

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREA REESE

Topic: [Acting](#)

Modelspring has now expanded its coverage to feature articles about the acting life and profession. Andrea Reese combines fashion and acting in her portrayal of Jackie O., in the new play, "Cirque Jacqueline." Andrea took time out of her busy rehearsal schedule for an exclusive Modelspring interview.

Andrea Reese comes from a family of actors and musicians, so it's no wonder she became an actress at an early age. She's appeared in plays in both New York and Washington D.C., and has been featured on television shows and film. A look-alike for Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Andrea became obsessed with the former first lady, and has penned a one-woman stage show called "[Cirque Jacqueline](#)", which is intended to take people behind the façade of the public Jackie the world came to admire and adore.

MS: When and how did you first get interested in acting?

AR: Both of my grandmothers were professional performers. One was an actress and the other was a concert pianist with her own radio show. Ever since I was five years old, I admired them and wanted to follow in their footsteps. When I saw "The Sound of Music" at the same age, I spent hours imitating Maria, running up and down the big hills in the park near my house and singing "The Hills are Alive".

MS: What were your original goals when you began?

AR: My original goal was to express myself in a colorful, creative way, and to feel what it would be like to be different characters. I had always been fascinated by human behavior, and the most interesting way to understand it was to slip right into the skin of other characters. I also always loved being in front of audiences.

MS: How did your fascination with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis start?

AR: When I was born, a nurse commented that I looked like Jackie O. as a baby, and throughout my childhood, people noticed the resemblance. Later, as a professional actress, I was cast as her in a few movies and plays. Slowly, over time, because of the resemblance, my fascination grew.

MS: What made you picture yourself as her?

AR: At first it was just the physical resemblance... Later as I researched her for roles, I discovered that I identified strongly with aspects of her personality, including her courage, vulnerability, mischievous sense of humor, love of the arts, passion for painting, and many other traits.

MS: Jackie's style made her a celebrity in the fashion world. How much did you have to learn about fashion and style to play her accurately?

AR: I have so many books and videos on Jackie, that just looking at the countless photos gave me a strong sense of her fashion style. She also had a distinct style of moving and speaking, which I learned by watching footage of her over and over again and speaking with people who knew her.

MS: How would you describe Jackie O's style?

AR: Elegant, high-fashion, conservative, Parisian, and incredibly expensive. Lots of stiff fabrics in solid colors.

MS: What do you think her style would be like today, if she were born decades later?

AR: I think she would still wear very expensive, French couture fashions. Perhaps the fabrics wouldn't be as stiff, and I'm pretty sure she wouldn't wear hats or white gloves any more, except for the most fancy occasions. I'm also sure she wouldn't have such stiff helmet-like hairstyles!

MS: Have you felt yourself losing part of yourself as you've morphed into her so often?

AR: No. I believe that we all have every trait inside of us, and that our life experience leads us to bring out certain traits and suppress others. To play Jackie, I bring out parts of myself that are already there, and suppress others. Also, I've learned from many years of acting to maintain a strong sense of my own personality so that I don't lose myself in characters. In fact, it's fun and refreshing to discover different parts of myself and play around with them for awhile.

MS: Aren't you afraid that you will be pigeonholed by the industry, and only be called for Jackie O. roles?

AR: No. I've already done enough other roles to show that Jackie O. isn't the only role I'm capable of. I have a great reel that shows me in three completely different roles: an abused housewife, a seductive Mafia wife, and an opera singer waltzing in Central Park.

MS: What is your funniest Jackie O story? Either about her, or about you as her character?

AR: I auditioned for the Broadway play about Jackie, and dressed the part. Without changing out of my costume, I took a cab home, and when I opened the door to exit the cab, a bike messenger came by too fast and flew over the door and into the street. He lay there for a minute or so, then slowly became conscious. I was leaning anxiously over him when he opened his eyes, so the first thing he saw was...Jackie O. Later it occurred to me that he might have thought he died. It must have been very eerie for him!

MS: How did you make the leap to writing about her?

AR: Jim Simpson, the Artistic Director of the Flea Theatre Company, suggested I write a one-woman show about Jackie O. I researched Jackie for 4 months, then wrote for 8 months. I developed the play during that time in an incredible writer's group.

MS: Where do you see your Jackie O. fascination leading to in the long run?

AR: I'd like an off-Broadway run of "Cirque Jacqueline." I have my eye on a few NY theaters and will keep sending them materials. I've always wanted to be on a talk show. Letterman would be my first choice!

MS: Do you see a time when you will just be tired of portraying her?

AR: I don't think so. The play is written in such a way that I can play her until I'm 99 years old, since it starts and ends on the last day of her life. Also, I want the play to keep evolving. Every time I look at the script, I get new ideas.

MS: What are your long term goals for Andrea Reese?

AR: I want to continue to perform challenging and varied roles for the rest of my life. My grandmother got her best roles when she was in her 70s and 80s. The more life experience I have, the deeper my acting gets. It's a constant growing experience.

MS: What advice do you have for beginning actors, especially those who are

trying to make the transition from modeling?

AR: Get the best training you can, right from the beginning. No matter how attractive you are, if you don't have solid training, you won't be able to sustain a career. If you're in NY, I recommend a brilliant teacher named Jim Bonney.

(www.jimbonneyacting.com). Also, be persistent. Learn about the business. Many actors don't learn the business end of things, and self-marketing is 90% of the game. Realize that when you don't get a role you audition for, it's simply because you didn't fit the casting director's idea for the part. Be gentle on yourself and take time to have fun. Focus on the process rather than getting obsessed with the final product. Always remember that there is nobody exactly like you and you have plenty to offer. And above all, keep connecting with the joy of performing and the incredible potential in this career to grow and learn. Be focused and courageous. Good luck!

You can contact Andrea at: andreareese@mindspring.com

COPYRIGHT 2002, modelspring.com