

A Love of Animation Led Ramapo Alumna to California and a Successful Career in the Industry

Like millions of young people, Annie Arjarasumpun '15 has fond memories of watching animated films as a kid. So, her career choice seems like a natural fit.

*Arjarasumpun, a River Edge, N.J., native, majored in Communication Arts: Digital Filmmaking at Ramapo College and has carved a career in animation as a project-based contractor writing for some of the biggest studios in the industry. Currently she is a script coordinator for a DreamWorks Animation project and just wrapped up several projects for Netflix Animation Studios, including the family series *City of Ghosts* and kid-friendly film *Back to the Outback*.*

We caught up with Arjarasumpun from her California office.

What was the strong attraction to animation?

Some of my favorite childhood memories were watching animated films with my family. Animation is such a strong visual storytelling medium that it often breaks language barriers, making it even more enjoyable for multilingual families like mine. As an animation writer, my goal is to help create more fond memories like that for other families, too.

What does your position entail?

As an animation script coordinator, I'm responsible for all things related to writing scripts and recording voice over. As a script coordinator I'm a part of the writers' room, and take notes during writing meetings. As episodes and features evolve throughout production, I also make sure the scripts stay up to date and remain consistent with the produced project. Another aspect of my job includes making sure every line of dialogue is recorded with actors. Being a script coordinator has been a great way to learn how series and features are developed, and strengthen my own storytelling skills.

Tell us about some of the projects you worked on.

In 2019 when Netflix Animation was starting to build their studio, they reached out to me to work on *City of Ghosts* because I already had script coordinating experience at DreamWorks (*Trollhunters: Rise of the Titans*). In December 2021, I wrapped on a project that was being developed at Netflix Animation and am back with DreamWorks working on a to-be-announced series.

I finished working on *City of Ghosts* in 2020 and *Back to the Outback* in 2021 at Netflix Animation. Both are now available to stream on Netflix.

City of Ghosts is a mini-series that combines documentary and fictional storytelling. It follows a group of kids, the Ghost Club, as they embark on adventures all around Los Angeles and interview ghosts, solve problems and learn about their city's history.

Back to the Outback is a feature film. It's about a group of Australia's deadliest creatures who are tired of being locked in a reptile house where humans gawk at them like they're monsters, so they plot a daring escape from the zoo.

The project I'm currently working on at DreamWorks has not been announced yet, so I can't share any details on it yet.

How do you like being in California?

I moved to California a few years after graduation and enjoy living and working here. The weather is nice and being a part of the animation/art community here makes me happy. Working in animation has allowed me to work from home during the pandemic, so that's nice, too.

What was your experience at Ramapo like?

Attending Ramapo was a good experience. The campus is beautiful and I enjoyed the small class sizes. I also enjoyed being able to hone my filmmaking skills. My favorite part of attending Ramapo, though, was meeting great friends and my fiancé.

What advice would you give to current students looking to follow this career?

Some advice I would share:

- Pursue what makes you happy.
- Give yourself permission to be creative and initiate projects.
- Breaking into the TV/film industry requires a lot of effort with applying to gigs, putting yourself out there, and sharing your work with others.
- Continuing to get work is heavily referral based, so you'll be successful if you're great at your job, easy and fun to collaborate with, and someone who people would want to work with again.
- If you're interested in interning at an animation studio but you're not currently based in the studio's city, apply anyway. Most animation studios are still operating remotely and are willing to hire people from outside of state.