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Life is funny for women trying to break through the brick wall; but do they have the 'BALLS' to become comedians?

by VICTORIA DAVIS

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Jules Chanel Hoberg at The American Comedy Co.



Point Loma High graduate Ava Bunn.

With 20 live theatre venues, 12 acting schools and 10 comedy clubs, San Diego is not a bad launch pad for those trying to catch a break in the entertainment industry. From The Old Globe to The American Comedy Co., the city is enriched by theatre and is particularly welcoming to those who are willing to bear their amateur skills on the live stage.

Two of those brave souls are Jules Chanel Hoberg and Ava Bunn, both looking to tap into the world of comedy, one through stand-up and the other through acting.

Point Loma High graduate Bunn, now 18, has started attending The American Comedy Co.'s Tuesday night Open Mic Nights where she recently had the chance to

see Hoberg, who prefers “Chanel,” take her shot at the spotlight.

“It’s in these little clubs and theatres where people often get discovered,” said Bunn. “My friend and I saw probably 40 people go up on Open Mic Night and take a swing at comedy. It’s amazing to know there’s so many people out there trying to pursue their passions and do what they love here in San Diego.”

While Chanel, a Pacific Beach resident, had no idea she was being observed by another aspiring comic, she says she’s not surprised. To her, this is one of San Diego’s many charms when it comes to entertainment.

“San Diego is very pro-youth,” said Chanel, who moved from Bremerton, Wash. to Pacific Beach this past January on an impulse. “There’s quite a few of us going for the same goals in comedy and entertainment. It’s a city definitely geared towards younger people and it’s a lot more welcoming than most other big cities.”

Bunn added: “I’ve heard from people, ‘Good luck being an actor. You’ll live with your parents forever.’ I know it’s going to be tough, but there’s no point in not believing in what you love to do.”

For the past 10 years Bunn has performed in local theatre shows, such as in “Annie Get Your Gun” and The Old Globe’s “Dr. Seuss’ How The Grinch Stole Christmas,” as well as starred in college short films and national commercials for Petco, SeaWorld, and Jeep. This May, Bunn was asked by TEDxYouth@SanDiego to do a TED Talk. Her subject? Having the “BALLS” to chase your dreams.

Standing for “Believe,” “Achieve,” “Listen,” “Learn,” and “Support,” Bunn, who will be attending University of Southern California on scholarship for an acting major in comedy, believes these are the main ingredients everyone needs in order to successfully achieve their dreams.

“Don’t have a back-up plan,” said Bunn, during her talk. “Grow a pair... Stop developing your plan B. You’re putting energy in the wrong direction. Don’t have something to fall back on. Instead, fail forward.”

It certainly took “BALLS” for Chanel to get herself on the stand-up stage for the first time. While she’s harbored a deep appreciation for comedy since age 17, Chanel still had serious doubts about getting on the San Diego stage, until she had a chance encounter with a celebrity in March.

“I was working at Hennessey’s Tavern in La Jolla and just happened to serve David Koechner right before his stand-up show in La Jolla’s Comedy Store that night,” said Chanel. “I asked him for advice about getting into comedy and he said to me, ‘Why are you nervous? You already know you’re funny, so just do it.’”

That night, March 26, Chanel went to the American Comedy Co.club and did her first stand up. Now, the comedian works at the comedy club, does stand-up every Tuesday night. Also performing at Mad House Comedy and the La Jolla Comedy Store, Chanel’s bits are drawn from stories of new friends, old boyfriends, her “boring” degree in accounting and, of course, her “posh” name.

“Comedy is like therapy for poor people,” said Chanel. “That’s a joke everyone says. But it’s something I really apply to my comedy. I’ve had three failed relationships in the six months I’ve been here. That’s tragic to some people, but I think it’s pretty hilarious.”

Bunn, who was called “mute child” by her gymnast coach, says she “grew a pair” after her first rejection at age 8 from San Diego Junior Theater’s Miracle Worker production.

“I used to be the biggest introvert ever... but acting has totally brought me out of my shell once I realized how badly I wanted to do it,” said Bunn, who has gotten the chance to work with theatre legends Beth Malone and Allison Spratt Pearce. “I fell in love with the adrenaline rush that comes with improve, not having a safety net or any back-up takes. And I’ve learned from the best-of-the-best here.”

San Diego might not have the highest profile gigs, but according to Chanel and Bunn, it offers a welcoming atmosphere to beginners, the perfect environment for growing a pair of “BALLS.”

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