

This article appeared in the Spring 2007 edition of *Kearsarge Magazine*

A Star in the Making

By Tina Derby

“When I first saw Kristin in the play ‘Mirette’ she reminded me of a young Natalie Portman,” reminisces Phil Celia, Kristin Tate’s acting coach. It is easy to understand why Phil would be so struck by this budding actress. From her dark hair to her petite good looks to her honor roll grades to her lead parts in major area theatrical productions and even a movie, the similarities between Portman and Tate are very real.

“I think this is really a story about a great kid with a great family doing great things in a great community,” states Bonnie Cornell, a teacher at the Lyme School and a local actor in many Upper Valley theatrical productions. “I guess that’s life in New Hampshire the way it was meant to be!”

The Early Years

It all started modestly enough on Sept. 14, 1992. Born on that day in a New York City hospital to parents Stephen and Dawn Tate (now Dawn Tate Cady), Kristin was a beautiful baby with huge blue eyes, tiny rosebud mouth, creamy skin, and full cheeks. She could have easily passed for the Gerber baby, so extreme were her looks.

In 1993, when she was just 1-year-old, the Tates moved from New York to Grantham, the result of their desire to find a more peaceful place to raise their baby. “I lived full time in Grantham until I was in the fourth grade,” says Kristin. “I think Grantham is such a nice town. Everyone here is so friendly. From the people at the day care to the teachers and kids at the school, I just have always enjoyed living here.”

In 2001 Kristin and her younger brother, Austin, who was born in 1994, started spending half their time at their mom’s new house in Lyme and attending the Lyme School. Kristin adjusted quickly and easily to her new environment, making lots of friends and excelling at her schoolwork.

“Kristin’s always been outgoing,” says her father Steve. “She’s always been able to get along with just about everyone, so the move to the new school was really no trouble for her. She’s often giggling or laughing, and it’s often at herself, which is a good thing. But she’s always been a hardworking student, too.”

Kristin’s hard work paid off as she excelled on her 2006 entrance exams for Hanover High School. Kristin was placed into the honors science and honors math classes, and was also elected to the student council. “That means a lot to me because I love helping to change things for the better,” she says.

Even with the possibility of a successful acting career, Kristin emphasizes her love for both academics and art. “At this point I am thinking about going to college to study finance. My favorite television show is ‘The Apprentice’ so I guess I am really fascinated

by business,' she says. "Of course, I also want to pursue my acting and to take that as far as I can go with it. But I want to go to college, too. I just figure that I can do both and do them well, so that's my plan."

The Future

Indeed, Kristin's future in acting seems as bright as her future in the world of business. Since her high profile debut as the singing and tight wire-walking lead of the 2005 Signal and Noise production of the play "Mirette," Kristin has been quickly expanding her acting resume, as well as her base of fans and supporters.

"It's funny because I wasn't really trying to get into acting," says Kristin, "I actually just kind of fell into it. My stepfather, Skip Cady, does theatre. Back in 2005 he was trying out for a part in 'Mirette.' He knew that for the lead child female role they needed a young girl who could walk on a tight wire. I had learned to do that when I was in circus camp when I was 10, so they let me audition for that role. I ended up getting the part and, as it turned out, I really loved being in the play. I'd always loved acting and singing and being the center of attention. But I guess what surprised me was all of the attention I got from other people, especially the playwrights and producers in this area. A lot of people saw me in 'Mirette' and that's how I got a few other roles."

One of the people who saw Kristin in "Mirette" was Phil Celia, an actor and trainer of actors, as well as one of the musical talents behind the band called Acoustic Philosophy. "Over the years I have worked with and coached many excellent actors and actresses and Kristin is on a par with the best of them. What I thought she needed, though, was coaching. She's got all the natural looks and talent in the world, but everyone needs training, so that's what we're doing now," says Celia, who has appeared in numerous New York and Los Angeles plays and productions, and also was a teacher at the John Strasberg studios in New York City.

Kristin meets with Celia for weekly lessons, and they go over everything from how to create an actor's resume to the proper delivery of a monologue to acting for the camera. "Our plan is to have Kristin ready to go to New York for auditions during the summer of 2007," he says. "I'm telling you this now: Don't be surprised next summer when you hear that she has landed a big part in a major show or production!"

Marisa Smith, playwright and co-owner of Smith and Kraus Publishing in Hanover, N.H., agrees. "Even though she's a teenager who's enjoying a great deal of success, both as an actor and as a student, she's just as nice and decent as you could want a person to be," she says. "A lot people change, and often not for the better, as they achieve higher and higher levels of success. But I don't see that happening with Kristin. She's nice to the other actors, and nice to her parents, and nice to her siblings, and nice to her friends. She's the kind of kid that you want to see succeed, and there is no doubt that she's doing just that."