

# Katy's *broadway* Star

**Former Taylor High School student and Broadway veteran, Kerrarri Giovanni, dishes about her life as a wife, mom, and actress**

*Written by Kirsten Cornell*

Growing up in Katy, Kerrarri Giovanni filled her days with cheering on the Taylor High School Mustangs and driving down Mason Rd. heading to the local movie theater with friends. "I love the hometown feel of Katy," says Giovanni. "It's a place that stops in time as far as family values go."

## The Early Years

Giovanni didn't always picture herself as a flourishing actress. In fact, she had a completely different path in mind. "I had solid plans to attend Rice University and become an ob/gyn," she says.

Focusing on dance, gymnastics, and cheer, she has fond memories of attending Becky's Academy of Dance where she did a majority of her training. "I met some of my closest friends in the dance company, and I still go back and visit every time I'm in town," she adds.

It wasn't until she attended the High School for Performing and Visual Arts in Houston her senior year that she even entertained the thought of acting. "I didn't really perform anything 'theatrical' until college," laughs Giovanni, who attended the College of Conservatory Music in Ohio. "I was more focused on dance and gymnastics." It was in Cincinnati that she discovered her love for musical theatre, and a new path for her life became clear.

"My parents are my biggest fans. They were always supportive of everything I wanted to do growing up," she

says. "They told me nothing can go wrong as long as I work to my full potential."

## Life on Broadway

Determined to pursue her stage career, Giovanni headed to the birthplace of Broadway in 2004, the Big Apple. Landing her first role in *The Lion King*, many other credits soon followed, including *Anything Goes*, *Catch Me If You Can*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Guys & Dolls*, *Hugh Jackman: Back on Broadway*, and *Tarzan*. But Giovanni considers her first breakout role to be when she landed a lead part as Helene, starring alongside well-known actress Christina Applegate in *Sweet Charity*. "It was thrilling to be 23 and get such a fantastic role," she recalls.

The feel of a live audience is one of the factors of musical theatre that drives Giovanni. "They bring so much energy to a show every night. I also love being able to use my whole body to perform," she says. "Screen acting is so much smaller; it takes practice to rein it in."

Although exhilarating, Giovanni admits that the world of acting is not as glamorous as some might think, especially in the world of theatre. "It's a grind of eight shows a week. I've worked every Christmas for 10 years," she says. "We're up there performing two or three shows a day when everyone comes to New York to catch a Thanksgiving show."

In addition to honing her skills and developing her repertoire of Broadway experience, New York is also where Giovanni met her husband, Philip Ambrosino.

Kearran Giovanni cheered at Taylor High School, before moving to New York and becoming a successful Broadway actress

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**- Kearran Giovanni**

# *Kearran Giovanni*

Photo by Marta Elena Vassilakis



Giovanni with Hugh Jackman after receiving Equity's Gypsy Robe for being the chorus member with the most Broadway musical chorus credits during *Hugh Jackman: Back on Broadway*

Photo by Walter McBride



Photo by Darren Michaels/Turner Entertainment Networks Inc.

Giovanni on the set of the TNT drama series, *Major Crimes*, with co-stars Raymond Cruz and Tony Denison

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Giovanni and her husband, Philip Ambrosino, at the opening of *Finian's Rainbow*, in which she played the role of Suzanne

### Life as Detective Sykes

In 2009, Giovanni secured the part of Vivienne Wright on the daytime Emmy-winning series *One Life to Live* and expanded her acting into TV roles. While she has played many characters, she cites her current role as Amy Sykes, an undercover police detective and military veteran who served in Afghanistan on TNT's series *Major Crimes*, as one of her favorites. "Amy gets a back story this season. I think fans are really curious about what makes her who she is, and now they'll finally see why," Giovanni explains.

The third season of *Major Crimes*, which will debut in June 2014, is sure to keep fans on the edge of their seats. "The show will have a great rhythm this season," adds Giovanni. "It'll vary from some fantastic comedy to some heartbreaking episodes."

While Giovanni says there is always a lot of jabbing and practical joking on set, the hours are long and the cast works hard to make sure they are giving it their all. "I typically wake up around 5 a.m. and sneak out of the house to the set so I don't wake anyone," laughs Giovanni. After hair, makeup, and blocking rehearsals, they usually shoot scenes for around 12 hours. "We have a great time," she adds.

### Becoming a Mother

Having relocated to Los Angeles, Giovanni enjoys spending downtime with her husband and two daughters, Jordan, 6, and Peyton, 4. "Balancing everything can be tricky of course. I keep a calendar everywhere and try to stay on top of who goes where and who has what," she says. "And we always make it a point to have a date night once a week."

Giovanni and her family love being outdoors whether its concerts, a park, or having a backyard barbecue. "I often refer to myself as the 'activities queen,'" she laughs. They even include the family's long-haired Chihuahua, Neo.

Having a stunning actress as a mom has not altered her girls' perspective. "They have only seen me on TV once, and it was me on the soap opera getting a pie thrown in my face. They think that's all I do now - like a clown," she says with a smile.

Giovanni also says that becoming a mom has made her appreciate her own mother even more, and she has learned not to sweat the small stuff. "It really humbles you," she says. "No matter what is going on at work, you'll still be 'mother' when you get back home."



## A Heart for Others

In addition to her TV roles, Broadway, and being the family's event coordinator, Giovanni is also heavily involved in several charities. She is active with the Sunshine Kids Organization, which was founded by fellow *Major Crimes* cast member G.W. Bailey, and is dedicated to providing fun events to children receiving cancer treatments.

Another cause close to Giovanni's heart is the Lupus Foundation, especially after losing her mother to the autoimmune disorder. She also maintains a philanthropic passion for the Special Olympics and is an active supporter of dance programs and art projects that are centered on helping children. "Times have changed, and so many young people haven't been given the guidance to make strong choices," she explains. "I was lucky enough to have parents and teachers that gave me the confidence to own my decisions and to fall, and then get back up."

To other young people pursuing a career in acting, her advice is clear: "Make a choice for your future, work toward it 100%, and don't be afraid to fall, then get up and try again." KM



*KIRSTEN CORNELL is the lead associate editor for Katy Magazine. She is a fan of Kearran Giovanni and Major Crimes, and is looking forward to seeing more of Detective Sykes.*

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