

Rising Music Star Judy Whitmore of ‘The Great American Songbook’ on The Five Things You Need To Shine In The Music Industry.

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As a part of our series about rising music stars, I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Judy Whitmore.

*Judy Whitmore heeds the call of the stage, the sky, and beyond. A renaissance woman, the renowned vocalist, pilot, best-selling author, psychologist, and theater producer recognizes the symmetry between her pursuits. She approaches each with style, sass, and spirit. That holds true on her full-length debut album, *Can't We Be Friends*, where she dives headfirst into the Great American Songbook and re-imagines twelve staples with fearlessness, fire, and finesse.*



Thank you so much for doing this with us! Can you tell us the story of how you grew up?

I grew up in a lively house, where there was lots of laughter and lots of fun. Every Sunday was a party, usually 15–20 people. Everyone would arrive around 3pm and Mom would serve dinner at 5:00. I loved to play the piano and sing at these gatherings. During the week there were friends for dinner too... just not as many as on Sunday. Mom was creative. She built mosaic art pieces, painted flowers on fine china, knitted, and always had a needlepoint project. Her father was a violinist at MGM Studios, so she thought watching old movie musicals was as important for me as learning algebra! I learned about art, culture, and fashion from her. I got my work ethic from my father. He owned a paper bag manufacturing business and left for work at 6am and got home at 7pm. On Saturdays, he'd take me, my brother and my sister to work with him, which we all loved. He taught me to set goals, to work hard, and to never give up! My parents instilled in me the importance of "family." All my aunts, uncles, cousins, and both sets of grandparents lived within walking distance of my house. I grew up surrounded by a loving family.

Can you share a story with us about what brought you to this specific career path?

When I was six years old, I saw my first Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers movie. I was enchanted that out of nowhere an orchestra would begin to play and people would start to sing and dance. In my young imagination, I thought that was normal, and what happened in life. I was already taking dancing and singing lessons, so I knew how to do those things. I waited all through grammar school for the music to begin, and my only worry was when it happened, how would my classmates know the dance steps and the words to the song!

Can you tell us the most interesting story that happened to you since you began your career?

When I was doing a show a while ago, in the middle of one of my songs there was a saxophone solo. During a break, the sax player and I were having a conversation about how we both came from musical families. I told him my mother, my aunt and my grandmothers were all pianists. Then I mentioned my grandfather had been in the MGM Studio orchestra for twenty-five years. He said, "My grandfather was a violinist at MGM too." It turns out his grandfather worked there during the same years as my grandfather. And here we were...the grandchildren of these two studio musicians, working together so many years later.

Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

When I was in college, Capitol Records was looking for a female background singer for a new band. On my audition day, I took lots of time with my hair and makeup and ended up running a bit late. Without much thought, I grabbed a piece of music off my piano and headed to Hollywood. I entered the office of the vice-president of Capitol Records. We shook hands, then he smiled and pointed to the piano near his desk. "Okay," he said. "Show me what you've got." I sat down at the piano to accompany myself and quickly discovered the piece of music I'd grabbed off the piano was not in my key! It was a good lesson. When it comes to performing, there's no "winging it." Pre-plan for every contingency. I was lucky...I got the job!

What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now?

Just before the pandemic, I did two different cabaret shows that were well-received. One show was a solo act where I chronicled my life with stories and songs. The other show, "Two For the Road," is a cabaret act my brother and I did together. When plans to do both shows in London this last summer had to be cancelled, it gave us an opportunity to work on some revisions we had wanted to make to both shows. We're now planning performances in England for next summer.

We are very interested in diversity in the entertainment industry. Can you share three reasons with our readers about why you think it's important to have diversity represented in film and television? How can that potentially affect our culture?

Whether it's film, TV, or stage, audience members should be able to identify with the characters they see. Actors should reflect the images and cultures of their audiences. Onscreen diversity and inclusion begins with diversity in production and personnel departments.



What are your “5 things I wish someone told me when I first started” and why. Please share a story or example for each.

1. Never give up.
2. Never give up.
3. Never give up...4...5...you get the picture.

As an example, I was on a tour of Carnegie Hall one day. As my friends and I left and were standing outside on the sidewalk, one of them suggested that we might perform there. We all laughed! Then the possibility actually hit us, and through a process of “never giving up,” we ended up performing at Carnegie Hall and producing a film of our journey there.

Which tips would you recommend to your colleagues in your industry to help them to thrive and not “burn out”?

I tend to be a work-a-holic, so I can say, without a doubt, one of the most important things you can do for yourself is to take a break! It’s gratifying to become absorbed in a project, especially if it’s one you love. But no matter how much satisfaction your current project is bringing you, it can’t compete with the importance of reading a story to your child, or cooking a meal for your friends and family, or doing some volunteer work at a local charity.

You are a person of enormous influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

At the beginning of the pandemic, I began reading the first Harry Potter book to two ten-year-old boys. We had our daily story-time over Zoom, which they loved. I think it would be great to match up adults who have the time with grade school children for a daily “story time.” If you can draw a child into an imaginary world of pirates or detectives, dragons or medieval battles, when they are young, you’re providing a pathway to a lifetime of adventure.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

Without a doubt, Peisha McPhee is the person without whom none of this would have happened. Peisha started out as my vocal coach. Now, in addition to vocal coach, mentor and career advisor, she is also a dear friend. She encouraged me to create my first cabaret act, and she always inspires me to do the best work I can do.

Can you please give us your favorite “Life Lesson Quote”? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

“It’s never too late to be who you might have been.” This quote is attributed to George Elliot. I love it because it confirms my belief that throughout our lives we are offered opportunities to change. It’s always within our power to alter our course and choose a new path.

Is there a person in the world, or in the US whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might just see this, especially if we tag them. :-)

I would love to have lunch with Daniel Silva. I’ve read all his books. I’m a huge fan.

How can our readers follow you online?

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