

Interview with Caroline Garry, playwright, director, and performer with DSAMn's Advanced Acting Troupe

CG - Caroline Gary

LW - Lizz Windnagel

KB - Kit Brady (Caroline's mom)

LW: If you could describe your play in one word or a symbol or a color what would you choose?

CG: I think I like the color blue and in one word I might say the play is really amazing.

LW: Ok that's a short and simple one. My next question is, back last Summer when you started writing the play, do you remember what made you want to write the first scenes of the play? It was a while ago...

CG: It's hard to remember from all the years back. I don't know what the scene was but it is really fun to do and I'm glad that everyone's really getting into the scene of the scuba diver part cuz of when the scuba diver was looking for some stuff down there and playing around and seeing what works I think. Like being like a sassy mermaid saying "what are you doing?" and stuff.

LW: Nice, so you're answering some of my later questions already. So did you like rehearsing that scene with the scuba diver?

CG: Yes I do, it's really fun and I like what I did with Ann cuz I like how she brought it out and how she tricked me and stuff that was because I got used to it now because I never been tricked before.

LW: Oh ok so how did she trick you?

CG: When she asked me to help her to get up on shore because she wasn't breathing. She said "Come with me please" and I helped her get back on her boat and I thought "where am I?"

LW: Oh cool. So I feel like I hear you saying maybe that Ann's performance has helped you understand the Scuba diver character more?

CG: Something like that. Yeah

LW: Sorry if that was a lead question.

CG: That's ok.

LW: Do you feel like when you're watching an actor perform something tha you wrote, do you kind of feel like you're a part of that?

CG: Yes I do feel like I'm a part of it, yes.
I can definitely relate to what she's saying and stuff as well.

LW: yeah Ann's character she has a really personal journey. Was that inspired by your own life?

CG: A little bit, not all of it though.

LW: Nice. How do you feel like you're similar to Ann's character?

CG: The mermaid?

LW: Yes

CG: Well let's just say sometimes when I'm around people I get tongue-tied sometimes and sometimes my legs get the best of me sometimes.

KB: Your legs get the best of you?

CG: Um hello! In the past years when I was at school, it wasn't anything crazy but I lost balance of my legs and then I just fell.

LW: It makes sense mermaids not having the full use of their legs would bring up that memory for you

CG: Yeah a little bit it's like a muscle memory I get. Kind of like what happened when I was at school.

LW: Ok next question. What do you hope people in the audience will feel when they see the play you wrote?

CG: I bet they feel really surprised I think.

LW: What do you think is something that will surprise them?

CG: It would be the shark part I think.

LW: Totally that part's really fun.

CG: Really fun. I like the shark bit too. I like how Aaron brought the shark to life on his own. I like how he brings it out.

LW: Yeah Aaron's a really good actor. He has a lot of fun with the roles.

CG: Yes he does.

LW: Yeah. It's been a really good role for him I'm excited. Ok you kind of talked about this already but, what has it been like working with the actors and seeing them bring your words to life?

CG: I like how Sophia - how she says the word "boo" that part - it kept my attention I guess. I never knew a mom could be so funny.

LW: Mom's can be funny! Yeah she definitely took your words and played with them and made them her own character.

CG: Yeah I like how she always says "well well well".

LW: Yeah and did she write that line or did you write that line I can't remember

CG: I don't think I did I think you convinced me to write it down

LW: Oh right

CG: She brought it up because she said "well well well look what the cat dragged in!"

LW: I appreciate how flexible you've been with sometimes letting the actors add a line here and there. Even though you're the playwright.

CG: Of course

LW: Haha. Yeah it's a very nice thing to do.

CG: Yeah I'm not becoming a diva or anything.

LW: Yeah. That's good don't become a diva.

CG: (To Kit) Yeah you don't want to be the parent of a diva

KB: I don't want to be a parent of a diva.

LW: I feel like you've had a good balance as a playwright of having really strong ideas for what you want and then being open to what the actors are interested and that's always a hard balance.

CG: Yeah it is. Sometimes I like listening to the actors. I like what they mention about what to put into the play. Sometimes I like to give my mom a hard time with it.

KB: Give me a hard time with it?

CG: Like you know just trying to figure out how I can fix it with the actor's help sometimes. So I can really trust my actors and of course friends too.

LW: I'm sure they appreciate that a lot. Cuz I think sometimes when you're an actor you have ideas too and they don't always get to share them so it's nice to give them a little opportunity here and there. Ok, can you describe what your writing process was like?

CG: I think my writing process is really great imagination.

LW: It does take great imagination.

CG: Yeah cuz sometimes I think about how I see my world that I can definitely to see what the mermaid is looking at.

LW: So you're saying you take inspiration from your world and you add it to your story.

CG: Yeah

LW: Nice. And your mom helped you too a lot!

CG: Of course she helped a lot but I love my mom and all but you know how she and I get. She has great ideas. Someteimes I pretend like she's the audience like I pretend like she's not there and I say what's on my mind and put it right out mostly. And sometimes we act it out. But I think that's fun to do sometimes. But yeah I can do it with anyone of course.

LW: Yeah well your mom knows you so well. I was impressed when we were writing and you guys would act it out and it was almost like you were improvising together.

CG: Yeah I can see that.

LW: It's similar to what you would do if you're improvising in a rehearsal room but you're just doing it at the writing table which is cool.

CG: Really cool.

LW: I thought that was awesome. It's a cool way to write! It's like whatever comes to your mind you just put it out there. Ok so, you've dipped your toe a little bit into directing with me and Shelby on this project, what has that been like?

CG: I think with you and Shelby I feel more confident about the whole thing and I feel like I'm getting my voices heard and I feel really flexible no matter what you and Shelby give me to do for homework assignments for me and my mom to do and yeah.

LW: Nice. Have there been any moments in rehearsal that felt difficult or confusing?

CG: I would say a little difficult I think. For one of the scenes about when Shelby was talking about when Aaron and the mother are at the restaurant thing - that's where the difficulty part comes too. Between the mother or the server thing. Is he picking out a date or anything.

LW: Yes. Do you mean difficult like emotionally difficult or difficult trying to figure out what the scene means?

CG: Figure out what it means.

LW: Yeah cuz we were having this moment in rehearsal where she's like a server [the mother] but then all the sudden she's on a date. Yeah.

CG: haha

LW: Sometimes when you're writing you're like "This makes sense" and then you try it in the rehearsal room and you're like "hmm"

CG: It was her idea

LW: Oh don't blame it on your mom.

CG: I'm not blaming it on her I'm not but it was her idea to mention it though

KB: Well I don't remember what my idea was but I do remember we had a hard time figuring out what that scene was and where it belonged. I don't know that the scene is still the play is it?

LW: Yes it is

CG: And yeah we got a job for Sophia to be the server [in the scene]

KB: Oh good! I'm glad that worked out

CG: cuz it'll be really funny for that.

LW: Yeah cuz sometimes we're trying to see in rehearsal if there's a problem with the play we're like how can we make this into a joke and problem solve that way. But yeah it's a good question. And you also wrote your play in a really short amount of time. You both worked really hard.

CG: Yeah that's what it feels like

LW: Sometimes you're rushing and you're like ok here's the answer. Were you surprised by any of the characters that emerged in the play or did you have an idea of all the characters when you started writing?

CG: I was definitely surprised mostly because I like how what Ann says about loneliness about what she's working with and I'm glad I put that in so she can relate to it.

LW: Do you think loneliness is something that a lot of people can relate to?

CG: Yeah some people do yes. It depends on the difficulty in their family sometimes or anything of course.

LW: Yeah it's easy to feel lonely.

CG: Yeah or your friendship just goes away sometimes.

LW: Yeah Ann's character is feeling lonely because she doesn't know her mom which is kind of sad. I think it's something a lot of people can relate to and good plays often pick topics people can relate to.

CG: That's how I feel sometimes from my dad's mom I think. That's what I can relate to. Cuz did dad read the letter out loud from...

KB: Oh I don't know if he read all of it out loud.

CG: Well he did mention me in it

KB: Did he? I think what Caroline's referring to if you don't know is her dad's mom died about 5 years ago and his sister in the last few months gave him a letter that she had found from her mom to him and it was emotional for him to read it.

LW: Yeah totally. That makes sense that's hard. I feel like it comes up in our class and other classes I teach. People bring up losing their grandparents and it really sticks with people. I think in the Down syndrome community people feel that really deeply. Wow deep stuff. Kind of intense.

CG: Sorry I don't mean to be that intense

LW: No it's good! Theater people are intense it's ok. So maybe you answered this already but do you have a favorite part of the play so far?

CG: My favorite part is the shark part.

LW: Which part?

CG: My favorite part was - I like how he talks to Ann I think.

LW: What are his lines?

CG: The story of how he meets the mother.

LW: He's like "That story is hard for me to tell". Aaron's made the shark really sassy.

CG: Oh yeah I love that about him.

LW: He's so over the top I love it.

CG: he's very fun to watch.

LW: This one's kind of putting you on the spot. Do you have any ideas for future plays?

CG: I've got some ideas in mind. I'm thinking about how I can be more creative with it with my imagination and everything and yeah I'm getting some more ideas about it.

LW: Anything you'd like to share with the public?

CG: I was thinking like maybe about how to live in an apartment.

LW: Oh that's cool.

Kit: I think it's amazing that while she was writing this she moved from our house to her apartment and had this whole transition in her life.

LW: Yeah that's huge.

KB: Could be a source of future creativity.

LW: That's a really great idea. Cuz a lot of people with Down syndrome or other disabilities are really curious about what it's like to live on your own. So that would be a fun way for them to find out a little bit about it. I hope you work on that!

CG: I'm definitely gonna work on it

LW: Ok last question. Did you learn anything new about writing plays during this process?

CG: Well I might say. I learned a lot during the process because of my parents of course and their history of acting of course. They inspire me to write more plays sometimes and yeah they're like my heart and soul.

LW: Aww that's so sweet. Is there anything else you want to say about the play or anything people should know before they come see play?

CG: The play will be really fun and it's kind of like party in the USA.

LW: haha! What do you mean by party in the USA? I think I know what you mean...

CG: By party in the USA it's like are we having a beach bash or something.

LW: Because the play ends with this party on the beach scene.

CG: Yup

LW: And it's nice to leave the audience with a little

CG: more fun excitement

LW: Leave them in a good mood a happy ending. Anything else you want to share for the interview?

CG: What else should I put out there, mom?

Kit: What do you think about the directors?

CG: Oh that's a good one.

KB: Did the directors help bring your play to life? What would you say about Lizz and Shelby?

CG: About Lizz and Shelby. I think they're really helpful and thanks to you and Shelby, I feel more confident in the plays that I do. And you guys are inspirational, and I feel more flexible with my moods too and everything else.

LW: Theater is powerful!

CG: Yeah cuz I don't remember when I first started acting.

KB: It was a long time ago.

CG: I started acting at Lundstrum right?

KB: Yeah

LW: I should have asked more questions about that. So you started acting when you were a kid?

KB: Maybe she was 10 or 11

CG: We were doing some plays like Spamalot and Mary Poppins, Annie. I got all the inspiration from everyone around me.

LW: Oh now I'm thinking of all the fun questions. So what do you like to do when you're not at rehearsal or writing plays?

CG: Sometimes I watch tv, or stretching, or of course, cleaning my home.

KB: You enjoy doing that?

CG: Yes I've made it into a habit now. And hanging out with my boyfriend as well.

LW: Have to mention that!

KB: What do you guys do together?

CG: We play x-box. Sometimes he makes me dinner.

LW: Nice, that's great. Maybe he can inspire you to write more plays. I'm treating you like a playwriting machine sorry.

KB: Haha!

CG: I like that idea about hanging out with my boyfriend.

LW: oh yeah like a little romance?

CG: That's what I was thinking cuz I was kind of inspired by the play I'm doing.

LW: I bet your classmates would like that. They kind of eat up that romance stuff.