

HOW CAN I RESIST YA?: PREPARING FOR *MAMMA MIA!*

By SARAH RUDINOFF

We asked Sarah Rudinoff, who plays Rosie, to share her thoughts on how she chooses and prepares for a role, and how she relates to *Mamma Mia!*

When our director Bill Berry called with an offer to play Rosie, he said Lisa Estridge was coming back to Seattle to do the show. I think I said yes right after he said Lisa's name. Lisa is one of the few people who truly makes me giggle with delight onstage and off. I met her doing *Smokey Joe's Café*, my first show at The 5th. Lisa lives in Chicago now and any chance to play with her is a treat. The part of Donna had not been cast yet but finding out later that Kendra Kassebaum was going to lead our trio was thrilling. Kendra elevates everything she is in and I was blown away by her recent performance in *Ragtime*. Killer cast—check!

Once I am signed on to a show, I start with the material. I read the script and for musicals, listen to the score. I try to find where my life intersects with the part so that I can dig into feelings I understand. For experiences that are beyond my own, I **read, listen** and **ask questions**.

READ

I read the script for *Mamma Mia!* and there was something very Greek about the book with its chorus and character archetypes. There are all these sets of threes in the play; the former girl group Donna and the Dynamos, the three possible fathers, Sophie and her two friends and her groom and his two buddies. All these trios come in and out of view, representing different dramas, different wants and desires. I also love that this musical focuses on the stories and voices of three middle aged women and what they want. A rare thing indeed! We need more of those stories on bigger stages. Diverse perspectives—check!

LISTEN

Full honesty... I have never seen *Mamma Mia!* and I didn't have strong opinions about ABBA's music. However, I have been to the land of ABBA. My oldest brother Chris has lived in Stockholm for 17 years. You can hear their music everywhere—yes, they play "Dancing Queen" in the subway in Sweden. If an entire country is obsessed, I know they must be on to something. I asked a few friends about the band and their music. (Stereotype alert!) My gay male friends who are my age and a little older have a very deep connection to ABBA. For them, the intersection of the 1970's gay rights movement and the sexual revolution that spawned the disco era forever linked ABBA to those new freedoms. Revolutionary, beloved music—check!



PHOTO BY MARK KITAOKA



"Once I ended up on a crosstown bus in Sweden that was one big ABBA Museum advertisement."

ASK QUESTIONS

In the end, I listened to the music and I found myself dancing around the room. That was all I needed to find the spirit for *Mamma Mia!* This year has at times felt divisive, disappointing and coarse. I gave myself permission to spend the winter on a Greek island looking for a playmate while singing in a sparkly jumpsuit with my friends. Check! Check! Check! I invite you all to join us!