

Edging Toward Stardom

Story by Kathy Love
Photos by Rob Hill

Lindsey Alley leaves behind G-rated Disney for R-rated funny in her one-woman off-Broadway show.

Beauty and talent do not ensure success in the world, as Lindsey Alley will tell you. She was a Mouseketeer on the Disney Channel's *New Mickey Mouse Club* with Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake. They are pop icons; Lindsey waits tables in New York.

"I admire what Britney does, I really do," says Lindsey at a fictional audition in her musical production *Look Ma ... No Ears!* (*A Show for One Woman and the Voices in Her Head*), which will debut in New York next

month. "But it's just not my style. I've always thought of my voice as more of a Broadway voice."

"This job pays \$10,000 a week," says the auditioner.

"Hit it!" Lindsey says, and proceeds to sing satirical lyrics and dance in Britney's bump-and-grind style to the demure tune of "Sixteen Going on Seventeen."

Whether the show will vault her to stardom remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: Lindsey Alley has an edge. "Edge,"

according to Webster's, can mean "advantage" or "daring and unconventional." Both definitions apply to Lindsey. Take this example from the show, where Lindsey re-enacts a conversation with her mom about its adult content:

Mom: I just don't want those people to think you've had sex.

Lindsey: Are you serious? I'm almost 30. I don't want them to think I haven't had sex!

Lindsey's most obvious edge is talent. She received her bachelor of arts degree in



Lindsey Alley shows off the many faces of funny during rehearsal for her one-woman show, *Look Ma ... No Ears!* It originated at MU as *Like It Is*, a play for three characters. Lindsey adapted it because, she says, "I realized it was much cheaper to play all the parts myself."

theater from Mizzou in 2000, but she has been performing since the age of 3 when she sang her way through a Christmas pageant in the role of Mary. "She didn't learn to walk or talk until she was 19 months old," says her mom, Marcia. "My mother-in-law told us she was either deaf or very slow. But once Lindsey started talking, she spoke in paragraphs and never shut up." (One suspects Lindsey gets her flair for drama from Marcia.)

Far from being stereotypical stage



At age 8, Lindsey starred in *Annie* with Burt Reynolds and Loni Anderson, right. Reynolds became Lindsey's friend and mentor.



Lindsey, right, kneeling, was 10 when she became a Mouseketeer on Disney's *New Mickey Mouse Club*.

parents, though, Marcia worked full time as a nurse, and Lindsey's father, Paul, was an undersheriff for Polk County, Fla. Marcia remembers the call she got from Lindsey in kindergarten. "There's going to be an audition for *The Sound of Music*." Lindsey said. "Can you take me?" She landed the role of Gretel before she was 6 years old.

At the age of 8, she starred in *Annie* at the Burt Reynolds Theater in Jupiter, Fla. Reynolds became Lindsey's friend and mentor. At the age of 10, she became a Mouseketeer in Disney's *New Mickey Mouse Club*. Then came roles in *B.L. Stryker*, *Roller Jam*, *Ernest Saves Christmas*, and other movies and TV shows.

When it came time to think about

college, Lindsey asked Reynolds for advice. "My mom and I took a bunch of college materials to his house, and we sat on the floor and looked them over." Several MU students had been apprentices at the Burt Reynolds Institute for Theatre Training. "Burt said the University of Missouri must be doing something right. I said, 'Where's Missouri?'"

"Once I got there, I met Jim Miller in the theater department. It was like a gravitational pull. I fell in love with the whole vibe there, and I got so much stage time," Lindsey says. She performed in 14 productions. A playwriting class taught by David Crespy inspired *Like It Is*, a play that is the

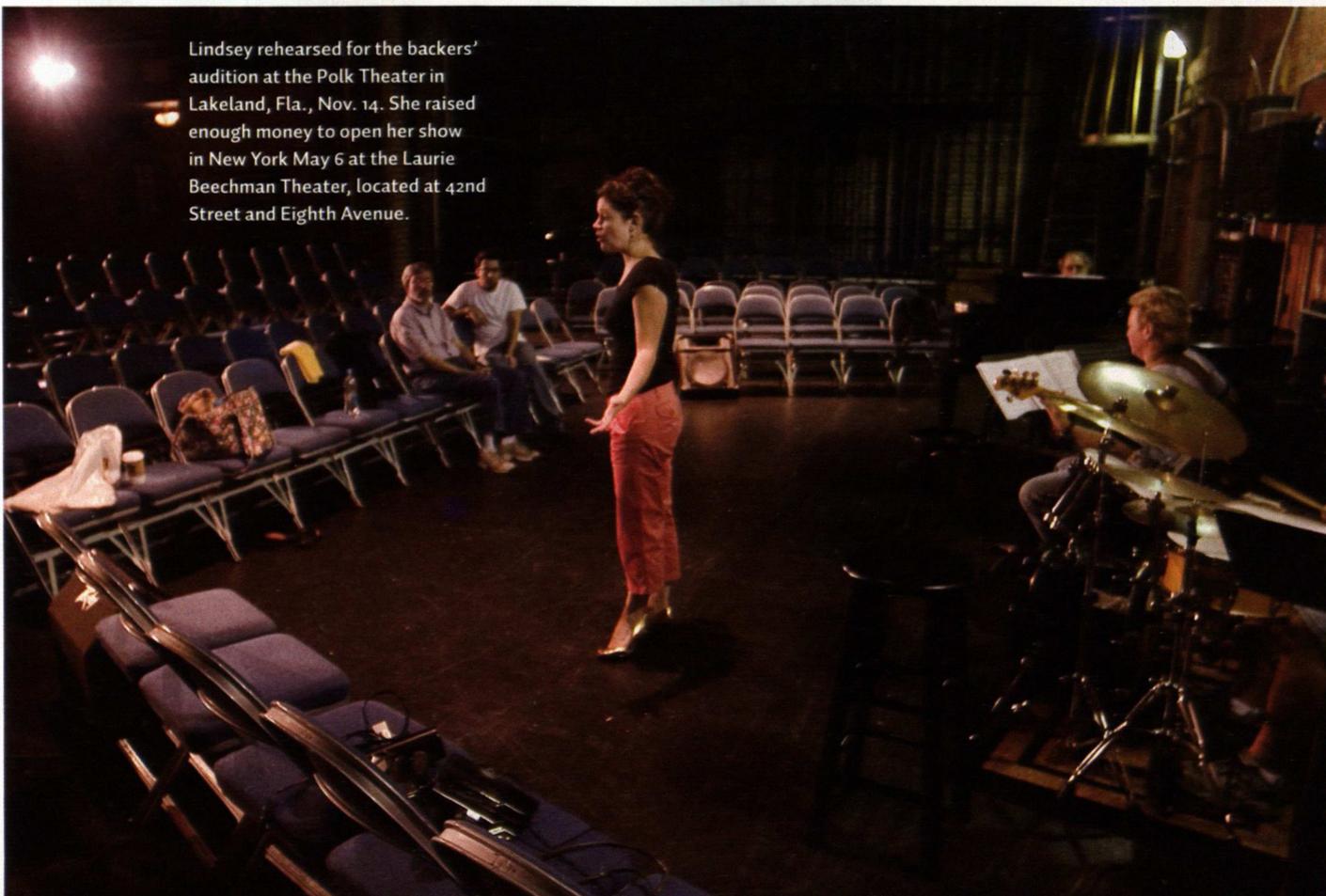
basis of her current show.

It was scheduled to be performed Sept. 15, 2001, at Mizzou on Broadway in New York. The production was canceled because of the calamity days before. In 2002, *Like It Is* opened at the York Theater on Broadway as part of the first Mizzou on Broadway showcase.

After graduation, Lindsey headed to New York like so many other aspiring actors and actresses. And, like them, she ended up waiting tables. She also met Bob Stein, a virtuoso musician and lyricist, whom she enlisted to help produce *Look Ma ... No Ears!* — a process that has taken five years.

"I finally just circled a date on the

Lindsey rehearsed for the backers' audition at the Polk Theater in Lakeland, Fla., Nov. 14. She raised enough money to open her show in New York May 6 at the Laurie Beechman Theater, located at 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue.





“I won’t have a love affair with Brad Pitt because the press would refer to us as ‘Brindsey.’” — Lindsey Alley, *Look Ma ... No Ears!*

calendar — Nov. 14, 2005

— and said, ‘We’re going to do it then,’” Lindsey says. The “it” was a backers’ audition, a pre-performance to raise money to mount a show in New York. “I’m almost 28. I didn’t want to be doing it with a walker,” Lindsey says. She raised enough money at the backers’ audition in her hometown of Lakeland, Fla., to pay for renting a theater and associated expenses for a spring run off-Broadway.

In November, family and friends crowded into the 135 chairs set on the stage for the backers’ audition. Many had known Lindsey all her life. If they expected a showcase of sweet sentimentality, they didn’t get it. Lindsey lived up to her daring and unconventional edge, but mostly she was just funny, as in this segment from her version of “The Impossible Dream.”

“Now just what is the impossible dream?” she asks. “Well, to me, the impossible dream is about succeeding in my chosen profession, show business. But not just to succeed — succeed without betraying my basic principles, or cutting my conscience to fit today’s fashions. Yes, I’ll be an incredibly rich, famous and beloved star, but I don’t want to lose my innate modesty.”

Her humor taps universal topics such as family, ambition and dating, with liberal doses of satire and sex. The audience at her backer’s audition reveled in it, but her mother wondered aloud if she could show her face at the supermarket the next day.

Stephen Winer, who co-wrote the show with Lindsey, says he first heard of her in New York. Disney producers were trying to lure him to Florida to write for the *New*

Lindsey started her career at age 3, progressing to dinner theater, Walt Disney’s *New Mickey Mouse Club*, and roles in movies and TV. Her content has matured along with her career because, as she sings in a refrain, “A nice girl’s just too easy to ignore.”

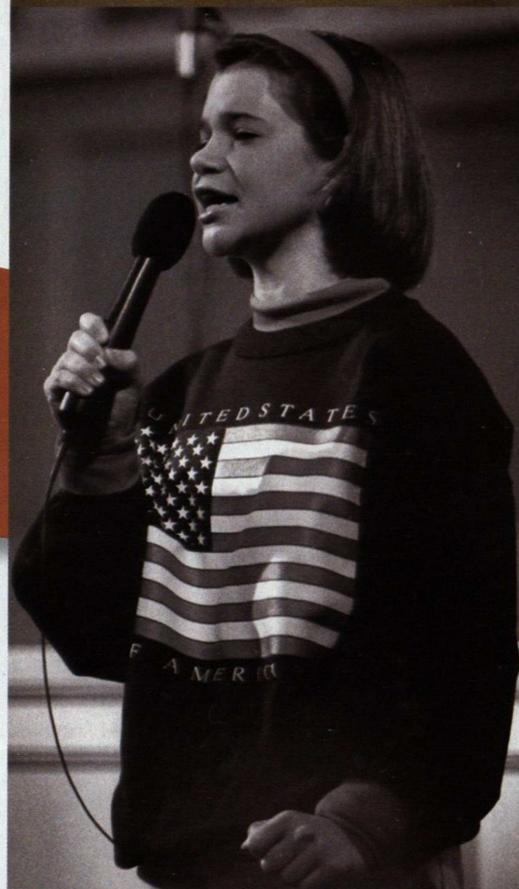
Mickey Mouse Club. “They told us about a 10-year-old who could do everything. They said she could sing, she could dance, she was funny.” Winer was skeptical until he met Lindsey. They have been friends and collaborators ever since. Winer introduced her to Stein, who wrote much of the music for her show. Some of the songs debuted at MU in 2005, during Lindsey’s performance as the Thomas Jefferson Distinguished Guest Lecturer at the annual Jefferson Club dinner.

Michael Kateman, director of arts development for MU, met Lindsey in Crespy’s playwriting class in 2001. “There’s something about great performers that shows up the minute they set foot on stage. Lindsey is one of those charismatic performers.”

Showing her charismatic edge, Lindsey sang the lament, “You just can’t market ‘normal’ anymore” in her show:

*And now the real bad news,
I’ve never been abused,
I love my parents.
Where did I go wrong? III*

The show will preview April 29 and open May 6 at the Laurie Beechman Theater at 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue, in New York. For ticket information, or to keep tabs on Lindsey’s career, go to www.lindseyalley.com.



Childhood photos courtesy of Marcia Alley

Lindsey’s unwavering alto voice was still maturing when, at age 14, she sang in her hometown church, above. Below, she plays both parts in a mother-daughter phone conversation about sex during *Look Ma ... No Ears!*

