

Persistence lands actress first paycheck

BY JACKIE DEMALINE • JDEMALINE@ENQUIRER.COM • JANUARY 24, 2011

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Playhouse in the Park returns to 1950s Buffalo, N.Y., and the Padinski family for a second visit in the 1999 box-office hit and nostalgic comedy "Over the Tavern." Wise-cracking 12-year-old Rudy is at the center of the action, more interested in his Ed Sullivan impression than studying for his confirmation.

Meanwhile, older siblings Eddie and Annie are both fraught with guilt over their awakening sexual feelings, and cognitively disabled brother Georgie is learning bad words.

Katie McClellan, who grew up in Mount Washington and is a graduate of McNicholas High School (2005) is making her Playhouse - and her Equity - debut as Annie.

It was her dad, Michael McClellan, who pulled her into show biz when she was a high school freshman. "My dad was roped into directing McNick's musical, so he and my mom pretty much forced me to audition," she says.

McClellan thought musicals were "not cool" but couldn't say no to her dad. Turns out she had fun.

She was cast in the school play the next year (not by her dad), and her desire for an acting career was sparked.

McClellan has been living in New York since fall 2009 after she graduated from the conservatory program at the University of Miami in Florida.

There are few brick walls higher than the one facing a non-Equity, nonmusical actor in New York.

Fortunately, McClellan is plucky. She knew she wanted to work at her hometown theater "someday," found out the identity of the Playhouse casting director and signed up for a six-week workshop with him.

As a nonunion performer, McClellan shouldn't even have gotten an audition for "Tavern" but, she says modestly, "I got lucky."

And smart. When the audition notice went out, McClellan e-mailed the casting director and got a time slot. Talent took her the rest of the way.

McClellan says she has some things in common with her character. "I also have three brothers, grew up acting like the oldest (even though I was second) and went to Catholic school.

"At Annie's age in the play, I was a freshman at McNicholas, so I was definitely having similar feelings of awkwardness and being a fish out of water.

"I always felt the responsibility to be the peacekeeper in the house - another Annie-like quality - and to never be the one stirring up trouble. As siblings, we had our share of fights and moody years; but all in all, we are very close, and I feel blessed to have the family dynamic that we have."

Thanks to "Tavern," that brick wall has become climbable - McClellan will return to New York with an Equity card. Next goal: an agent.



Zoom

Provided

Katie McClellan, who grew up in Mount Washington and is a graduate of McNicholas High School (2005), is making her Playhouse - and her Equity - debut in the nostalgic comedy "Over the Tavern."

IF YOU GO

- What: "Over the Tavern"
- When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 4 and 8 p.m. Saturday, 2 and 7 p.m. Sunday; through Feb. 19.
- Where: Marx Theatre, Playhouse in the Park, Eden Park
- Tickets: \$25-\$64. 513-421-3888, 800-582-3208 and www.cincyplay.com.

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