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Exclusive: Chantelle Fraser Makes Her Off-Broadway Debut

The #BloodSweatHeels leading lady discusses the transition from reality TV to the stage.

by **Jordan Upmalis** August 4, 2015 • 9:01 AM ET



If **Chantelle Fraser** is still **adjusting to fame**, she better start working overtime. The ***Blood Sweat and Heels*** star has made the transition from reality TV to the stage, currently starring in an original production of *Georgia*, which debuted Off-Broadway last week. Chantelle plays the Jamaican mother of a woman who is raped during her first serious relationship. The play breaks down the subject through humor, and explores the various perspectives of the characters who are closest to the victim. We got a chance to catch up with the actress shortly after opening night to get some insight on her experience thus far.

How did you become involved in this production?

Chantelle Fraser: The producer Kevin Benoir invited me to read for role of the mother, which was really daunting because I have never been to an acting audition before.

Have you ever performed on stage before?

I haven't performed on stage since I was 16 years old. I was top of the class in Theatre Studies, though, and trained in the Stanislavski method of acting.

What was the transition like moving from reality TV to acting in a play?

It's very difficult actually. Everything is live when you do theatre, it takes a lot of skill to learn complex lines, speak in a foreign accent, and convey the emotions and idiosyncrasies of the character. There are no second chances or edits in theatre. It's very challenging — especially since it's been so many years since I've acted — but it's kind of like riding a bicycle; you never really lose the skill, and I'm so proud that I'm able to pull it off!

Tell me how you made the transformation into the character. Were there any real life experiences that influenced or helped you?

Coming from a Caribbean background played a pivotal role in getting the authenticity of the character. There are certain nuances that are very particular to people from the Caribbean and that's what I tried to convey in my character.

Did it help to grow up with Jamaican parents? How authentic was the portrayal of the Jamaican family dynamic?

My parents came to England at eight years old so they are very Anglicized, [which is] atypical of the stereotypical Jamaican parent. My great aunt and my grandmother were the inspiration for my character. My great Aunty May is a 94-year-old God-fearing Jamaican immigrant. She helped me get my Jamaican accent down pat! And I was so pleased when she gave me her stamp of approval, because the Jamaican accent is one of the hardest to master without sounding like a complete idiot!

Geneva was there on opening night. How was it having a *Blood Sweat and Heels* co-star there supporting you? Are any of the other women planning on coming to one of your shows?

I was so happy that *Geveva* came to my opening night, she is very supportive of me. It was very comforting to have her there, because I was terrified! *Mica* was in Aruba celebrating her birthday, but she is coming to the Manhattan opening on Tuesday.

Did any of them give you advice during the process?

Both *Mica* and *Geveva* were very helpful in calming my anxiety, telling me just to have fun with it. I practiced my lines with them both beforehand, and they both gave me the "thumbs up," which made me feel good.

What's next for you? Do you plan on continuing to act?

I have been asked to be in a film, another first for me. Right now, I am just enjoying these new experiences and seizing all opportunities that come my way.

Georgia plays through August 6 at Manhattan's 777 Theatre (777 8th Avenue).