

Yes, we Kenned!

 By Eugene Yiga

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Every career has its ups and downs, as has been the case for actress and singer, Lynelle Kenned.

After graduating Cum Laude from UCT Opera School in 2010, she auditioned for a few postgraduate programmes in London, but none of these were successful because she was too young and her voice was still developing.

"I had to learn to not take disappointment personally," she says. "If anything, I've learned that it's better to try to fail spectacularly than not try at all. I've learned to laugh at myself and stop trying to be a control freak and perfectionist. Keep working and puzzle pieces will fall into place by themselves."



Kenned ended up teaching singing in her home town of Paarl, which is where she auditioned for the Top Billing Presenter Search. She made it all the way to runner-up, but Jonathan Boynton-Lee walked away as the winner. Kenned then joined Pasella, Top Billing's sister show. And because Pasella is only on air for six months of the year, she can now juggle television and theatre.

"Sometimes when you don't get what you want it's just the universe's way of giving you what you need," she says. "What seemed like a failure then proved to be a blessing in disguise, guiding me to where I am today. I believe that when one door closes, another always opens, but you'll miss the opportunity if it finds you still staring at the door that closed."



Naturally competitive

As someone who considers herself naturally competitive, Kenned doesn't dwell on defeat too long. Instead, she aims to challenge and surprise herself by working even harder on the next project. More than that, being a freelancer with many fingers in many different pies has taught her to plan "like a beast".

"My most precious possession is my diary," she says. "If something hasn't been scheduled, it's not happening. While that doesn't leave much room for spontaneity and flexibility, I find I'm way more productive and balanced this way. I even schedule time for family and friends, as if it's a professional appointment."

Perhaps it's understandable. After all, she's performed the leading role in two big musicals - Orpheus in Africa and [West Side Story](#) - this year alone. She mentions the former as another of her career highlights and is a role she's looking forward to performing again.



"David Kramer wrote the role of Mattie Allen with me in mind, so the part was tailor-made for my voice, ranging from classical singing to gospel," says Kenned, who made her musical theatre debut in David Kramer's adaptation of *Blood Brothers* in 2013. "She was a fascinating woman with a fascinating story. She trained as an opera singer, but was teaching when she joined the Virginia Jubilee Singers to tour the world. Her transformation from nervous newcomer to blossoming into a confident woman in love was a dream to portray."

American accents

Kenned loves the production's music, the American accents, the costumes, the set, and the lighting design. She loves telling an incredible story about a group of extraordinary people during an exciting time of musical history. Most of all, she loves working with such a talented and amazing group of people.

"Together with David Kramer, we built the musical from the ground up - and every performer added their unique set of skills to their characters, making them flesh and blood people as opposed to roles being played," she says. "We're like a family, and with that magical chemistry I believe we created something special from a place of love that audiences felt when they came to see the show."

ABOUT EUGENE YIGA

Eugene graduated from the University of Cape Town with distinctions in financial accounting and classical piano. He then spent over two-and-a-half years working in branding and communications at two of South Africa's top market research companies. Eugene also spent over three-and-a-half years at an eLearning start-up, all while building his business as an award-winning writer. Visit www.eugeneyiga.com, follow @eugeneyiga on Twitter, or email hello@eugeneyiga.com to say, um, hello.

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