

**M**ARDER WAS RAISED IN CONWAY, MASSACHUSETTS, in a community that adhered to the teachings of philosopher and Russian-born mystic George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, who believed most people live in a state of waking sleep, unaware of their connectivity to everything around them. Finishing his formal education at The Putney School, a learning environment that “trusts people who want to be in that vulnerable landscape...where there’s a magic in the unexplorable” was a natural choice for a young man coming to terms with his artistic legacy (grandparents and parents are all artists) as well his own urge to push boundaries into the unknown.

As a filmmaker, Marder has garnered a reputation as a lone wolf, not beholden to the Hollywood Machine with its endless remakes, comic book movies, and sequels to franchises that long ago lost their luster. Instead, he heeds a voice “inside telling me to make films.” By listening to this voice, by allowing himself to live in a place of uncertainty, the Academy Award-nominated Marder connects with what most of us would call success by any measure—a roster of top filmmaking awards and a body of work that leapfrogs over obvious characters and clichéd plotlines. But don’t congratulate him. To Marder the pass/fail mentality stymies creativity and keeps people from risking breakthroughs leading to artistic truths that would otherwise remain hidden.

Marder and I spoke twice while he was with his youngest son in Arkansas. (Marder’s eldest son, Asa ’18, as well as his older sister, Gabrial, ’90, are also graduates of The Putney School.)



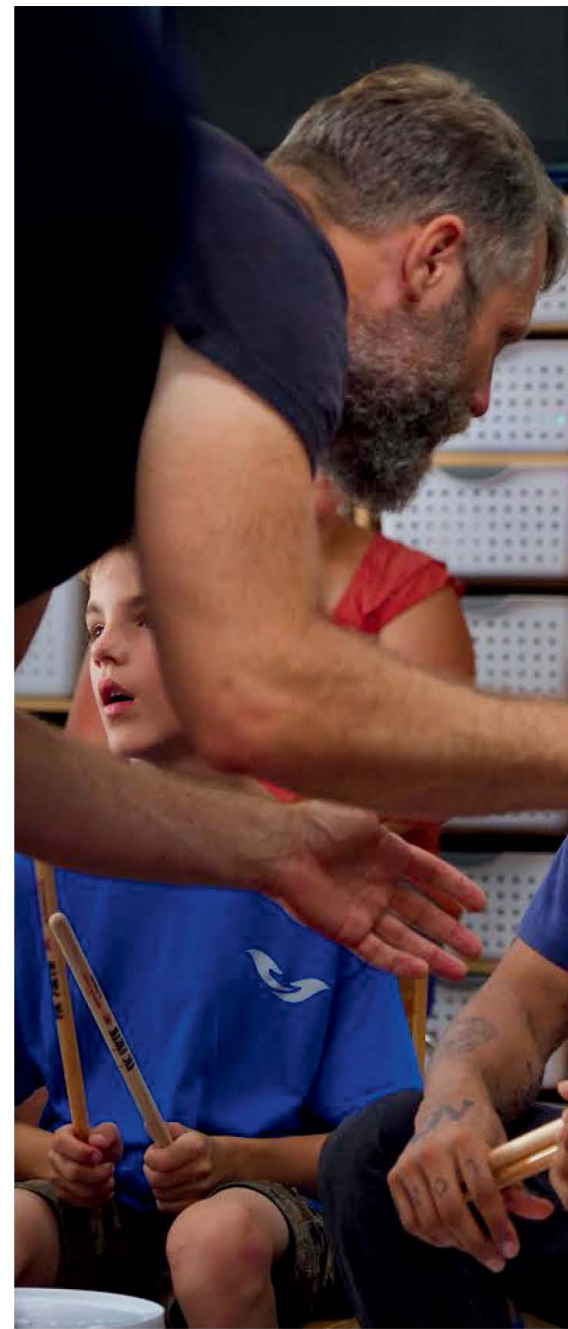
Darius working on set during filming of *Sound of Metal*.

**It’s ironic we’re handed this topic—learning from failure—as the world witnesses the failure of America’s efforts in Afghanistan, a disappointment many say could have been avoided had our leaders learned the lessons of Vietnam.**

When something goes terribly wrong, people seem to go one of two routes—they blame someone else, or less often, they admit failure. Assigning blame is a way for us to avoid being uncomfortable because being wrong is not allowed in our society. We do a Hester Prynne number [from *The Scarlet Letter*]; we cancel people who fail. Meanwhile, we’re fascinated by train wrecks; people get endorphins looking at other people’s failure when the only appropriate response is to accept that failure is the human condition. Or is there a third, and maybe more interesting route to take after something goes south? When you don’t look for someone to blame; when you’re willing to be in that space of discomfort, that’s where you find the greatest riches.

**Can security exist side-by-side with failure?**

The creative process is by definition insecure. You have to be able to live in a place of failure to find even a glimmer or glimpse of success. Success isn’t a product. It is a moment of creative truth. The actual



process of finding something creatively, something transcendent, does not come from a pre-scripted place—there’s never a destination. For me there’s an odd sort of security in trusting in this dichotomy.

**You chose a career in one of the most difficult industries in which to achieve success. There are a thousand pitfalls along the way to getting a film on screen. What keeps you going?**

My true north is connecting with something unifying and greater than myself. When I was 18, I was in a dark place, driving cross-country with no particular