



RANDOLPH COLLEGE

FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: EMMA BARTOLOMUCCI JANUARY 2020

How did you secure the contract performing with *An American in Paris*?

I finished a cruise contract with Norwegian Cruise Lines in the summer of 2017. 2016-2017 had been a year of performing contracts and travelling so I was happy to spend the next year at home working on my teaching, choreographing for Echo Productions with fellow alum Victoria Fuller ('10) and gaining ideas for my own company launch.

That year, I had noticed a decline in long-running musical theatre contract auditions in Toronto. I started to grow impatient (we dancers only have so many years to dance) so I decided to save all my money and take a trip to NYC. I enrolled myself in a six-week film course (in keeping up with the trends in Toronto, I had noticed that the film industry seemed to be really thriving) and set off to spend the next two months auditioning every day. In 55 days, I completed 34 audition calls, mostly for musical theatre and a couple repertory theatre calls. It was invigorating. To be in the room with some of the world's best talent made me hungry.

I had heard Arizona Broadway Theatre was holding auditions for their upcoming show of *An American in Paris*—the first non-Equity regional production. After researching the theatre and the artistic director Kurtis Overby, I realized that this was a show I'd really like to be a part of. The audition went well, the dance call was mostly ballet and I was asked to stay and sing. A few months later, after I returned to Toronto, I had received an email saying that I had booked the job. Amazing!

But now to sort out the work visa thing. This can be quite an overwhelming process. After doing extensive research, I found that the most direct way of getting a work visa would be to go through the Toronto Musician's Association and the American/Canadian Federation of Musicians. I filed for the p2 visa at a time when the Trump administration not only enacted a government shutdown, but also held really intense policies for foreign workers. Luckily, with the help of the strong Musician's Union, the p2 visa came in and I was able to cross the border.

This job wasn't handed to me. I had to fight for it and that is the perseverance that I am talking about. How bad do you want it?

Prior to *American in Paris*, you created your own contemporary dance work “Worldly Women”, now in *American in Paris* you are back in traditional musical theatre—is it difficult to switch mindsets from one to the other?

Yes, 100% it is a challenge to go from creator brain to performer brain. They require different skills. When I launched my company Dance Fachin, the freedom of expression was really limitless. Now rehearsing and performing *An American in Paris* I had to be conscientious of allowing someone to create their ideas on me. A totally different experience. I have always found that I thrive in a balance of both; spending half the year putting out my own ideas then switching over to being the muse. It makes for a really interesting year!

How has your training at Randolph helped in your career?

My training at Randolph was invaluable. Although I was so young when I attended, I was able to absorb a lot of the messages and training that the teachers impressed on us. For example, I never go onstage without completing a full voice and text and physical warm up. That was a huge takeaway from Randolph. I also found the scene study training to be really special and useful in creating backstories for characters. The dance classes were fire, the vocal tutorials extremely helpful. I also found that Randolph gave me the space to be creative and to hone my choreography skills. There was always opportunity for us to showcase other talents. I look back on the time fondly.

Is there a piece of advice from a Randolph faculty member that you've carried with you since graduating?

A piece of advice that I've held onto from a teacher was from dance faculty member Linda Garneau who told me once that technique is intelligence. I couldn't agree more.

What advice would you give to students auditioning this year?

Go for it. Own it, every time you get the chance to be onstage or in the audition room--don't let it pass you by. Perseverance is everything and I have found that this industry can be rewarding to those who "stick it out." Don't be afraid to be yourself, because directors and choreographers can sniff out phony behaviours and the last thing you'd want to come across as is desperate! Be respectful of those who have worked hard to be where they are and listen to their stories. Know your place and be YOU!

Where do you see yourself in five years?

The past decade has been spent travelling the globe performing different shows to a wide variety of audiences. It's been unreal. However, I hope that in five years, I'll be committed to one place, creating a style and a network with my dance company. I really want to push the boundaries within the Toronto dance scene.