

With her sultry voice, eloquent phrasing, and smooth delivery, Dyana Williams, BA SCAT '97, sounds every bit like the broadcasting maven she is. Over the course of her 30-year career she has worn a variety of hats that include radio DJ, journalist, entertainment reporter, and TV producer. These days she is a Penn Valley, Pa.-based communications coach for performers and executives who are called upon to do interviews, and she is also the official voice of Philadelphia's WYBE-TV.

But it's the music that still drives her. Twelve years ago, she teamed up with Sheila Eldridge, a marketing and PR professional, to found an educational and cultural advocacy organization to perpetuate and promote black music and culture worldwide. That organization is the IAAAM, the International Association of African-American Music, which sponsors an industry awards event and black music month celebration each year in June. Their work has resulted in a Congressional resolution that recognizes the contributions of African-American music to global culture and to commerce. And, as a result, Eldridge and Williams were hosted by President and Mrs. Clinton at the White House. "I have traveled the globe and everywhere I go, I have heard the influence of African-American music and culture," says Williams. "The energy and rhythms have influenced so many artists in all musical genres: jazz, blues, R & B, gospel, soul, pop, everything."

Williams once aspired to be a jazz musician herself. Raised in Harlem, she was studying to be a flutist at City College of New York when she discovered CCNY's radio station. "I hadn't even known that we had a radio station, but I fell in love with it right away." Realizing she didn't have the talent to make it as a jazz musician, she dropped out of school after her freshman year to accept a job at WHUR-FM in Washington. The records, turntables, pace, and dynamics of the radio station cast a spell that she says "has me to this second."

"I was clear on what I wanted to do and where and how, but my mother, a college professor, was dismayed. This was the early '70s. There were hardly any women in radio, but I was very focused and made a list of my goals and pursued them with vigor and determination." And success. Williams worked as an on-air personality at radio stations in Washington (WHUR), New York (WBLS), and Philadelphia (WDAS).

By 1984, she was the mother of three children by record producer/songwriter Kenny Gamble, and after an amicable split, she registered for a full schedule of classes at Temple's Department of Radio, Television and Film. After her second semester, she dropped out; it would take ten more years and a meeting with Bill Cosby to fuel her return trip to the classroom.

She explains, "I took my son and his friend Jaleel White (of *Family Matters* fame) to see Bill Cosby when he was taping a show at WHYY. He started counseling the boys — as a dedicated educator does — and invited us to his home for breakfast. He told us, 'Success means nothing without an education. It's something that can never be taken away from you.' I absorbed that information and said to myself, 'I've got unfinished business.'" Williams returned to Temple and graduated cum laude in 1997. "What a blessing to have that experience, and to keep that promise to my mother that I would go back."

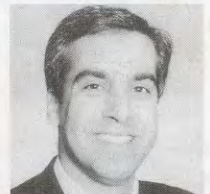
Williams uses Cosby's philosophy in administering an educational component of IAAAM. Called Literacy Lyric, it brings high-profile members of the music industry such as Sean "P. Diddy" Combs into the schools to teach children the importance of reading and writing.

Her current projects include the production of a TV documentary on Gamble and Huff's Sound of Philadelphia with WYBE-TV, and a joint project with *Essence* magazine that promotes empowerment in women's lives.

Williams could be considered a documentary on her own — a trail blazer for women in the entertainment industry and in life itself.

— Brenda Lange

SUSAN BELKIN



Brian M. Katz '92



Gregg Soffer '93



Dawn Vahcy '93