

# PEACHCRAFT

## ACTORS STUDIO

### Article

#### Kennedy Returns to the Chatham Stage

As published in the Chatham Courier on September 22nd, 2005

By Max Pizarro

CHATHAM - To get a sense of the confidence that Kate Kennedy and Katherine Ng project into a room, you have to hear Kate Kennedy talk about former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

"You look at Powell," she says, sitting in her third story hardwood floor studio on Springfield Avenue in Summit. "He's one of the best public speakers in American politics."

She pauses to ask the listener if he agrees, at which point the listener is forced to bring up, for argument's sake, Powell's largely discredited presentation to the United Nations on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Kennedy hears out the point, and then passionately, unflinchingly dives into the breach.

"He needed us," she says, pointing to herself and Ng.

The cell phone rings and she's on the line with someone named Charlie Matthau, who, it turns out, is indeed the son of the late Oscar winning actor.

"Charlie and I are collaborators," Kennedy says. "We've been working together since 1997."

This is the world of the newly opened actor's studio, PeachCraft, where Hollywood casting director and acting teacher Kennedy, a Chatham High School graduate, imparts the acting techniques of 20th Century actor/teacher Michael Chekhov.

Kennedy is the visionary and artistic force behind the two-pronged business. A 100-mile-an-hour fireball of emoting energy who tried to run away to Barnum and Bailey Circus when she was a little girl in Illinois, she divides her time between Chatham and Los Angeles. Her family owns the Parrott Mill Inn on Main Street in Chatham.

For Kennedy, the artistic impulse arrived early, stayed late and endures. "I was a fine arts major," she says. "My intention was to teach painting and sculpture." She performed Shakespeare for children in the San Francisco ghetto. She later broke into the movie business, casting numerous major motion pictures and several hundred Screen Actors Guild (SAG) commercials. She's worked with a hodgepodge of Hollywood talent - everyone from Meatloaf to Angelina Jolie, and she continues casting for feature films across the country.

That's Kennedy.

And then there is Ng, who herself could easily play the femme fatale in a movie directed by Robert Rodriguez, a raven-haired poet's delight. Raised in New York City, the Cornell University graduate with a Master's Degree handles the other side of PeachCraft, the corporate image development side.

Now every artistic endeavor that works its way into the public consciousness must have one leg in that irritable realm called the real world. It's a crushing newsflash to any idealist but each Don Quixote saddling up for the journey needs to have an alter ego who takes care of business.

Vincent and Theo.

Don Quixote had Sancho Panza.

Michaelangelo had Pope Julius 11th.

It would be tempting in this breath to say Kennedy has Ng, but it's not exactly accurate, for Ng does not merely act as chief financial officer here. With Kennedy, she fuses cognitive psychology with acting technique in the corporate-gearred classes she teaches at the PeachCraft Studio.

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