

# Singin' in the Rain: Q&A with Bethany Dickson

 By [Eugene Yiga](#)

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Bethany Dickson, lead actress of the musical Singin' in the Rain, chats about her performing career.

## ■ Could you tell us more about your background?

I reside in Hout Bay, Cape Town, although I grew up in Table View. I attended Table View Primary School and Table View High School and went on to study public relations for three years at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

## ■ How did you make the switch to performing?

I never considered studying anything to do with performing because I never thought my life would take this turn. I always loved the stage - singing, dancing, and everything theatrical - but tried to be wise and educate myself in something that might provide a little bit more stability for me in my life.



## ■ What inspired you to make the switch?

I've always been inspired to be on the stage, mainly because of my mum, aunt, grandfather and grandmother. I come from a theatrical/musical family. Music itself has always been a huge part of my life. As a toddler, I watched my mum on stage and was crawling around theatres and catching the bug that would infect me for years to come. I can't seem to escape the pull to be on stage. I've always adored performing. I don't think it's what I imagined myself doing. I seriously considered a career in PR and events management. I still have dreams outside of theatre; things I am hoping to give some of my life to.

## ■ What was it like when you first started working in the industry?

It blew my mind. I couldn't understand how I was getting paid to do something so awesome. High School Musical was my first professional gig and it was just the most awesome time for me. I also had both of my cousins involved in the contract, so for me it was kind of just the best thing ever.

## ■ How was it different to what you expected?

I realised very quickly that it was hard work. It's not the performing that's hard, it's the maintenance. Most people think about performing as if it's just this fun thing we are lucky to do. And it is. But the thing people seem to overlook is the 'eight shows a week' slog that it can sometimes be. To make sure each audience gets a great show, no matter how tired, sick, or sore you are. It's quite a mental thing.

■ ***What would someone find surprising about the work you do?***

That a lot of people aren't ritualistic. At the end of the day, it's a job. We come into work, we keep to ourselves, we warm up, we do our job, and we go home. A lot of people associate 'theatre' people with ritual and 'drama' and weird practice. But a lot of the time we are just boring people coming into work.



■ ***What's been the biggest setback of your career?***

I don't feel I have been in the industry long enough to have an answer for this. I wasn't able to do two productions that I would have loved to have done, but that was because I got married, but I don't see that as a setback. It was my decision and it was what I wanted more than anything in the world. I did take two years to settle down in my marriage and get my life together. I did take a small hiatus from theatre for this. My home and my family has always been number one in my life.

■ ***How did you bounce back from this?***

I got back into theatre after those two years just by auditioning and hoping I would land a role. It's just putting yourself out there and making sure you audition realistically I suppose. I only go for things that I believe I could do so as to not get disappointed.

■ ***What did the experience teach you?***

That theatre was my calling. That despite my small hiatus after Grease, I came back and was able to slip back in, which is not the case for many people. I was blessed in that the perfect roles came around at the perfect time too. Timing is everything.

■ ***What's been your greatest professional highlight and why?***

So far, my greatest highlight has been playing Maria in The Sound of Music. I mean, it doesn't get any better than that at my age. And also because my mum played Maria a couple of years back and I played one of the children. So for me it was an incredible journey stepping into my mum's shoes. We are incredibly close as it is, so to share in that experience and

have her rooting for me was just beyond special for us both.

■ ***What do you love most about being on the stage?***

I love bringing joy to people. To know I'm creating a memory for them. I often think during the day while I'm going about my daily routine: Who will be watching me tonight? And they're probably deciding what they're going to wear to the theatre. It's a whole event for them. I get to play a big role in that occasion. And that's pretty cool.

■ ***Could you tell us about your role in *Singing in the Rain*?***

I play the beautiful role of Kathy Selden. She is an aspiring actress, a real 'stage' actress who meets famous silent movie star actor Don Lockwood by chance and insults him by thinking he is a criminal. They end up embarking on an interesting journey, set in the silent film era, when the industry was making the transition into 'talking pictures'. She's a fantastic character; real, honest and truthful.

■ ***How do you relate to your character?***

I think the fact that she's chasing after her dream and isn't fazed by the bright lights of fame and fortune. She loves acting and wants to succeed and sees the positive in everything. I like to think I'm like that. I'm optimistic, even when some harsh realities stare me in the face.

■ ***How did you prepare for the role?***

A lot of physical training as this is an athletic show. So I had to get into decent shape to be able to perform this role. I also went through the usual rehearsal process which helps one get into the right head space.

■ ***What was it like to perform in Asia?***

I love Asia and I have done a lot of performing on that side of the world in the past few years. The audiences are so appreciate. It's special to feel so acknowledged.

■ ***Why should audiences see this musical?***

It's literally making 'splashes' all over the world. It was one of the best films ever, brought to life on stage. I think the fact that the spirit of the piece, in essence, is represented so beautifully and that is why it's been such a success. You can't replicate a movie like on stage just as it is. It has to be altered to translate on stage. And this piece does it perfectly. And to be in a theatre and experience that rain on stage - it's quite a spectacle. It's funny and light-hearted in its overall essence,

but it deals with a real topic in a time that was real for a lot of performers. So it has some historical value to it as well.

▣ ***What are the dream roles you'd like to play in the future?***

There are a few I have my sights set on. I would love to play Mrs Anna in *The King and I* (another role my mum played, as well as my grandmother). I would love to play Fantine in *Les Miserables*, and Glinda in *Wicked*. That's the bucket list right there.

▣ ***What are your plans for once the show's South African run ends?***

Well, I have my fingers in a few pies at the moment but nothing quite 100% confirmed. I am hoping to open a coffee shop sometime. That's always been a dream of mine. So maybe 2016 will be the year it happens.

*Singin' in the Rain* was at the Artscape Opera House in Cape Town from 11 December to 10 January and is at the Teatro at Montecasino in Joburg from 15 January to 13 March. Book at [Computicket](#).

## 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](http://www.eugeneyiga.com), follow @eugeneyiga on Twitter, or email [hello@eugeneyiga.com](mailto:hello@eugeneyiga.com) to say, um, hello.

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