

JEWISH WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

Fall 2008

Jewish Woman

Broadway Producer
Amanda Lipitz

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SUCCESSFUL WOMEN

Amanda Lipitz **Making It on Broadway**

By Susan Josephs

Like most little girls who fall in love with Broadway musicals, Amanda Lipitz signed up for every dance class, singing lesson and school play. "I never realized there were other things you could do in the theater besides becoming an actress," she says.

These days, Lipitz expresses her passion for musical theater offstage. At 28, she is a Tony-award-nominated Broadway producer, most recently of *Legally Blonde* (currently playing at The Palace Theatre on Broadway and on national tour), and the executive producer of the MTV series *Legally Blonde The Musical: The Search for Elle Woods*. With a reputation as a top-notch fundraiser, she spends her days talking to investors, reading the scripts that pile up on her desk, attending play readings and workshops and, most important, "infusing people with the passion I have for whatever project I'm working on."

"You have to be passionate," she says. "That's what makes a great producer. I could never get someone to invest in something I didn't love."

Lipitz is usually the youngest person at any gathering of top theater professionals, and she refuses to be intimidated by her age or gender. She can definitely relate to the *Legally Blonde* main character, Elle Woods, "who's judged because she's blonde. I'm not blonde, but I am a young woman, so I constantly have to prove myself," she says. "People are surprised when they meet me, and I always think, 'Do not judge a book by its cover.'"

Raised in Baltimore, Lipitz grew up in a traditional Jewish home and fell in love at an early age with Barbra Streisand, *Mary Poppins* and just about anything related to musicals. She started dance classes from the "moment I could walk," she says, and, at age 14, choreographed a musical with a cast of 23 kids while attending a performing-arts camp. She also learned all about fundraising from her parents, both committed Jewish philanthropists, who took her to board meetings in lieu of finding a babysitter.

"My parents really passed on to me the importance of philanthropy and charity work," she says, recalling her winter vacation during her junior year of college, when she and a friend raised \$25,000 to start their own nonprofit. Called the Stained Glass Project, their organization continues to provide inspirational reading material to ailing hospital patients.

Lipitz believes investors in Broadway musicals are practicing one of the "highest forms of *tzedakah*, which is to never let the people you're helping know you're helping them. My investors give blindly, and they're supporting a whole group of people who will never know their names," she says.

After receiving her BFA in theater from New York University, Lipitz knew she didn't want to live the life of an actress and, upon her father's suggestion, called the producer of a play-reading she had attended and loved. She got hired as an assistant, and "while I was horrible at filing, I was great with investors," she recalls.

By age 24, Lipitz signed on as the producer of the Tony-nominated musical *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and says she learned much about the business from other female Broadway producers, such as Margo Lion of *Hairspray* fame. Having recently formed a development company with legendary manager and producer Bernie Brillstein, she's "grateful to all the people who have taken me under their wing. I think Broadway is realizing it needs to support its young," she says. "We're the future of the industry."

As for her future, Lipitz, who is married, remains "open to anything. But it's safe to assume that if I'm working on a project, it's going to be related to musicals," she says. "Musicals will always be my first love."