

JODY KIELBASA

Born and raised in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Jody Kielbasa attended Rollins College on an academic scholarship and graduated with a B.A. in History. He went on to receive a B.F.A. in Theatre from Florida State University and an M.F.A. in acting from the F.S.U./Asolo Conservatory for Actor's Training in Sarasota, Florida. Jody spent 10 years in Los Angeles where he worked as a professional actor with a brief stint on a soap opera before founding the award-winning Tamarind theatre in Hollywood. While at the Tamarind, he produced over 100 plays working with a number of stage and screen artists including Sir George Neville, Charles Durning, Burt Reynolds, Charles Nelson Reilly, George Furth and Paige O'Hara.

Jody returned to Sarasota in 1995 working for a time as the director of development at the F.S.U./Asolo Conservatory before serving as Managing Director and then Producing Artistic Director of American Stage in St. Petersburg. In 1999, founding board members of the Sarasota Film Festival (SFF) recruited Mr. Kielbasa to helm the fledgling organization. In his ten years with the Festival, he guided its growth from a 3-day mini-festival to a 10-day event attracting some of the Industry's most celebrated films and film artists. Key to this growth was Mr. Kielbasa's ability to garner unprecedented financial support from local and regional corporate and individual sponsors.

In 2002, Mr. Kielbasa launched SFF's Outreach and Education program offering seminars, symposiums and specialized programming for children and families. This program was rewarded with grants from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Foundation in 2005 and 2007 along with a grant from the NEA recognizing it as one of the top programs in the country. In 2005, in a bold and innovative move, Kielbasa initiated a spectacular SFF charter cruise to Cannes: over 150 SFF board members and supporters chartered the Seabourn Legend to sail to the 2005 Cannes Film Festival. While in Cannes, SFF hosted multiple parties for industry at some of the most celebrated venues and managed to garner significant international press for his Festival. In 2008, the Sarasota Film Festival attracted patrons in record-breaking numbers: over 45,000 attended SFF's films, seminars and symposiums, special events and family programs. The 2008 Film Festival was proud to include among it's honorees Charlize Theron, Liv Ullman, Stanley Tucci, Ted Hope and Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. In short, Kielbasa directed the Festival to phenomenal growth and success in only ten short years, creating one of the preeminent regional festivals in the United States. This success was corroborated in an article in SCREEN INTERNATIONAL listing the Sarasota Film Festival as one of the Top Twenty Film Festivals in North America.

Kielbasa recently produced the independent film, *The Deal*, starring William H. Macy and Meg Ryan which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008.

In May of 2009, he was appointed to serve as Director of the Virginia Film Festival and in his first year guided the festival to record breaking attendance. The festival welcomed an array of high-profile special guests from either side of the camera, including actors Matthew Broderick and Cherry Jones, writer/director Alan Ball and Hollywood legend Norman Jewison. In addition, Kielbasa significantly expanded the festival's Outreach and Educational programs to include a community-wide family day event, student filmmaking initiatives including a digital media installation and more. The 2010 Virginia Film Festival broke all attendance and box office records. Currently teaching Arts Management for the University of Virginia, Jody lives in Charlottesville, Virginia with his wife, Helen, and his children Camille, Luke and Juliet.