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## Molly Kruse: Into the Woods and On Her Way

By Lou Fancher



Molly Kruse as Cinderella in Into the Woods Photo  
Ben Krantz, Ben Krantz Studio

admits.

That is why her latest success, appearing as Cinderella in Diablo Theatre Company's Into the Woods, is sweet victory. "The audition was so calm," she says. "I felt safe to do my best work." It helped that she had played the same part years ago, and even had worked with Ryan Weible, the show's director.

Kruse speaks enthusiastically about the imaginative approach Weible has taken with the musical. The production, based on a book by Bruno Bettelheim, weaves familiar Grimm fairy tales into new patterns. "It's set in an orphanage," she says, "and you really see how children survive difficult circumstances by grabbing onto these stories."

Building an acting career requires a similar tenacity. Kruse relies on a matter-of-fact philosophy for surviving auditions: "It's important to learn early on that things are just out of your hands: it's totally out of your control." She's a marketing intern for Teatro ZinZanni in San Francisco, giving her a financial base and increasing her value to potential employers within the field. And her well-rounded California upbringing is still at play: she will spend the summer months abroad, in a work-exchange position with World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms.

When Into the Woods closes at the end of June, Kruse plans to study videos from the production. "I'll be looking at where I've improved and what I need to work on," she says. Her determination, temporarily shaken, has returned.

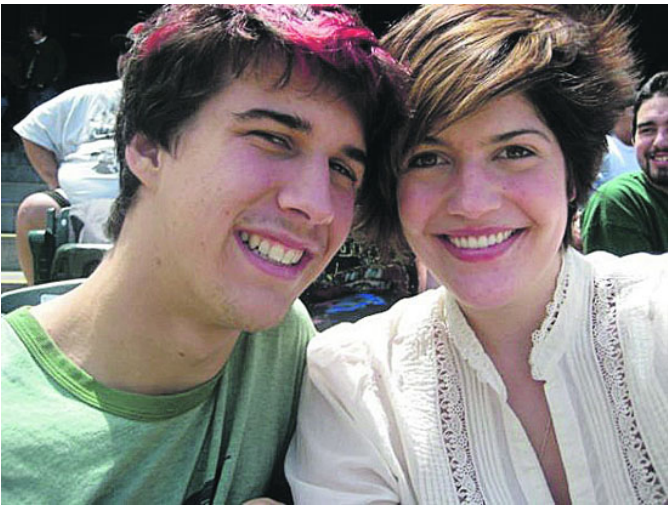
"My first memory was my mom's CD of Les Miserable. I listened to that constantly. In third grade, I'd lock myself in my room for 3 hours, playing it over and over. I knew that was what I wanted to do."

But first, despite her fierce desire, Molly Kruse lived the well-rounded life of a California kid. Growing up in Orinda, Kruse, now age 21, attended Sleepy Hollow, then Miramonte. Along the way, she participated in ACT's Young Conservatory school and took private voice lessons from Berkeley-based Betty Schneider, a well-respected instructor.

Landing the role of Emma Carew in Jekyll and Hyde during her high school sophomore year was pivotal. "I developed an unyielding passion for it," she says. The "it" was musical theater. The following summer, Kruse traveled to Carnegie Mellon for a pre-college intensive course, discovering a personal affinity for the program's Stanislavski-based method.

When it came time for college, Kruse wanted to land on one coast or the other. Instead, she wound up at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. An actor knows how to play any scene, and Kruse makes the best of this one, saying, "I got a well-rounded education and it made me a much smarter, more well-rounded actress." Unlike a BFA Musical Theater program, where students take only degree-specific courses, Indiana's BA program meant that astronomy, science, and "Finite Mathematics" classes (Kruse's least favorite) were also on her transcript.

Added to the stress of classes that left her flat, auditions left her out. "I was called back and called back, but I wasn't cast on the main stage," she says, "I was always told I was too tall." At 5'11", Kruse is tall, but the real blow of the feedback wasn't to her career (she knew lots of actors were equally tall,) the damage was to her long-ago determination. "I emerged from school not very confident," she



Molly Kruse with boyfriend Jon Jordan Photo Molly Kruse

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