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Yanna McIntosh: *'We're all aging, you know?'*



We like to think that age is just a number, but is it true? Yanna McIntosh is one of the cast of stars in Chris Abraham's production of *The Seagull*, Anton Chekhov's masterpiece of desire, longing and ambition. We spoke to the gifted fortysomething actress about acting her age.

You're playing the role of Arkedina, an actress and mother. I was speaking to someone who has watched you in rehearsals, and you were described as ferocious, tough and regal. Is that what you are going for?

That's nice to hear. I think I'm discovering more about the ferociousness of the character, and the way she will stop at nothing to achieve the reality she perceives, even to the point of damaging her own self and the people close to her. So yes, ferocious and tough, and maybe a little scary and monstrous too.

The typical description of Arkedina has her as an epic, aging, fading actress. We'll give you "epic." But "fading" and "aging," that's a stretch for you, right?

[Laughs] Well, we're all aging, you know? She's in her middle years, and that probably means toward the end of her career. Those are some of the stresses that are acting on her as she deals with her fame, her lover and her family, and her needs as a woman and an actor. She's right in that scary pocket.

Speaking of actresses and aging, did you hear what Russell Crowe had to say on the subject this week?

I haven't.

He was quoted as saying there are plenty of acting

roles for older women on screen as long as they are willing to act their age.

I think that shows a stunning lack of sensitivity and awareness on poor old Mr. Crowe's part. I think women would love to play their age. But the reality is that nobody wants them to act their age. You get to a certain age, and you may as well as be 100. I forgot who said it, but a Canadian actress had a quote attributed to her saying that when an actress gets to be 40, the thing she should do is to make a beeline to 60.

That has to be frustrating.

I remember working with an American actress at Stratford many years ago. She was playing Isabella in *The Merchant of Venice* that summer. The next summer she went back to the United States and I saw her on a soap opera playing the mother of a person in their mid-20s. And she was only in her 30s herself. So, it's skewed. It's too simple to say "play your own age," because Hollywood doesn't really show us what that age looks like when it comes to women.

The *Seagull* isn't a contemporary play, but that's where Arkedina is, right?

Yeah, she's definitely there. It's becoming a challenging for her. I think it's why she's become greedy and selfish with her money. She's clawed her way up to where she is. She's just trying to survive and hang onto what resources she has, to see herself through. The life of an actress is always precarious, but with the life of an aging actress you could fall off the cliff the next day.