

Edmonton-born ballerina finds acclaim as Big Apple voice actor

Nicole Papadopoulos has turned her voice into a livelihood

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Edmonton's Nicole Papadopoulos works as a voice actor in New York. (Nicole Papadopoulos)

It took an injury for Nicole Papadopoulos to find her voice.

A professionally trained ballet dancer and actor, the Edmonton woman spent most of her life on stage.

When an injury put her off her feet for weeks, she couldn't stand it. Papadopoulos channelled her frustration to take her love for performance from the stage to behind a microphone.

She's been working as a voice actor ever since.

"I'm stubborn, tenacious," Papadopoulos said in an interview with CBC Radio's [Edmonton AM](#). "I was on crutches and I thought 'I just can not handle doing anything artistic and performing,' and that's how voice-over came about for me.

"I thought, this is the one thing I can do right now, and I was so surprised with how wonderful it was, and fulfilling.

"You get to be really physical while you're doing it. Even though you're standing in one spot, in order to portray a character, you need to be moving your body and interacting with that imaginary person."

'You have to be really good at improvising'

At the age of 11, Papadopoulos left Edmonton for the National Ballet School in Toronto.

While gaining success as a dancer, Papadopoulos fell in love with acting and singing, and honed her talents at Sheridan College for Musical Theatre.

She now splits her time between Edmonton and New York City, and will return to her hometown this weekend to host a series of voice-over workshops.

Her biggest break came in 2014, when she was nominated for the Voice Arts Award for best local commercial, something she describes as the "Oscars of the voice-over industry." Other nominees included Hollywood names like Kate Winslet, Lena Dunham and Jon Hamm.

"I was nominated, which was super exciting," Papadopoulos said. "It was kind of cool to be in their company."

We'll talk to a local voice-over artist who wants to pass on the tricks of the trade. 7:08

'You have to be really good at improvising'

The list of Papadopoulos' credits in the voice over industry is a long one. She has lent her voice to numerous commercials, radio ads and video games, including the award-winning game Dragon Age II by local developer Bioware.

Papadopoulos said video game gigs are her favourite "because you get to be really kooky."

Due to confidentiality concerns about keeping the storylines of unreleased games secret, scripts are often kept under lock and key.

"It is interesting because of confidentiality stuff, you get to the gig, you don't know what you're going to do," Papadopoulos said.

"You have no idea what your script is going to be and it flashes up on your screen what words you're going to say.

"You don't know who you're talking to. You don't know why you're saying these words, so you have to be really good at improvising."

“ It's much less about the voice and it's much more about how you use the voice ”

-Nicole Papadopoulos

According to Papadopoulos, even those lacking perfect dulcet tones can be successful in the industry.

Would-be voice actors need to be persistent, she said.

Papadopoulos said she encourages anyone interested in learning more about the job, honing their skills or improving their demo to attend her coaching sessions this weekend.

"I find a lot of people who have a quote, unquote 'lovely sounding voice' get caught up listening to their voice, rather than actually being able to connect with the copy and connect with the audience.

"It's much less about the voice and it's much more about how you use the voice and the intention behind it."

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