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Chautauqua Theater Company Conservatory Actor Amara Granderson Looks Back on Chautauqua Bonds

by DUARD HEADLEY on AUGUST 16, 2019 • 1.45K VIEWS

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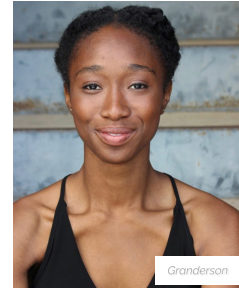
Who: Amara Granderson, CTC conservatory actor.

Granderson is preparing to finish off the summer season with her roles as Peggy Shippen-Arnold and Abraham Woodhull in CTC's final New Play Workshop show, *Agent 355*.

Throughout the summer, Granderson has tackled several other parts with CTC, including a dual role as a mischievous fairy and comical napkin-folder in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; a precocious pub proprietor in *One Man, Two Guvvners*; and a bevy of roles in the Young Playwrights Project early in the season.

But of all the things she's worked on this season, Granderson said her time working on *One Man, Two Guvvners* was the most fun and rewarding.

"I think a lot of my grad school training has been how to become a more serious actor and not be so — 'corny' is a bad word — but corny," Granderson said. "But with *One Man*, I've gotten to work that muscle that I'd forgotten about, and it's been so fun and rewarding to do."



Where she's from: Originally from Brooklyn, Granderson is now spending her time across the country at the University of California, San Diego.

When she was in third or fourth grade, Granderson saw, by chance, a play put on by an after-school theater class.

"I remember that being absolutely fascinating to me," Granderson said.

After her interest was piqued, Amara continued to see plays whenever she could. She picked up theater classes in the summer of her first year in middle school and continued performing throughout high school.

At Oberlin College in Ohio, theater wasn't one of her majors, but she was in a play every semester she was there. Eventually, she decided to go to graduate school at UC San Diego, to pursue her MFA in acting.

"A big part of deciding to go the grad-school route was because of a show I did out in Seattle, at the end of my junior year," Granderson said. "While it wasn't the first professional show I'd done, it was the first show where I was getting paid to do the work by people who weren't my friends and peers."

Favorite theater memory: "I have several, and I'll share one with you," Granderson said.

In August of 2009, Granderson saw the revival of *Hair* on Broadway. Granderson said it was an amazingly immersive performance, as cast members ran through the crowd and connected with the audience.

But the real engagement was still to come.

At the end of the show, the cast invited members of the audience to come onstage with them and sing "Let the Sunshine In" with them.

"It was really surreal," Granderson said. "I remember being up there, getting hugged by members of the cast, singing while the show was ending and just having a moment of just, 'Oh my goodness, this is what I want to do with my life!'"

Favorite food: "Oh. Oh no," Granderson said. "This is really hard."

After much deliberation, she landed on either shrimp or lasagna. And after even more deliberation, she remembered a specific lasagna that bumped the needle a bit in the pasta dish's favor.

"I can't have dairy or gluten," Granderson said. "But this summer, our neighbor across the street from us made us a dairy-free, gluten-free lasagna that tasted glutinous and full of dairy. It was maybe the best lasagna I've ever had in my life."

What she's watching: "Easy" on Netflix.

She appreciates the level of acting presented in the romantic comedy series.



"I think it's incredible," Granderson said. "You can really tell that, across the board, the actors have done their homework in terms of character preparation. I always want to tip my hat to people who do film well."

Favorite thing about Chautauqua: "First and foremost, the people that I've met," Granderson said.

She said the connections she has made with her housemates and fellow conservatory members have been the best part of the summer. While seeing her fellow actors leave the grounds one-by-one as the season winds down is sad, Granderson said, she's looking forward to staying in contact with them in the future.

Dream vacation: Granderson said she's torn.

"It would either be Trinidad, Panama and Jamaica in one trip to connect with the place my family is from, or Scotland, because I've been there twice and I absolutely loved it and would go back again in a heartbeat," Granderson said.

What's next: In the spirit of staying in contact with her CTC friends, Granderson said she'll be finishing off her last year at UC San Diego, inviting all of her Chautauqua friends to her showcase.

"That'll be really nice, because I don't think I'm ready to move away from these people quite yet," Granderson said.

After that, she plans to move back to New York City to live with her parents for the time being while pursuing work in theater on both the East and West Coasts.

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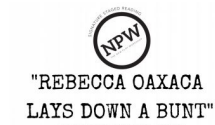
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THE AUTHOR DUARD HEADLEY

Duard Headley is from tiny Yellow Springs, Ohio, and studies journalism and American studies at Miami University in Ohio. Coming hot off the heels of performing in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream last summer, he is excited to cover theater at Chautauqua, merging his love for writing and theater into one experience. In his free time, he enjoys acting, reading, and staring wistfully into the distance as though he were deep in thought (he usually isn't).

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