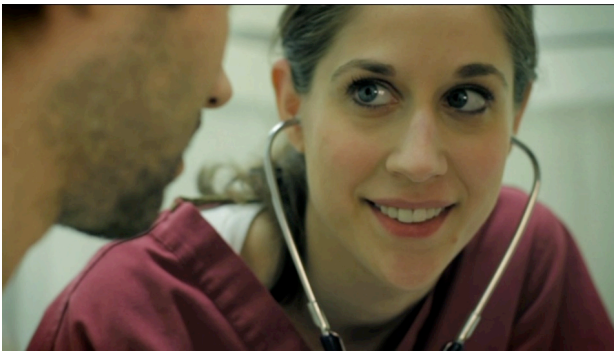


Curtain rising on Edison native's career in acting

Marissa Kelton co-stars in award-winning short film

BY KATHY CHANG Staff Writer



Marissa Kelton in a scene from the short film "Sleepers."

EDISON — Marissa Kelton knew by the time she was 12 years old what she wanted to do in life: become an actress.

"My sister and I would put on these little shows and act out the books we were reading," she said. "I also did ballet and danced in 'The Nutcracker' every year ...

I realized around sixth grade that I wasn't going to become a professional ballet dancer, I saw that my friends had stopped doing it, and I started participating in other things."

When she stopped doing ballet, Kelton found herself missing it.

"I think it was the part of being on stage," she said. "I might have not really realized what I wanted to do, but subconsciously I did."

Kelton, now 27, has been pursuing an acting career ever since. She graduated from the theater program at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa., with a concentration in theater and business.

"The weird thing is I didn't really get cast much in school," she said. "Also, at Edison High School, they just did musicals ... I don't sing."

This did not stop Kelton from pursuing her passion, and she has gone on audition after audition. Since college, she has been involved in commercials, short films and

some theater, playing a teacher, an actress, a wife who had been cheated on, and more.

“In school, they don’t really teach you how to market yourself. That’s where business has come in handy,” she said.

Last April, Kelton auditioned for the short film “Sleepers” in New York City and got the role as a nurse. Produced by I SAID CUT Productions, the film, shot in upstate New York, is about a dying Earth. Project Zero is placing Andrew (played by David Arkema) along with the rest of humanity into hibernation to prevent any further damage. For Andrew and nurse Jenny, played by Kelton, deciding how long to hibernate is about one thing: hope.

The film received the Silver Telly Award in June, selected out of 11,000 entries from around the world. A panel evaluated entries to recognize distinction in creative work. Entries do not compete against one another, but are judged against a high standard of merit. Less than 10 percent of entries are chosen as winners of the Silver Telly, the highest honor.

The Telly Awards joined forces with YouTube to give the public the power to view and rate videos submitted as part of the People’s Telly Awards. In addition to recognition from the Silver Telly Council, the judging panel that selects the Telly Awards winners, the Internet community helps decide the People’s Telly Awards winners.

Kelton said it was really exciting that the film received such an award.

“The film looks like a trailer for a movie,” she said with a smile. “I use a variety of casting websites, and they asked me to submit my résumé and headshot, and I happened to be selected for a read-through.”

Kelton said she found the script intriguing.

“You kind of had to accept the circumstances and put yourself in that place,” she said.

Linda Day, executive director of the Telly Awards, said the film illustrates the production company’s creativity, skill and dedication to the craft, and serves as a testament to great film and video production.

Kelton has recently produced and acted in her own short film, “Kissed by Inspiration,” a period piece set in the 1960s. It is scheduled to debut later this summer.

“This was filmed in Boston, and it was really fun,” she said. “Ever since I was a child, I have been obsessed with three decades — the 1940s to the 1960s,” she said. “I think it was because I love the outfits and it was a simpler time. I look at my mom’s [Evelyn] childhood growing up in Edison, and she got to run around.”

Kelton said being involved in the production of her own film was challenging.

“It is a lot of work with the preparation and completion,” she said. “But after it’s completed, it is totally yours ... it’s your baby.”

Kelton said she got plenty of experience in college with directing after having to complete a 10- to 15-minute play and direct and act in it.

“It was a directing class of 10 people and a lot of fun,” she said.

Kelton is also currently the production executive on Canton Theatrical’s “PLOP,” a full-length stage musical paying homage to a bygone era when boy bands and pop princesses ruled the world — the late 1990s.

“This is all original music [by Damon Intrabartolo] and different characters, but the project is inspired by that era,” she said. “Drew Lachey [a member of the boy band 98 degrees] has a role.”

The show will open in Orlando, Fla., where many of the famous boy and girl bands originated.

“It takes me back and I feel like a teenybopper again,” she said with a laugh.

Kelton is looking forward to her upcoming projects being completed. She is currently improving her skills in an improvisation class at The Barrow Group.

“I used to just say I just want to do film, but there are so many great TV shows out and I wouldn’t mind being involved in a show, as well as drama and comedy,” she said.

For more information about Kelton, visit www.marissakelton.com. The film “Sleepers” can be seen at www.vimeo.com/23525147.