

HUFFPOST ENTERTAINMENT

Liz Smith, Columnist

Judy Abrams -- She's No Longer a "Pixie"

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•MY LONGTIME friend Judith Ann Abrams is a good example of why some people, who are crazy, go into the theater business and will never give it up although the drama-comedy stuff usually gives them up!

Judy used to direct and produce for something her family dreamed up, 'Pixie Judy's Troupe,' working with children.

Now, she's still working with "children" -- the adult kind who invest and meddle with Broadway. But she is a real grown-up person who is actually making a living from this mysterious, appealing and horrible business. The other day, after she checked to be sure I had gotten Elaine Stritch's farewell gift of Bay's English Muffins -- they went to all her friends -- Judy came by to check on whether or not I was snow-bound. I knew Judy had worked with a lot of shows that had failed and recently, many that had succeeded. So I asked her, "Are you making a living from the theater?" "Well," says Judy reflectively, "When in comes a nice hunk of change from something like the Broadway hit -- 'Kinky Boots' -- then the next thing you know the many producers are saying that they need more money for another production a'borning, or a new venue for maybe 'Kinky' or something else entirely. So one never knows if shows really turn a profit, or it's all just a money pit! But I love working with my favorite producer, Daryl Roth, and I trust her with my whole heart!" (Ms. Roth is the blonde bombshell who backed Nora and Delia Ephron's little play about fashion and what we all wore. And many other hits.)

Judy went on to praise the legendary Chita Rivera, who is opening in the long-awaited musical version of "The Visit," with music by John Kander and the late Fred Ebb. 'The Visit' opens April 23rd at the Lyceum Theater, with a book by the busy playwright Terrence McNally.

• Friend Judy also has a hand in the incomparable Tyne Daly's opening at the Brooks Atkinson Theater on April 14. Again, Judy is working with Daryl and this musical has the whimsical title of 'It Shoulda Been You.' The star, Tyne can do no wrong in my book.

She was the young partner of Clint Eastwood, killed off in one of his early "Make my day!" films ... She hit the big-time in TV's 'Çagney and Lacey' (with Sharon Gless) and went on to distinguish herself on Broadway in an acclaimed revival of 'Gypsy,' where she sang the hell out of the Mama Rose character. She was also a surprisingly effective Maria Callas in 'Master Class.' Critics and the public have loved Tyne ever since she embraced the theater and came back "home." (She began her career acting in stock in New York, and made her Broadway debut in 1967. Tyne was born in Wisconsin, but New York claims her!)

•Judy then handed me a bottle of champagne. (Now that's the kind of drop-in I like.) Oh, yes, and I almost forgot that Judy has associations with 'Matilda' and 'It's Only a Play,' now offering Broadway the talents of Martin Short, knocking them dead as usual.

Here's a nice P.S. Judy will be going to London for the openings of 'Dirty Rotten Scoundrels' and 'Made in Dagedham.' She tried to give me the names of all her other producers and show backers. But this column has to stop somewhere short of suicide.