



Meet Manhattan's
Next Big Star 

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MIZUO
PECK

CREDIT Heidi Hartwig

New York native Mizuo Peck is proud of her roots—she still lives blocks from the Tribeca loft where she grew up, a loft built by her artist mother and poet father. This summer, she returns to the big screen as Sacagawea in the sequel to the smash hit *Night at the Museum*. The Resident met Mizuo at a coffee shop in the neighborhood to talk about making it big and why this New Yorker won't be moving to LA any time soon. —Heather Corcoran

You grew up right around here, what was that like?

I'm fascinated with my parents and them coming to the neighborhood in the '70s. And when I'm walking around here I feel like I'm embracing their life. My parents built the loft themselves. It was totally funky and rickety and there were chairs on the walls, and the floors were green and there was a tire swing. We had room to grow and that was their philosophy, to be creative as possible. It was very bohemian and it was a great sense of all the kids in the neighborhood playing, and as I grew up in the neighborhood I think it shaped who I am.

Tell me about the new movie, *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*.

I feel really lucky and excited that I got to be part of the sequel, and that there even was a sequel. *Night at the Museum*, the original one, was just my big, giant break. I started acting when I was 11, doing musical theater, riding the subway to rehearsal, then went on to LaGuardia High School, then went on to SUNY Purchase upstate, always theater, theater, theater. Then did commercials, and little modeling jobs here and there, and then television and stuff like that, but it was all building up to this one great, giant film. Or hopefully building up to a career of many films. But getting *Night at the Museum* was finally just the culmination of all this hard work, going on one billion auditions and finally that one stuck.

You're working with some big names—Robin Williams, Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, just to name a few. What was it like to work with such an amazing cast?

I was really intimidated at first, when I just heard the list of people that were going to be in it. It was insane and I couldn't believe it. My agent was so excited to surprise me with the fact that I was going to be Robin Williams' love interest, which just struck me as the craziest, most surreal thing in the world. Although I was nervous going into it, as soon as I was onset and started meeting everybody, it just seemed so chill and so cool. Every once in a while, I'll look around and be like, this is totally insane, I can't believe I'm chatting with Amy Adams or something.

Any favorite on-set memories?

Ben Stiller's super-cool and he's a New Yorker, too, and we shared stories about growing up in the city. He's an Upper East Sider, I was a Lower West Sider. After coming back on the second one, we're like old friends now. We all went to Ben's place and played *Guitar Hero*, talk about a surreal experience. It was Hank Azaria and Bill Hader and I stuffed in a cab and going to Ben's lair, his gorgeous pad, and they're already fully rocking out to *Guitar Hero*, with Amy Adams and her boyfriend on drums and singing. Ben Stiller's actually really good at *Guitar Hero*, and I don't know if it has anything to do with the fact that he has two kids; I think it's just because he really likes it.

You've filmed in New York too...

I'm really proud of doing my *Law & Order*, just because as a New York actor, you just got to. It's part of the ritual of being a New York actor. I feel like I've done one of everything now. I did a little part on *All My Children*, I did the *Law & Order*, I did the weird, German made-for-television movie, and did theater and stuff in the city. I've definitely had the progression and I've paid many dues and I'm just like still climbing that ladder. I like the journey.

Do you ever feel pressure to move out to LA?

A lot of people say to me, so when are you going to move to LA? I'm not really thinking of moving to LA any time soon. I do like LA a lot, but I'm a New Yorker through and through. There are just so many outlets and so many great things going on and such a good vibe of people and places to go where I don't find LA to be as accessible. In New York you can ride your bike and just find something out of the blue, or just walk around and find something. There's something going on in New York every second. There's a million bands you can go see, there's a million places to eat. That kind of influence is just going to benefit you in a positive way, at least give you a more well-rounded life. Even though I like going to LA and it's glamorous, it's fun, I always love coming home. It's good for a minute and then it's nice to come back. ■



CREDIT Doane Gregory

Mizuo in *Night At The Museum: Battle for the Smithsonian*.

See Mizuo in *Night At The Museum: Battle for the Smithsonian* in theaters May 22