermostat in the building was pretty amazing. After meeting him personally and later becoming roommates, I found Shaun to be very much like a brother, companion, and someone I could confide in and lean on at any time.”

His second family quickly made the court Shaun's second home. Coach David Chadbourne said the infamous Pizza Man title started off as a kind of manager/circus attraction. “He would dress up in a mask and cape and run around at halftime giving away pieces of pizza. The crowd loved Pizza Man. Then he grew into a more serious manager who did a ton of things behind the scenes to help the team.” Shaun was the go-to guy for anything from arranging meals, setting up hotels for film sessions, running the video, or handling the book.



Shaun made such a significant impression on **Bruce Kirsh '71** that he said he was the best manager the program had ever seen. In 1999, and again in 2000, Shaun was awarded the Fred Berger Scholarship, which is given to a student who manages an intercollegiate team and is in good academic standing. Shaun also helped out with Spring Weekend each year, loading bands in and out and helping with band selection. “Shaun was fully committed to bringing great live music to campus,” said Scott Ansevin-Allen, assistant dean of Student Involvement. “He was consistently involved from promotion to set-up to event support to breakdown.” Shaun's time at Franklin Pierce was preparing him for what his future would hold, but he had no idea of this at the time.

The Chance Taken

After graduation, Shaun moved to Boston and worked as a waiter at Whiskey's and was then promoted to a manager, managing 45-50 people at a time. During that same period of time, he began to work with a New York City rock band called Semi Precious Weapons (SPW), booking their shows for them every two months. Shaun traveled back and forth from Boston to New York just to be a part of it all. “I knew it was worth it because I believed in them, and honestly, I had more fun doing that than anything else,” Shaun says. After two months, Shaun decided to move to New York for SPW and began waiting tables at Planet Hollywood in Times Square.

SPW – comprised of Berklee College of Music graduates Justin Tranter, Cole Whittle, Dan Crean, and Aaron Lee Tasjan – was signed in 2008 by Razor & Tie, who re-released their album “We Love You.” The band became increasingly successful and was eventually asked to go on tour with Lady Gaga. At that point, Shaun began working with a band called Glasvegas, a Scottish indie rock band from Glasgow, which had received critical acclaim for their platinum selling debut album. Shaun drum teched and assisted them for only \$50 a day. “I can remember back in school when there were days the phone would get shut off because I couldn't pay my bill, so any money was good money,” Shaun confesses. Little did he know what his future had in store for him!

In June 2012, Glasvegas was planning to go on tour at the Glastonbury Festival in England. Shaun knew he wanted to go, but the band did not have the budget to cover him. It was then that he decided to “just do it.” Shaun booked a ticket and told the band he would work for free if they could find him a floor to sleep on. At the end of the first week of the tour, Shaun was having breakfast with the lead singer of Glasvegas, James Allan. Shaun explained how much he enjoyed the tour and that he was working



Bruno Mars concert, June 2013. (Photos by Prof. Bob Lawson.)



for free because he believed in the band. James wound up hiring him for the whole summer.

When Shaun returned home from the summer tour, he went back to waiting tables at Planet Hollywood for eight months. Things were starting to look like they would never turn around again, when Shaun took a weekend off to celebrate his birthday. He and **Jimmie Hunt '04** were watching the U.S. World Cup, when SPW – who had since signed a major record deal with Interscope Records with Lady Gaga – texted Shaun to ask him to go with them on tour with Lady Gaga. “I can remember it like it was yesterday,” Shaun says. “I looked at Jimmie and asked him what I should do.” Jimmie said, “Shaun, you need to do this. You aren’t happy doing anything else.” Four hours later, Shaun called to accept the offer.

Shaun spent six months on the Monsterball Tour when he was approached by Lady Gaga’s tour manager. She knew of someone whose management team had an opening; that opening was for Bruno Mars. “I thought she was crazy,” Shaun confesses. “I had very little experience. I mean, I had just been waiting tables at Planet Hollywood!” But Shaun applied and had a ten-minute conversation with the manager, Brandon Creed, and Bruno’s tour manager at the time, Derek Brenner. And that’s when Shaun’s life changed – when all the pieces fell into the puzzle.

Shaun was hired as Bruno Mars’ tour manager. He started in January 2011, and it was anything but a slow start. Shaun’s first experience with television was for an appearance on the Ellen DeGeneres show that was quickly followed by the Grammy’s. “Bruno was just taking off at that point,” Shaun says. “We went from a travel crew of 12 people to 50 people, one bus to five trucks, and a six-piece band to a nine-piece band – in what felt like overnight.” Bruno’s career soared, with sales of 8 million albums and 58 million singles worldwide, and awards including a Grammy, an American Music Award, a Billboard Music Award, and a BRIT Award. As for Bruno’s feelings about

his tour manager, he jokes, “There are two types of men in the world, and Shaun Hoffman is neither one!”

A Life Changed

In a typical day, Shaun wakes up to a multitude of emails and confirms rooms for whatever hotel they will be in for the week. He checks on flights, ensures that everyone is awake, works on the sound check parties, sets up any ‘meet and greets,’ caters to the label people, secures any guest passes, and attends to all the other details for Bruno and his band. Then the show goes on, and Shaun arranges for the after party, club, or dinner for the group. “That’s your typical show day,” Shaun laughs.

What Shaun loves most about his job is that no two days are ever the same. “Whether it’s a private party, a new TV show, or a video shooting, you are always around new people,” Shaun says. Many days Shaun cannot believe that this is his life now. “How did this happen?” he asks himself. “So many times I could have made a slightly different decision – and my life would have been completely different.” His advice to the students at Franklin Pierce, both past and current, is to “always know that anything’s possible, and it’s what you make of it.”

Prof. Lawson summed up Franklin Pierce’s pride for Shaun’s success: “A lot of kids get involved in theater in high school – the number of people who go into it professionally is a scant percentage of those high schoolers. It takes a massive amount of passion, acquired and applied skill, a collaborative brain and personality, and the good luck that all of that can magnetize – all of which Shaun has, or he wouldn’t be doing what he’s doing today. I’m happy to have been there when he was starting out and to have been one of his mentors in that phase. He deserves an enormous round of applause.” Agreed! The Alumni Association at Franklin Pierce University is so proud to call Shaun part of the alumni family, and looks forward to following his amazing career.

