The Revenge Of The Second Banana A Female Sidekick's Survival Guide

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Abstract
I returned to school to receive an MFA in Musical Theater for many reasons, but paramount was the need to further explore and develop my range as an actress. Throughout my career, I have played a variety of roles, but none as challenging or possibly as rewarding as the man-hungry secretary UCharlieV in James Valcq5s Zombies from the Beyond, produced by the Jester Theatre in Winter Garden, FL. Performing this role allowed me to achieve one of my objectives when entering the grad program at UCF: to transition from a classical ingénue or soubrette into a leading lady or character actress; making Zombies from the Beyond the perfect capstone to my graduate experience. During the 1950s, American cinema was filled with sci-fi movies such as Forbidden Planet, The Thing from Another World, and Invasion of the Body Snatchers. Each movie depicted an otherworldly creature as the villain (a metaphor for the relationship between the United States and the USSR) who had only one purpose: total domination. Zombies from the Beyond aptly reveals the absurdity of the hysteria and paranoia surrounding the Ucold warV and the Uspace raceV that dominated America in the 1950s. The play makes comic use of the Udouble-red agentV and presents the belief that the space race and cold war inevitably were tied together, while examining Russia5s dirty tactics in the struggle for power. In addition to the historical ramifications of Zombies from the Beyond, post WWII America saw an explosive growth in female empowerment. Through each female iv character5s thoughts and actions on stage, Valcq5s musical tackles the struggle many women faced between the new feminist ideals and old-fashioned morals. My character, Charlene UCharlieV Osmanski, is the iconic man-hungry, working girl with a big heart (aka UThe SidekickV). She is a woman very much caught between the traditional values of the 1950s and the progressive, more feminist attitudes starting to take hold in the country. After accepting the role in Zombies from the Beyond, I realized my responsibility was to breathe new life into the role of the comedic sidekick while remaining true to the original vision and traditions that had been set forth by such brave comic pioneers as Rose-Marie, Thelma Ritter, and Vivian Vance. Faced with this daunting task and the enormity of creating a role with such a prominent historical and societal lineage, I asked myself, UWhat does an actor need to know in order to become the perfect sidekick?V To answer this compelling question and to ensure I did not fail in my task, I researched actresses who play a similar archetype; studied the evolution of the female comedienne; examined the audience5s relationship to the sidekick; and discussed the character5s future as an integral force in contemporary theatre, all in a convenient survival guide. Ultimately, the evolution of the mainstream audience and their shifting requirements for entertainment impact the sidekick5s portrayal on stage; however, since post-modernistic audiences no longer need one definitive stereotype or archetypal character, the ideas I set forth are not finite or absolute in nature. Instead, they create a v basic foundation that serves as a guide for the actor when creating a similar character while ensuring the sidekick5s place as a relevant and sustainable character for generations to come.

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