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Anna Kosmanovski
chats to teenage actor
Sophie Cusworth about
making it in the film and
television industry



(REG RYAN)

For Sophie Cusworth, there never was a lightbulb moment when she realised she wanted to act. There never needed to be. Growing up in a media family accustomed to cameras and microphones, she was ready from an early age.

"My parents speak of a young Sophie who was incredibly shy and spoke only in whispers, until I was wearing a costume or there was a video camera nearby," the softly spoken 19-year-old actress tells.

The Geelong actor is best known for her role on an episode of *It's A Date* which screened on the ABC last year. Yet, the opportunity to audition for the series couldn't have come at a busier time, as Cusworth tells.

"My audition for *It's A Date* was in the middle of my year 12 exams and a shoot for another series, so I was pretty exhausted and overwhelmed and, therefore, nervous about how I would go."

For actors, auditions are a sink or swim moment and this determined actress has definitely learnt to swim. She shares a tip on how to handle audition nerves.

"I have a whole list of calming exercises and methods of preparation," she explains, "but most helpful is the knowledge that you are in an audition room or on a stage to do what you love."

It was all worth it when she received the call-back of her career. "I was in the principal cast with the role of Sam, playing alongside Lawrence Mooney and Sally-Ann Upton, who were a joy to work with."

This year, she also hit the big screen with a bit part speaking role (see her in the credits as "older fighting

girl") in the Spierig brothers' thriller *Predestination*, starring Ethan Hawke and Sarah Snook. She's also featured in a few episodes of Channel 31's *Leongatha* series and recently played Meg in Michael Gow's play *Away* with Third Door Theatre in Melbourne.

"My first professional acting gig was one line in the Australian feature film *Taj*. I played a student in a classroom answering a question," Cusworth says.

Born and bred in Geelong, Cusworth comes from a family generally quite comfortable on the other side of the camera. Her father Wes Cusworth is a WIN news reporter and has worked onscreen for many years.

"Seeing my father work in television as a presenter and journalist has absolutely influenced my approach to the acting industry," says the bubbly brunette.

"His work has shown me professionalism, how rewarding it is to have a career in something you love and perseverance in a harsh industry."

For this creative soul, the lure of acting is all about being expressive. "I love being able to explore and express aspects of myself that I do not usually, within the circumstances of a character," she says.

"I would really love to play some darker characters. Lady Macbeth especially."

For now, though, she's found her character age lies around the 13 to 19 mark, meaning she can tap into teenage roles easily. "I think that what makes me stand out most is my appearance," she says. "Simply because

I look quite a few years younger than I am, which means that I can portray younger characters." Although she giggles as she recounts that she was recently knocked back for a 15-year-old character role for looking "too young".

The key to success, Cusworth says, is a professional approach. "I think it all comes down to respect for other people. If you respect someone, you don't want to disappoint them and you treat them with politeness and kindness."

It's this hardworking attitude that's seen her get offered repeat work. She exemplifies the very advice she says she'd give to those wanting to crack into the industry.

"You arrive on time, you follow through with commitments and you work hard. Of course, it also has to do with building positive professional relationships with people, in order for them to want to work with you again."

"The entertainment industry is gruelling, but worth it," she says honestly.

The Geelong beauty, who says she loves wearing vintage clothes and comes to *The Weekly Review* photo shoot laden with cute cardigans, floral dresses and '60s blouses, made the decision to move to Melbourne last year to focus on her craft. It's paid off.

She's quick to come back, though, and enjoy some time in her hometown on days off, especially if getting down to the coast is an option.

"Most of my extended family live in Geelong, too, so it is always lovely to go back to visit," she tells.

The busy actor also juggles auditions and shoots with study and is soon to complete her first year of arts with the University of Melbourne. Following in the footsteps of actors such as Shaun Micallaf, John Cleese and Gerald Butler, she plans to study law and combine her acting with the legal profession. "I have many a year of study ahead of me," she says.

Cusworth has also taken acting courses with Melbourne Acting Academy, NIDA and the VCA and has been studying her craft from a young age. "I've taken acting classes since I was 10 years old beginning at the Music Box Theatre Company in Geelong."

Although all her roles have been filmed in Australia, she's ready to work abroad, having already mastered an American accent.

"I do believe that there seems to be more opportunity to work overseas," she says.

As well as finishing her university studies for the year, she's busy preparing for her next role in an upcoming television series. She'll be starring in Shane Dunlop's *Under the Milky Way* series, set to shoot early next year.

"I'll be playing a young astronomy enthusiast named Halle. She is described as 'feisty, deadpan and a little nerdy' and wears vintage clothes, so I guess I've been rehearsing for the role for a while!"

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