

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Theater Producer Andrew Alexander Reflects on 50 Years of Success

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From the outside, producing comedy seems like it would be an easy job. Comedic actors make people laugh for a living. However, that is only what the audience can see. What they usually do not see is the hard work, multiple rejections, and the feeling of wanting to give up that often takes place behind the scenes. This is something that Andrew Alexander knows all too well.

Andrew Alexander retired from his role as CEO, executive producer, and co-owner of The Second City in March 2021. He had served the world-renowned comedy club based in Chicago for 48 years and now works on freelance assignments. He did not start out being in the position to launch the careers of people like Andrea Martin, Gilda Radner, and Steve Carell. The path was long and full of plenty of bumps along the way.

The Early Adult Life of Andrew Alexander

People might assume that Alexander always knew he wanted to go into comedy. He did spend nearly a half-century making people laugh, after all. The reality is that he did not quite know what he wanted to do with his life after attending Ryerson College in Toronto and Tri-State College in Indiana. Like many young adults, Alexander held a series of jobs while in the process of discovering his niche. Here are just a few of them:

- Cab driver
- Magazine editor
- Tree salesman
- Waiter

For as varied as each of these jobs were, they all contributed to Andrew Alexander finding his way and discovering that comedy was his passion a short time later. As he tells it, he did not find comedy. Comedy found him, and they made a perfect match.

That Night Andrew Alexander Went to an Improv Comedy Show

It was the early 1970s when Alexander and some friends decided to attend an improv comedy show in Chicago one night. At this point in his life, he felt no more passionate about making people laugh than he did about selling trees. That changed when he sat in the audience and felt an almost instant connection with the art form of sketch comedy and improv..

Alexander knew that anyone could tell the occasional funny joke, but improv comedy was something different. The people standing on stage making him laugh had perfected things like comedic timing, delivery, character development matched with smart relevant writing. His thrill of the show was life-changing, something that was a new experience for him at the time. Although he did not realize it yet, his career in comedy started that very night.

Resilience is an Important Virtue

One of the most practical pieces of advice Alexander has for young comedians is to expect rejection. In fact, most comedic actors face more rejection than success. Building a sense of comedic style takes time, and not everything coming out of a future comedian's mouth will be funny.

An important thing for anyone seeking a career in comedy to keep in mind is that they will meet plenty of people who just do not get them. The sooner comedians can come to terms with the fact they are not for everyone, the sooner they can master the ability to let rejection and criticism roll off their backs. If a career in comedy is meant to be, they will eventually find audiences who understand and appreciate their work.

For [Andrew Alexander](#), the above advice only tells half the story. People also need to be willing to accept feedback and apply anything that could be helpful. Even when the feedback turns out not to be helpful, comedic actors should thank the person who offered it and at least consider what they have to say. When one person provides constructive criticism, comedians can write it off as just their opinion. When 10 people say the same thing, it is time to stand up and take notice.

Andrew Alexander's Comedy Career Took Years to Develop

Working in comedy was the career that Alexander never knew he wanted. After he discovered his passion in the audience of a Chicago improv club, he headed back to Toronto to produce comedy theater shows. The shows were an instant success, just as if the universe were sending Andrew Alexander more confirmation that he was on the right track. He was instrumental in ushering a new style of comedy into Canada and the United States in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Even as he was busy creating his own comedy shows, Andrew Alexander connected with performers who would later go on to make people laugh on comedy stages across the world. They also became well-known television and film stars, but they were obscure at the time, just as Alexander started out to be. He later had the opportunity and honor to contribute to their career trajectory.

From Toronto Back to Chicago

Thanks to his instant success in Toronto as a theater producer, Andrew Alexander had the confidence to take his work back to [Chicago where his love of comedy began](#). He played a critical role in Chicago becoming a comedy hub in the United States and across the world. In later years, new comedians saw it as a rite of passage to start their career on a stage in Chicago.

Alexander's opportunities to expand comedy grew right along with his name recognition. After focusing exclusively on building his career in Chicago for a few years, he decided to divide his time between the Windy City and the Entertainment Capital of the World. This would be none other than Los Angeles, California. He developed content for television shows, rubbing shoulders

with some of the leading names in the entertainment industry. ABC, CBS, NBC, HBO, Disney, and Showtime were just some of the networks that accepted his scripts.

The Influence of Andrew Alexander Goes Far Beyond the World of Comedy

Comedy is not the only thing that Alexander developed a passion for as an adult. He also seeks to support other performers in work and in life. The understanding that devastating things can happen to anyone was the motivation for him to start the Alumni Fund for actors and comedians going through economic hardship or a health crisis.

[Andrew Alexander](#) also derives personal satisfaction by knowing that his nearly 50 years in comedy have brought joy to people during some of their greatest personal challenges. Now that he has retired and has time to work on some of his own projects, his fans from around the world anxiously wait to see what he will release next.

Photo by [Paolo Chiabrando](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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