

# Side Show

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Tell me about the beginning of Side Show? "It was a workshop last summer, commissioned by the Manhattan Theatre Club. And very different from what ended up on Broadway. Their mother abandoned them and this bar maid called "Auntie" became their surrogate

mother and got them into freak shows in the first place. "Auntie" hooked up with this Australian guy, Meyers. When the twins were 21 or 22, had five cents in their pockets, they basically sued to get out from under their managerial control. That's when they got into vaudeville. If they were going to be exploited at least they were the ones running the show."

Tell me about something that really bombed during rehearsal. "There was one picture where they were dancing on toe shoes. The director got this great idea for us to dance on toe. Thank God that never came about.

He wanted us to tap dance, and we actually attempted this in workshop. He wised up (she laughs)."

What was the hardest part about creating Daisy? "Doing that role eight times a week really was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. Going to that place every day does a number on you psychologically. I read an article in college about Glenda Jackson when she was doing Marat Sade on Broadway. After three months she had to quit because it began to be too much for her to deal with psychologically. Now I get it, I understand. I can't act that sort of pain. I have to really go there, and so does Alice."

Did you ever see their movies? If so, did that reflect in your choices? "In Freaks, they walk like a four-legged animal. They had a lope. I think our director was afraid that people would laugh if they discovered that is what fascinated people most. He kept saying you've gotta be graceful if you walk."

Has anyone who knew them tried to contact you? "There was one PR guy from Atlantic City who sent us black and white stills. We put them up in our dressing room. We got letters from people who knew them. They said they were very lady-like and nice, had a sense of humor, and that they were nice people. After vaudeville the twins ran a snack joint in Florida and they worked in a grocery store in Atlanta. The manager of the store would look out for them. He would get rid of reporters and others who were bothering them."

What about the Tonys? "We can't be nominated without the other. Our performances are a unified entity. I know it has a precedent, it has happened before. Sizwe Bansi [1975] had a double nomination. Two guys playing alter egos [John Kani and Winston Ntshoma won Best Actor Tonys]."

What was your favorite moment in the show? "'I Will Never Leave You'. This is the moment I most closely connected with Alice and it touches me the most. I love singing with Alice. And it's close to the end of the show."

What was it like to receive critical acclaim and not public? "We felt we got a lot of acceptance and love from people who came. I get stopped on the street and told how important the show was to them. That's pretty amazing. That's why I got into this. The reason we did not run was that we were not marketed correctly. The show about Siamese Twins is not really about twins, it is about being a human being, to have feelings about wanting to be loved and accepted for who you are inside."

When Side Show reopens, run do not walk to the box office. This indeed is a play about love and acceptance. Alice Ripley and Emily Skinner have created a true dynamic duo. It is something no one should miss.

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