

Sydney Nicholson finds her true voice again as Aurora's Teen Idol



By Brock Weir

It's rare that Aurora's Sydney Nicholson has any doubts of where her ultimate goal lies.

The local student, who is preparing to enter Grade 10 this September, has been sure for many years that her dreams lay on the Broadway stage, but these dreams were put in doubt recently during an audition for YTV's *The Next Star*.

"I always used to think I could win a competition or get far in a competition by singing Broadway," she says. "After I auditioned for *The Next Star*, I just felt totally horrible about myself because I decided to sing Broadway and they completely shot me down. They told me I couldn't sing Broadway to win a competition and couldn't sing songs from musicals I liked if I wanted to make it in the business.

"This helped me realise I had to sing the songs I wanted to sing and make choices for myself. After being told by other people that maybe it wasn't a good idea because judges might not like Broadway, I started to believe them for a while. I started to believe that, hey, maybe it is just not for me, and just not the kind of thing I can do in competitions like this. I was on the verge of giving up, but I realised I had to stay true to what I loved to do."

Staying true to what she loved to do was ultimately the winning formula, as judges crowned Sydney the 2014 Aurora Teen Idol at Lambert Willson Park as one of the centrepieces of the Town's Canada Day Celebrations.

In fact, third time was the charm. Her first crack at Aurora Teen Idol was when she was a Grade 7 student at Hartman Public School. Several of her friends were auditioning and encouraged her to tag along. Already armed with a love of singing in front of people, she figured she would give this a shot, looking for any performing experience she could get.

Her winning song this year was "The Life of the Party", which was sung on Broadway in the show "The Wild Party" by her idol Idina Menzel, an actress to whom Sydney was first introduced through the Broadway smash "Wicked."

"I worship her and she is everything I aspire to be," says Sydney, noting other inspirations include Barbra Streisand, Sutton Foster, and Lea Michele. "I fell in love with the song and knew I wanted to perform it and decided it would be perfect for Teen Idol. A lot of songs from Broadway tell stories and you can't understand them [in context]. I felt this song was jazzier and you could really get into the song."

Over her previous auditions for Aurora Teen Idol, Sydney says she has felt herself grow as a performer, and has worked conscientiously on her stage presence and connecting with audiences. She describes her voice as "very theatrical" and leans towards songs that do tell that all-important story.

?When I was growing up, I always knew I wanted to be a singer, without a doubt, and then when I started to get into Broadway, I started to get into dance lessons, but now I am starting to get into acting. I was recently in a production of Marquee Theatrical Productions, which was my first real production I did and this year I am going to do a production of Into The Woods with Broadway North Youth Theatre. At my school [Alexander Mackenzie High School's arts program] we're also doing a production of Anything Goes, so I am just waiting to see what happens.?

What is going to happen over the course of her 12 month reign as Aurora's Teen Idol is a round of many of Aurora's events ? including Concerts in the Park, which starts this week, and continues at Town Park every Wednesday at 7 p.m. throughout the summer ? and probably singing O Canada more times than she ever thought possible. Looking ahead, she's prepared to relish every moment and opportunity that comes her way.

?I am just looking forward to being able to perform most of all because I just love to do what I do best and sing,? she says. ?I am really excited for the next year. It is so amazing to be able to follow your dreams and Aurora has given me so many opportunities to do that I never thought possible. I have the time of my life performing in Aurora.?