

Actress looks on the 'Sunnyside' of life on City TV comedy



By Brock Weir

As a youngster, Patrice Goodman first stepped through the doors of Theatre Aurora, taking part in their youth theatre program.

Patrice, then a student at Regency Acres Public School, had moved to Aurora with her mother and sister just over a year before from Queensville and her mother was looking for a way for her 'big, fat show-off' daughter to flex her creative muscles.

It ultimately paid off and her local theatre experience set her on the path towards acting professionally, and now a starring role in 'Sunnyside', an acclaimed sketch-comedy show now airing Sunday nights on CITY TV.

'This show flexes a couple of other muscles, not just the sketch comedy chops,' says Ms. Goodman. 'We move really quickly when we're shooting and it is not uncommon for actors to have three character changes a day. It has definitely made me more disciplined in my approach to work and gotten me to hunker down and listen to any sort of kernel of information that is offered about the characters. [The writers] really welcome risk. They are not afraid of me bringing something new to the table.'

'On a show that has a bunch of improvisers, you don't improvise much, but you have a lot of fun with a character. It has made me more daring as an actor and has forced me to learn an entirely new genre and it has made me a better artist.'

Outside of local theatre, Ms. Goodman began developing her chops through the performing arts program offered by Unionville High School. A program which touches upon just about every facet of the industry, it was here she got her first taste of comedy through 'The Phantom of the Opry', a comedic take-off of you-know-what where Ms. Goodman played diva Carlotta Barracuda.

'I had so much fun with the character and I could make her as big as I wanted,' she recalls of the role which remains the firm favourite of her father. 'People were laughing so hard and were so into it. I thought, 'Oh, my God, yeah! This is definitely worth it.'

Overcoming a learning disability, it was on the stage where Ms. Goodman felt at home and able to give back. As her talent developed, she and friends founded their own theatre company where they put on a show every summer. By the end of her school

career, she was working a less-than-artistic job at the Body Shop where she was on the cusp of taking a year off to travel. But then she found a job in NOW Magazine for a children's theatre company, landing her first professional job in the process.

A casting director eventually came to see them, looking for talent for a CBC show intended to compete with Degrassi High. She caught the eye of one talent scout who encouraged her to get an agent. Persistence paid off and her first TV gig was not far behind.

Since then, her filmography has grown by leaps and bounds, eventually leading her to Sunnyside.

'I was just happy for the opportunity to audition, but I literally thought there was no way I would get in,' she says. 'When I walked into the room, I saw the cream of the crop of funny girls from across the country and thought there was no way this was available to me. I knew there were six spots available on the show, but comedy is an art and this wasn't my wheelhouse. But, I went in there, auditioned, they laughed, and they didn't have any notes. One of the producers asked me if I wanted to show them something else and I said, 'No, thank you. I want to leave you with that impression' and I walked out never expecting to get a call.'

But the phone rang and there has been no turning back.

'I think I was really lucky,' he says. 'When you get cast on a show as an ensemble, a lot of it is [asking] do you fit in with the ensemble that is already there? Are all the bases covered? There are a lot of talented women out there, but I feel like I lucked out. I am so happy for the challenge because it is so much fun.

'Everything that makes me an artist is needed in this work. We don't normally get to play 13 different characters, but that is what we get to do on this show. It reminds me of children's theatre.'

Sunnyside airs Sundays at 8 p.m.

on City.