

Akron native back for 'Rock of Ages'



Kerry Clawson

Ameling, now of New York, to show dance skills in '80s-themed musical at Players Guild

The last 3½ years in New York have been good for Carly Ameling, and now the Akron native is ready to come back home to rock it as Sherrie in "Rock of Ages" at Players Guild of Canton.

Ameling, a 2014 Firestone High School graduate from the Akron School for the Arts dance program, said the role of Sherrie has been on her bucket list.

"She's a role that I've wanted to play for a very long time," said the actress, 23, who relates to the character's "small-town girl" journey. "Sherrie's journey is from being a young, naive girl from Paola, Texas, to moving to L.A. with dreams of becoming a star actress."

Ameling, who attended Kent State University for a year before transferring to the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York, graduated from the AMDA's integrated musical theater program in 2017. She started working soon afterward, playing Katrina Van Tassel in the new musical "Sleepy Hollow" for the New York New Works

Theatre Festival.

The actress said transitioning from her conservatory studies to the New York audition circuit wasn't difficult: Her last semester at AMDA, classes were in the evenings so students could make daytime auditions, which she did nearly daily.

Ameling also performed in the musicals "Frankenstein" and "It Came From Beyond" off-Broadway at St. Luke's Theatre last spring. And in June, she toured to Qatar with "Dora/Ice Age Singalong," in which she played the monkey Boots and saber-toothed tiger Diego.

"All the little kids would look at me like I was an alien because I have blond hair and blue eyes," said Ameling, who was thrilled to perform in the Middle East.

In New York, besides performing in shows, Ameling is a tour guide for "Gossip Girl" bus tours, a babysitter and a front desk employee at Broadway Dance Center, which allows her to take discounted dance classes to continue her training.

"I love it. It's home for sure," Ameling said of her immersion in the city.

She grew up performing in ETC show choir and in musicals throughout Northeast Ohio, including her first lead role as Gertrude McFuzz in "Seussical" at Weathervane Playhouse. Ameling, the daughter of Patricia and Stephen Ameling, who now live in Cuyahoga Falls, also trained at Martell School of



Ameling

Dance.

The actress, who previously performed at Players Guild as Cosette in "Les Miserables" and as Tinkerbell in "Shrek," said working with director Jonathan Tisevich was so rewarding, she reached out to him from New York about the paid role of Sherrie in "Rock of Ages," auditioning by video and also sending in a dance reel.

Also at the helm of the Players Guild show with Tisevich — who has performed in national tours ranging from "Rent" to "The Full Monty" — is choreographer Brandon Leffler, a Cleveland-area native who has performed on Broadway in "Wicked," "Cinderella" and "On the Town."

Ameling said experiencing Tisevich's energy as a director is a joy: "I think it's his belief in his cast ... His support, his encouragement is just something that we don't always get as young actors from directors."

Anyone who has seen "Rock of Ages" knows it's

Carly Ameling will play Sherrie in "Rock of Ages" at Players Guild of Canton starting Aug. 9.

a spoof of the wild, big-haired '80s on L.A.'s Sunset Strip, where sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll reigned. The show has some sexy dance requirements for Sherrie, who ends up working in a strip club after she loses her job at the Bourbon Room.

Ameling said her recent work in New York with the aerial hoop, or lyra, which circus artists perform on, has prepared her well for Sherrie's pole dancing in "Rock of Ages."

"It's so beneficial because I have a lot of upper body strength already," which is necessary for her to climb all the way up the pole before sliding and spinning on it, she said.

"Rock of Ages" opens Aug. 9 and runs through Sept. 1. For more information, see <https://www.playersguildtheatre.com>.

Dance Institute news

Kara Stewart is the new manager of the Dance Institute at the University of Akron's

School of Dance, Theatre and Arts Administration. She replaces the retiring Christina Foisie. Stewart is the fourth manager of the pre-professional dance school, where she trained under founding manager Gena Carroll.

"We are thrilled that Kara will be leading the Dance Institute," Marc Reed, director of the School of DTAA, said in a release. "She is a UA alumna who brings a wealth of real-world experience to this position."

Stewart, who performed with the Ohio Ballet, Feld Ballet N.Y., and the Washington Opera, earned bachelor of arts degrees in psychology and dance and a masters in arts administration from UA. She has been a visiting assistant professor there since 2013, teaching courses in ballet technique, dance education, history and nonprofit management.

In 2012, Stewart founded ArtSparks, a nonprofit organization that brings dance and music to nontraditional arts participants. Stewart said she looks forward to promoting the Dance Institute, the School of DTAA and Akron's National Center for Choreography, all housed at Guzzetta Hall, which she calls "the dance world's best kept secret."

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