

From PMB

# to Hollywood



Amy Letcher, who grew up in Pietermaritzburg, in a scene from the U.S. film *Reckoning*.

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## KAVITHA PILLAY

RAISED in Pietermaritzburg, young actress Amy Letcher has taken her stage and screen acting to Hollywood.

The 22-year-old has already featured in a number of local and international stage productions and films including *Keeping Up Appearances* (2012), which was filmed in South Africa.

In the U.S., she's starred in films including *Reckoning* (2014), *Goblin Queen* (2014), web-series *Goody Two's* (2015), *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* (2015), and is currently appearing in the theatre production *Princess Freckles and the Forever Kingdom*, which she also wrote.

The play, which is Letcher's autobiographical one-woman production about growing up in Zimbabwe and South Africa, hit the festival circuit in the U.S. last year and has seen incredible success since its Los Angeles debut.

It was accepted into the Whitefire Solo Theatre Festival in February, and will be at the United Solo Theatre Festival in October this year.

"*Princess Freckles and the Forever Kingdom* has been invited to perform at United Solo Theatre Festival — the largest solo theatre festival in the world — held in New York in October. In the past, Academy Award winners have showcased work there, so I'm very excited about the opportunity," said charismatic and cheerful Letcher.

"I've also been on *Black Sails* playing Lydia, and worked on *Hooten and the Lady* and *Killer Instincts with Chris Hansen*, which are all international TV series being shot in the Cape," said Letcher.

The fourth season of the internationally acclaimed pirate drama series *Black Sails* is currently filming in Cape Town. The second season of *Black Sails* is currently aired on History (DStv channel 186) on Tuesdays at 8.30 pm.

The series stars Toby Stephens, Luke Arnold, Hannah New, Luke McGowan and Tom Hopper.

It also stars a host of South African actors such as Sean Cameron Michael, Louise Barnes and Fiona Ramsey. Letcher can be seen in episodes seven and



The cast of *Chicago* at The Theatre at St Anne's College (from left): Andrew Ness (Amos), Amy Letcher (Roxie), Michael Bullick (Billy) and Celeste Jamneck (Velma). This was one of Letcher's first major roles as an actress.

PHOTO: FILE

eight of season four.

Letcher's success at a young age is thanks to her consistent hard work and determination. She knew what she wanted to pursue as a career and, together with raw talent, she followed her passion to the fullest.

The vibrant actress, who attended schools in Pietermaritzburg including The Wykham Collegiate and St John's Diocesan, said that she started acting from as early as six years old, role-playing at every opportunity.

"The family had to endure numerous 'Amy Productions' at home — as did guests and their children who were roped into productions that were prepared on the spot," said Letcher.

She spent her senior school years at St Anne's Diocesan College in Hilton, having moved there at her insistence because of its reputation for drama studies.

Her first major role was when she starred as Roxie Hart in the musical production *Chicago*, directed and produced by Lynn Chemaly, theatre director at St Anne's Diocesan College.

Letcher took a gap year after school and worked for Scripture Union Independent Schools before enrolling at film school AFDA in Cape Town.

In her first year, she won a lead role in a graduation film that was nominated for a Safda award and was chosen for the Durban International Film festival and the shnit International Short Film Festival — a festival that takes place simultaneously in cities on five continents.

"After a year at AFDA, I was encouraged by my acting lecturer to audition for a place at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Hollywood. I auditioned, was accepted with two scholarships, and spent the next 18 months training," said Letcher.

Letcher joined a sword-fighting troupe in Hollywood, which landed her a number of roles in which she could exercise her sword-fighting skills.

"*Reckoning* was my first notable role that grew my screen-time and led to other roles," said Letcher, who recently starred in *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?*, a psychological drama hoping to hit the festival circuit.

Another festival film she starred in, *Goblin Queen*, was accepted into the 2016 Science Fiction + Fantasy Short Film Festival in Seattle.

She also performed in the AMTC SHINE Talent Convention in Florida with over 900 other performers, where she won Best Overall Adult Actress.

"Living in LA has been a huge culture shock, and a bigger and better adventure than I could ever have imagined. To think that I used to dream of this place when I was six years old ... It's kind of surreal — acting is such an all-or-nothing industry, and the American culture is very different to the South African one."

She said: "I miss home, but I couldn't think of anywhere I'd rather be, or anything I'd rather be doing. When you find what makes you come alive, the homesickness, the strangeness, saying goodbye and feeling out of your depth, and the daily mental self-pep talks — they're all worth it."

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