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## Baby Steps to Stardom

Annika Merkel is having a moment. The 25-year-old redhead, who's jumped across the country to study the performing arts, is moving from background player in TV--to background player in movies.

After getting catching the theater bug in summer camp at age 5, Merkel went on to be her high school's drama club president, earned a bachelor's in acting at University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colo., and studied further at the New York Conservatory for the Dramatic Arts.

Refreshed after working at the summer camp she attended in Alaska, Merkel sat down in for coffee in the section of Queens commonly referred to as "Actoria" to chat about her career.

*What was your first real role?*

AM: I played one of the stepsisters in "Rogers and Hammerstein's Cinderella," when I was 15.

*What did you do after high school?*

AM: I went and got a bachelor's in acting at University of Northern Colorado. They only take 20 kids.

It was cool to be surrounded by [acting]--it wasn't dorky like in high school.

*What parts did you play while there?*

AM: I did everything I wanted to do. I did Shakespeare, a period piece, a contemporary play, and a musical.

*So when did you make the jump to New York?*

AM: I moved out here in 2010, and got into the acting conservatory program.

*When did you start working in TV?*

AM: After I graduated; I did a show on Bio called “Celebrity Ghost Stories”...

*I love that show! I would almost pay for cable to watch that again. Whose ghost story were you in?*

AM: I got to be the ghost, it was in Phyllis Diller’s story. At the time it felt like “five years of acting school and I get to float through a wall?” But I also was really well-prepared from the NYCDA. When they said “go to mark 1, go to mark 2,” I knew exactly what they were talking about.

*What are you doing now?*

AM: I just did “Boardwalk Empire.” It was fun because it the last shoot of the season. I was like a kid at Disney.

That one’s fun--you just show up, you don’t have to bring anything, they do your hair and makeup. Everyone looks good, all dressed up.

*What do you have coming up?*

AM: I’m doing background in new Christopher Walken movie, playing Scrabble when a sprinkler goes off next to me. I have to get fit for it because SAG pays “wet pay.” They’re not allowed to get your personal clothes wet.

Sources:

Annika Merkel: 970-324-6250

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm4803327/>

<http://www.playbill.com/news/article/145554-Audra-McDonald-Justin-Guarini-Michael-Cerveris-Join-Drama-League-Celebration-of-Patti-LuPone>