

Aurora's Pereira wants to complete your movie experience



By Brock Weir

A love for the movies came to Aurora's Amanda Pereira from an early age ? and now she wants to share the movie experience with people from across Canada.

The York University Graduate is one of eight finalists in the nation-wide contest hosted by Cineplex Odeon to find three new hosts for their pre-show entertainment. It was an opportunity the aspiring actress just couldn't pass up when she heard about the contest through a Facebook group on casting calls.

While the opportunity to get out her video equipment and put her editing skills to the test for the first in what turned out to be a series of video auditions appealed to her creative side, there was more attracting her to the gig than a simple acting opportunity.

“The idea of being part of somebody's experience going to the movies was a huge appeal to me,” she says. “I thought it would be such an awesome, unique opportunity. It is a whole experience when you go to the movies with your friends, you go with your significant other, your family, or what have you. The thought that I could be a part of that is really, really cool.”

Pitching her degree in psychology as being an ideal asset if given the opportunity to interview some of her favourite stars like Lena Dunham or Mindy Kaling, she evidently had that certain something when judges whittled entries from across Canada down to the final eight.

“When I found out I had made the finals, I freaked out,” says Pereira with a laugh. “First I wondered how many people made it, because I didn't want to get too excited yet, and honestly, I was really excited to make another video!”

Unlike the first video where contestants were encouraged to take free creative rein on their project, the second installment was more structured. They were each given a script to perform before the camera. Amanda was given the challenge of reading a script recalling interviews with stars like Jennifer Lawrence, and mining for nuggets of wisdom in celebrity Twitter feeds, such the feed of Dwayne Johnson.

“The first video showed Cineplex why we would be good for this in our own world, but now they wanted to see what we would be like in their world,” she says. “That was really cool because clearly they saw something in me they were more interested in and it was another opportunity for me to show them I know I could do this and I want to do this.

“One of my goals was to make sure I was still showing myself, but also being host-appropriate. I wanted to make all my videos

show my personality and who I am. Strangers will be watching it who don't know me.?

While preparing her video, she learned that one of the pitfalls of being a host is, unusually enough, not to sound too ?hosty or predictable.? She agonized about whether she wanted to memorize the script, use a teleprompter app on her iPhone, and various other ways to get the job done. After reading the script over 100 times, she said she found she was able to strike that right balance between showing her professionalism and her personality.

It is hard to imagine this personality would not shine through in the end, as she has put it to good use in her daily life. While acting is a passion for Amanda Pereira, the York University graduate has put her psychology degree to good use, running York University's Psycho-Social Oncology Breast Cancer Support Study.

It is a service that helps young couples who have been diagnosed with breast cancer from across Canada.

She graduated from York in 2012 and while there she took every acting opportunity ? and every non-major acting class ? she could get her hands on. The result was numerous student and independent films, and a few TV appearances along the way.

?I was coexisting in two worlds,? she explains. ?Working with York, I had that amazing opportunity when I was graduating with the study and I was absolutely thrilled to do it, and it allows me to also go on auditions and maintain the unpredictable schedule an actor has.?

Looking back, Amanda thinks she was truly bitten by the acting bug when she was a young child. ?Friends? was her first obsession, watching episodes every morning and memorizing the dialogue. (?I was kind of a nerd,? she says.) Perhaps not surprisingly, she counts Lisa Kudrow's film ?Romy & Michelle's High School Reunion? as among her all-time favourites.

?I fell in love with acting, but it took me a long, long time to actually say out loud this is what I want to do,? she says. ?I didn't have the confidence and I was very nervous. It took me a long time to build up the guts to say, ?I am actually going to go for this, failure is not an option' and I was going forward.?

Her ultimate goal is to be able to write, produce, and star in her own film or TV show, not unlike her inspirations Dunham with HBO's ?Girls? and Kaling with ?The Office? and ?The Mindy Project.?

?I would love not to need a second job,? she says. ?[Dunham, Kaling] and Amy Poehler are absolutely fearless and they don't pride themselves on being women in comedy. They are just in comedy and I love that. They are fearless, strong, funny as hell, and they have their own voice and do what they want. I aspire to be that.?

To view Amanda's video and to cast your vote for her as Cineplex's next pre-show entertainment host, visit www.facebook.com/Cineplex and click on ?Casting Call? on the left side of the page. The three winners will be announced August 1.