

GEORGE XANTHIS

“Theatre vastly improves a person’s ability to “react” to the scene”

Hi George. Tell us about how you got involved with Bulldog Theatre’s Alex and Eve

It was actually quite random, it wasn’t planned and the opportunity fell into my lap. Alex is a teacher with a very close family friend of mine, Nick, and Nick had shown Alex my Showreel a few weeks prior. When Alex had the problem where one of his main actors was terribly ill, he went back to the video again and I guess he was impressed and asked for me to read for the roles of Chris and Mohomad. He saw I could do accents and voices and change characters easily. Alex invited me to his house one Saturday morning to read, he confirmed that he had seen other actors so I knew that I would have to impress from the first minute. He asked read a line for Chris, I said like 3 words in my school-kid accent and he said “Perfect, now Mohomad”, I did my best Lebanese nobleman accent, “Great, you got the job, can you start blocking for me today?” After this I met with the cast, who welcomed me with open arms, they were all great and made my experience amazing.

How did you find your first theatrical season?

I thought it went well, Alex told me I did very well, I’ve had people in the audience tell me I’ve done well, so overall I think it went pretty well! From a personal viewpoint, the first show was the hardest, because I have never performed for 400+ people before, but once you hear that first laugh...you get on a roll and there’s no looking back. Another major aspect which made it easier was the help Alex and the rest of the cast gave me. Their support gave me loads of confidence.

What did you learn from performing in front of 400 people every night?

I’m a student of NIDA, so I’ve learnt about acting theory and techniques. From a technical perspective, I learnt that theatre vastly improves a person’s ability to “react” to the scene. Performing in front of 400 people means you get instant feedback, and you have no time to stop and think about every scene. Everything is real. Sure, theatre requires you to be “louder” and “more



over the top”, but there are no breaks and no times to think about what you have planned. Everything in there is “in the moment”, its “quick”, unlike say television and screen where the director says “cut” and you all need to stop and prepare again. Also, when 400 people are consistently laughing at everything you do, it does wonders for your confidence. As Chris, I got a laugh for everything, Alex told me the best ways to get laughs and I manufactured my own ways to inject comedy into my character.

You have done some film and tv. Which do you enjoy more? Screen Acting or Stage acting?

Well I’m only young, I can’t say my experiences of either are quite enough to give me a proper scope as to which is better. At the moment, doing Alex and Eve, my experiences of theatre have been the best. Working with this cast, working with these people, working in front of packed audiences, it’s been amazing. The screen stuff I’ve done with NIDA has been great, because seeing yourself back on a television is good for personal analysis, but I think it’s also harder to an extent. Like I said before, theatre is so quick, in the moment, I found it very easy to

react and be in the scenes because you have no time to think about it. In screen acting, it takes more time, and you need a LOT of preparation, which can be frustrating if you’re not “in the zone”. But I love films, and the sooner I get into film and screen acting the more I’ll be enjoying life.

What made you get into acting?

My brother and I watched movies and television when we were younger and for children, we knew A LOT when it came to films. We were probably the only two kids at ages 4 and 6 (my brother is 2 years older) who knew the Guest Stars that featured on Sesame Street. We knew Whoopi Goldberg, Robert Deniro, Robin Williams etc so from a young age I was obsessed with how actors did what they did, I was obsessed with their on screen presence, and I loved the idea of doing what they did. I’ve also been interested in entertaining people, making them laugh, making them feel certain emotions, since I was a kid.

Who are your influences?

Robert Deniro, some people say when my hair is messy it looks like Deniro from “Mean Streets”. I love his intensity, the ease at which he performs,

and his style. Joseph Gordon-Levitt is also a major inspiration of mine at the moment. For those who don’t know him he was recently in “500 Days of Summer” and is starring alongside Dicaprio in “Inception”. His acting style is what’s called “minimalist”; he can show you a thousand emotions without really changing anything at all. He’s going to be a massive star, he’s still only young. He has great versatility, and as an actor I would really love to mould my career around someone like him, someone who can do anything as opposed to sticking to one genre or brand of film. Robin Williams is similar, he is the only person I know of that can play Peter Pan, he can play a woman, an Alien, a crazy psychopath and he can be funny and serious in roles like Patch Adams, all of that and still he gets an Academy Award for best actor in Good Will Hunting. He’s probably, in my eyes, the most talented actor technically, he can do anything. Matt Damon is also a minimalist, and his acting style is one which is underrated but so effective.

How did you get into acting?

My best mate Vish is like my manager, and since we were kids in high school he’s been telling me to do acting because I could impersonate all the teachers and make everyone laugh. The teachers used to get me to go through all of my impersonations and they’d all laugh at how accurate I was. In Year 9 my school Newington College held a short film festival and we made a movie about a convenience store robbery. My mate Vish directed it. He told me I’d win the Best Actor Award in our inter-school competition, and I did. From there, I sort of thought that I had something which other people enjoyed, and from then I knew for sure that I wanted to make acting a big part of my life.

What are some of your other interests?

Football, football, football oh and football. I’m a nut when it comes to football (‘soccer’ not rugby), I’ve been playing since I could walk and I still play around 6 times a week, even with all these commitments. I’ve been support-

ing Liverpool since I was like 8 or 9, when it comes to Liverpool I am very dedicated. I love sports and exercise so I’m always doing something. I’m also interested in music, I play the piano a lot, and like a lot of guys my age I am heavily addicted to Playstation as well.

Favourite movie?

That’s hard! How long’s a piece of string? I love anything by Scorsese and anything by Hitchcock, my two favourite film-makers, so you can count those in my top movies any day. My favourite movies change as I watch some and leave others, some I come back to. At the moment, if I had to pick one, Jim Carey’s performance in The Truman Show was amazingly captivating, the concept of the film was amazing, and yeah over the past 4 weeks I’ve watched it around four or five times, so I’d say that The Truman Show is probably at the top for the moment. Rear Window I could also watch a million times, the Hitchcock film starring James Stewart and Grace Kelly.

Why do you think Alex and Eve has resonated with the community?

The way the story has been written, the amazing similarities it has with everyone’s day-to-day life, for example Alex’s parents – I think it’s safe to say everyone has parents or grandparents or aunties/uncles who are exactly like this! So everyone can relate to the humour, because it’s so real. Alongside that, it’s a captivating story with many messages, it’s not just a comedy; it’s a story about real issues which affect all of us in the community. Religion, culture, nationality, these are all things which were originally thought to be barriers in our society but Alex and Eve helps illuminate how these things are insignificant in life. People not only relate to the comedy, but they are enthralled by journey of these characters, and what connects them. People understand the issues happening in the story because in both the Greek and Lebanese community they can relate to it. It’s also educational, showing how both communities are not different at all. In that sense it presents us with a story that people want to listen to and want to be involved with.