

**T**ony Phelan may live in the glittering hills of Los Angeles, but Cleveland holds a special place in the heart of this 1982 Heights High grad and Distinguished Hall of Fame member.

"Cleveland was the best place in the world to grow up," says Phelan, the executive producer of CBS's new legal drama *Doubt*. "From the museums to the orchestra, to Karamu House, the ballet, and the entire theater repertoire, there were so many incredible cultural resources. For a kid who was into the arts, it was perfect."

Phelan's schooling played a key role in shaping his career path, too. He started out in the original Fairfax Elementary School building, followed by seventh through ninth grades at University School, before insisting that his parents send him to Heights High.

He credits his brief time at US with helping him truly appreciate all that Heights Schools had to offer.

"From the top notch choir programs to the amazing classes and truly extraordinary teachers, I got something there that I couldn't have gotten anywhere else."

Phelan also credits the school's diversity with exposing him to valuable perspectives and ideas.

"There's such an advantage to being forced to get along with people from different backgrounds. To experience and expect classmates who don't look like you and who bring something different to the table."

His early experiences prepared him well for the life of a television writer and producer - where he needs both the confidence to use his voice and the ability to get along with all kinds of people.

After graduating from Yale with degrees in history and theater studies, Phelan started his career in theater in New York City, writing plays or directing his wife



Joan Rater (pictured above) in her one-woman show. After twelve years of traveling to regional theaters across the country and working multiple gigs to make ends meet in the big city, Phelan and Rater took their talents -- and their three-year-old son -- to Hollywood in 2010.

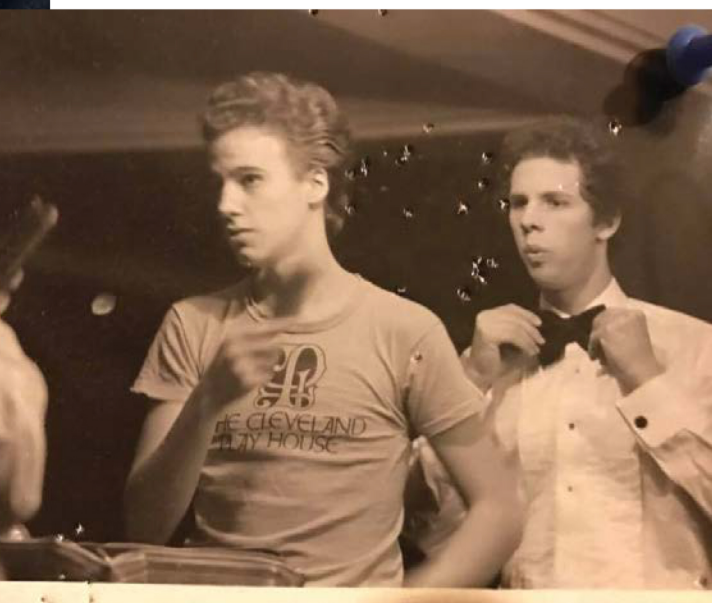
There they dove into screenwriting, working on nine different shows in their first five years. They eventually landed on *Grey's Anatomy*, writing for the award-winning medical drama for nine seasons. Both Phelan and his wife were nominated for Emmys and Writers' Guild of America Awards for their work writing, directing and producing the hit show.

Phelan's success in the entertainment industry is due in part to following what he loves. He believes that one of the hardest, but most important, things to do in life is identify that thing you're most passionate about. "Then commit to it and pursue it. But be open enough to accepting new opportunities and new ways to achieve those goals that you may never have considered."

He always thought he'd be an actor, having grown up performing at the Cleveland Playhouse's Youth Theater, Cain Park, Dobama and even on the soon-to-be renovated stage at Heights High.

"Now I'm doing what I set out to do, but in a completely different way. Instead of performing on a theater stage, I get to be in dialogue with millions of people every single week."

That's a pretty big deal for this kid from the Heights. 🐾



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