



Gina Barboza, a Fall River native and Durfee grad, has spent decades building a career in filmmaking and production. PROVIDED BY GINA BARBOZA

Fall River native helps produce Tyler Perry movie

Audrey Cooney

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A Fall River native played a big role in producing Tyler Perry's newest movie, just the latest step in her journey from the city's projects to a movie career.

"I'm living proof that you can come from nothing," said Gina Barboza. "Being able to work with Mr. Perry was like one of those things that you dream about."

Barboza, who grew up on Fordney Street in Fall River and graduated from B.M.C. Durfee High School, has spent years building a career in film production. She moved to Los Angeles in the 1990s, where she worked at Turner Entertainment Networks in roles

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that included director of music licensing and development and director of production.

She now lives in Atlanta and operates her own entertainment company, Balancing Acts Entertainment, which is currently producing a feature-length documentary centered on her family's experiences with mental illness and addiction. After years spent working as an executive in the TV and film industry, she said, she's now more interested in directing and writing.

"I wrote three feature films over COVID," she said.

While in the process of pitching her own scripts, Barboza got back in contact with a woman she knew in her early days in LA, who has since become president of production and development for Tyler Perry Studios.

"She said, 'I know you're trying to pitch your own movie, but I think you're ready to run your own big film,'" Barboza said. "She sent me the script. I'm not gonna lie, I cried."

Perry's "A Jazzman's Blues" was released on Netflix last month. The drama centers on the story of a young Black couple whose lives are deeply impacted by racism in rural Georgia in the 1940s.

Barboza said she still remembers the feeling of sitting with Perry for a table-read of the script.

"I just never thought in a million years from where I came from and how I started that I would ever be in that room," she said.

What a production supervisor does

Barboza was the movie's production supervisor. With just a handful of people in the chain of command between her and Perry, she worked with the heads of each on-set department to make sure production went smoothly. Her jobs encompassed everything between coordinating with different unions representing the workers involved and making sure everyone was paid properly, to wrangling up chickens on a day's notice for a scene set on a farm.

"If they have any issues, my job is to resolve them. Every single person on the team," she said. "From 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., your phone is ringing."

Now that "A Jazzman's Blues" is completed, Barboza is focused on her own projects, and on finishing her bachelor's degree in film from Georgia State University.

She said that, while she hasn't lived in Fall River in years, she keeps lessons she learned growing up in the city close to her heart. She still remembers hours spent at Durfee, where former English teacher Michael Vieira encouraged her to pursue writing, and at the Boys & Girls Club.

"I used to be in there reading and escaping to places I couldn't see myself. I think that's where I got my love of writing," she said. "I still always consider my city the place that raised me."

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