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Monette McKay hones craft for stage and film

By Rita Charleston Tribune Correspondent



Monette McKay is making her Bucks County Playhouse debut in the ever-popular “42nd Street.” — submitted photo

“I’m a storyteller. I’m an entertainer, a singer and a dancer. But first and foremost I’m an actor.” So says Monette McKay, who is making her Bucks County Playhouse debut in the ever-popular “42nd Street.”

Singled out for her winning performance as Anytime Annie in a Wall Street Journal review, McKay has been singled out for her performances in other ways as well. Born in New York but raised in New Jersey, she began dance training at a very early age, capturing the New Jersey Paper Mill Playhouse’s Rising Star Award for her high school musical performances.

“The first musical I ever did in high school was 'The Wizard of Oz.' I played the Scarecrow and I loved every minute of it. So much so that I realized that's what I wanted to do for a lifetime,” says McKay.

Toward that end, the budding actress entered Wagner College in New York City as a theater and speech major. While there the accolades kept coming when McKay became an American College Theatre Festival Irene Ryan scholarship nominee for her work as Peggy Sawyer in “42nd Street.”

Because this is the second time she's appearing in the musical, she has become quite familiar with the story of the young girl from Allentown who goes to New York to seek her big break. “As Annie,” McKay explains, “I am the head dancer who is skeptical of this newcomer, feeling threatened by her. But eventually we become friends and I get to sing some great songs.”

Of course, she continues, “all of us who are hoping to make that big break in show business are familiar with this story. It's a tough business, but well worth it if you make it.”

McKay considers herself very lucky in that she got a role in the national touring company of “Mamma Mia!” not long after her college graduation. After about a year touring the country she landed her Broadway debut in the same show.

Later she went on to join the company of the Tony Award-winning musical “Memphis” on Broadway, and then swinging into Broadway's high-flying musical “Spider Man: Turn Off the Dark.” She recently completed a role in Broadway's “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.”

Bitten by the on-camera bug, McKay has also made appearances on TV and film in HBO's “The Night Of,” “Law and Order: Criminal Intent,” an upcoming indie film titled “Pimp” and more.

“I love making films,” she admits, “and I'd love to do more. Actually, I love all forms of entertainment and just wait for the opportunity to do much more.”

In addition to practicing her craft, McKay is the co-founder of New York's Artists of Color Collective, a team of artists and activists dedicated to preparing artists of color with the skills and mental fortitude necessary to succeed in a business from an artistic and personal perspective.

“There's a magic in this business and I hope many people get to experience it,” she concludes.