

Alexandra Billings

"...if you're going to ask me what the most important thing is, what I couldn't live without, I couldn't live without [Chrisanne]..." (excerpt from Gregg Shapiro's interview)



Alexandra Billings is an award winning actress and singer. Her Father, Robert Howard Billings was Musical Director for the Civic Light Opera House in California, and head of the music Department at Harbor College for over 20 years where he directed and helped create over 200 musicals. Her Mother, Eloise Nelson Knight, remarried after their divorce, and was a teacher in both Southern California, and Schaumburg Illinois, then later retired to Laguna Hills. Alexandra married her high school sweetheart Chrisanne Blankenship on December 4, 1995 at the Bailiwick Theatre in Chicago. They live on the north side of Chicago with their 3 cats.

"Acting is very simple really, all you have to do is stand in front of an audience totally naked, and turn around...very slowly." -- Rosalind Russell

Alexandra's first play in Chicago was in 1987, starring in Charles Busch's campy classic "Vampire Lesbians of Sodom", which premiered at the Royal George Theatre, and won her an After Dark Award for Best Actress in a comedy. Afterward, she made a string of comedies including "Hamlet- The Musical" (which would run forever, over and over, and over, and became known as the Musical That Wouldn't Die), "Cannibal Cheerleaders on Crack" at Torso Theatre, which she starred in for almost 5 years, and many others to twisted to mention. Then, in 1983 she offered a play to Chrisanne Blankenship called "Gertrude Stein and a Companion". Her first dramatic role won praise from the critics and brought her and Chrisanne closer in their personal life as well. David Zak, Artistic Director of the Bailiwick Theatre then asked her be a part of a new musical called "Son Of Fire" written by Christopher Moore, and star as a 40ish Japanese painter, dying of cancer, and in love with a young gay man. She then performed in "Death Defying Acts" (After Dark Award for Best Ensemble) and, prompted by a suggestion of David Zak's, (what a guy) and with the help of Mary Beidler-Gearen, her one woman autobiographical piece "Before I Disappear" was produced, and eventually toured to Boston, and to The Producer's Club Off-Broadway. She went on to star as Joy in "Shadowlands" (again directed by Ms. Blankenship), Marion in "I Came To New York To Write" at the Organic, The Mother Abess in "The Adventures of Herculina", at Next and Frederico Lorca's "The Public" for Streetsigns at The Chopin. She also appeared in "Tour De Farce" at both Wisdom Bridge and The Apollo, and one of her favorite roles; "101 Dalmatians", as villainess Cruella DeVille. Soon after, in late 1996 she landed a pivotal role in Charles Mee's "Time to Burn" at the Steppenwolf Theatre. Her close association with director Tina Landau was a relationship that would endure for many years to come. She was also cast in "Space" and "Berlin Circle" both written by Mee and directed by Landau and playing opposite such Steppenwolf notables as Amy Morton, Irma P Hall, Mike Nessbaum, Maryanne Mayberry, and the delicious Tom Irwin. In 1997, along wit her fellow cast, she received a Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Ensemble for Time to Burn. All 3 shows went on to appear in Time magazine's Top 10 Shows of the Year. She then landed the role of Mrs. Lynde in Ingmar Bergman's version of "A Dolls' House" called "Nora" which co starred Kate Collins and ran at The Court Theatre. In 1999 she met, and hooked up her wagon to the delightful and buoyant Mr. Larry Kramer. She then starred in his play "Just Say No" playing Nancy Regan to Gregg Louganis' "Jr". It was a love fest all the way around.

She shared the cover of The Advocate with Mr. Louganis, had a feature in POZ magazine, and was chosen as one of the Chicago Tribune's Top 10 People of the Year. She then appeared in the Spotlight section of Entertainment Tonight.

In 2000, Ms. Billings starred in a live stage version of "Xena" called "Xena! Live!" at the About Face Theatre in Chicago. The piece ran for almost 6 months, and was successful enough to spawn a second part, in which she joined later. She then lived out a childhood fantasy, and was cast as Rose in "Gypsy" directed by her old pal David Zak, and performed at the Bailiwick Theatre.

In 2001 she played misunderstood and fabulously dressed Margot Channing in "Applause" for Healthworks Theatre at The