

Mamma Mia! in the Spotlight at ASU Gammage

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Mamma Mia! has taken center stage at ASU Gammage and we spoke with Alison Ewing who plays Mamma's friend Tanya. She gives us her take on the award-winning musical and a backstage glance at the show. Also get to know some of Mamma Mia's cast members in today's Daily 60!

Q. How did you come about getting the role of Tanya?

A. I went to the auditions seven years ago in Los Angeles, and they did the callbacks but I was too young for the part at first. They kept all my information for the second time around and I happened to be old enough at that point. It wasn't necessarily easy to get the part, but I'd say it was fate.

Q. Is it ever nerve-racking to perform in front of a huge live audience?

A. I do my best to prepare for my role to be comfortable in front of big audiences. When some of my friends and family come see me for the first time there's a little bit more of the nerves, but it's more excitement. When I was little, I was in piano and violin recitals, and I was more nervous for those, but performing on stage is more of excitement.

Q. Your character in the play gives a comic relief; do you find it fun to play such a funny and energetic character?

A. Well she's the complete opposite of me. She's vain and high maintenance... It's fun because she's really not me, so I have a good time doing it. She is silly and gets audiences to laugh. It's easy at this point to get into her character.

Q. Do you have any special rituals that you do, to gear yourself up before a performance?

A. Well usually shows start at 8 pm so at about 4 pm, I take a hot shower and do some voice warm-ups. An hour or so before the show, I do big vocal warm-ups and scales. During the day I go running or to the gym to warm up my body. It takes all day to slowly get up to speed. I've always done it and with long running shows, it's important to do it daily. The cycle and routine is necessary.

Q. In the play you sing a lot of the hit songs from ABBA, which song is your favorite to perform?

A. It's lesser known. It's called Chiquitita. It has a really good groove behind it and I love the backup vocals. It's really showy and really fun to do.

Q. What kind of training goes into perfecting all the dance moves that you do in the play?

A. I have a degree in musical theater so I have a background in a variety of dances. You need to be in good cardio shape and have a lot of endurance to be able to dance and use your voice at the same time.

Q. In the movie version of Mamma Mia! they never say who Sophie's real dad is, can the audience expect to find out in the play who her real father is.

A. I'm going to leave that up to audience. That would give away the end. But it is similar to the movie!

Q. Why should people come see Mamma Mia!?

A. It's fun. It's a great time and seeing it makes you feel really great. It's not a night to be in a bad mood because it will lift you right out of it. It's like getting away and going to the movies. Come and see us!

Q. What is the best part about getting to travel around the country and perform Mamma Mia!?

A. I love seeing cities and different people. We've been in Canada and Alaska and right now we're in Florida. I love seeing the kind of people on the east coast and the west coast...It's fascinating.