MEET THE CAST: TERI ADAMS

TERI ADAMS (Iowa Housewife) has been with Menopause The Musical®! since 2006, where she first played IH at The American Heartland Theatre in her hometown, Kansas City, where it ran for 5 months. Since then, she has joined the MTM national touring company, and although still based out of KC, she has performed this role on numerous tours and sit-down productions across the country. Regional credits include Ruthless!, Blues In The Night, Dirty Blonde, Baby, Lend Me A Tenor, 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, and the World Premiere of Gregg Coffin’s Rightnextto Me. Teri most recently appeared in MTM, as well as Church Basement Ladies (The Last Potluck Supper) at The Merry Go Round Playhouse (NY) for the Fingerlakes Musical Theatre Festival. Thanks to my G4 family and my actual family, and thank you all for supporting live theatre.

MY STORY
Cancer. I hate that word. The fact is, the word cancer strikes a terrifying chord with everyone, and most especially if you've watched it decimate your family. Everyone on my Mother's side had had a cancer diagnosis, three out of five dying from the disease, and my paternal aunt died of breast cancer at 31. I knew all too well about my family history. Cancer had been up close and personal.

I had just turned 40, gotten married and was enjoying a particularly busy time in my career on stage. And then my doctor called. My cancer was discovered after a routine mammogram came back abnormal, resulting in a biopsy that revealed DCIS—a noninvasive, early form of breast cancer. It was good news, I was told. "If you're going to get cancer," my doctor said, "this is the type that is easiest to treat." I breathed a little easier and met with the surgeon who would perform the lumpectomy. My surgeon, the first of many, as well as my Oncologist were the same two women who had treated my Mother five years earlier. I was all scheduled to have the same surgery that had successfully removed my mom's tumor, when the doctor decided on a last minute scan. The technology involved, she explained, hadn't even been available when my mom was sick. That decision may have saved my life. The MRI discovered that I had several other spots in my right breast, and after biopsy, they told me that I would need a mastectomy. At that point, based on all of the information, as well as my family history, it didn't take very long for my doctors and I to decide to remove both breasts. On July 1st, 2008, I underwent a bilateral mastectomy. While in surgery, doctors discovered that the cancer had micro-metastasized, and my sentinel node biopsy revealed invasive cancer. I was diagnosed with Stage IIA ER-/PR-, HER2+ breast cancer, and after that things got complicated. As the diagnosis changed, so did the treatment plan.

I went through a year of chemotherapy with docetaxel (Taxotere), carboplatin and trastuzumab (Herceptin). I was also treated for iron-deficiency anemia, and over the next few years I underwent multiple surgeries due to infections and other complications. There were too many bumps in the road to count. So many scopes and scans. So many needles. So much of my time for so long was spent inside the walls of the Cancer Center or in the hospital. Five years after my initial diagnosis, I'd had 12 surgeries—the last one to remove a small mass on my kidney.

During treatment I was extremely tired, lost all but a tiny cap of my hair, and suffered from blood loss, resulting in severe anemia. There were countless butchers, dressings and drains. And there was pain. But the body is an amazing thing, and after everything mine has been through, I'm starting to appreciate it in a much deeper way.

Through it all, I made a point to be an active participant in the development of my treatment plan. I did a lot of online research and discovered that although there is useful stuff out there, contradictory information can get confusing and even cause more anxiety than peace of mind. I finally had to trust my medical team and started carrying a notebook with me to write down any questions I had, so I could later ask my doctor.
My family was my backbone, and my husband was an amazing caregiver. They were there for me every step of the way. I also had support from a local organization that offered support groups, exercise classes, nutritional information and even help finding bras and wigs. Having support from women who understand your journey and are living proof that you can survive is beyond measure.

The emotional impact, however, was a bit harder to handle. I felt like I was being pushed and pulled this way and that, from appointment to appointment, for different tests and treatments. It was easier to just go with the flow than to stop and digest how I was really feeling. I realize now that I dealt with the emotions more after the fact than in the middle of it all. Now, as I look back over that time, I am just now starting to fully appreciate and understand everything I went through and what it all means.

It’s been an incredibly long road, but I’ve officially graduated from doctor visits every three months to an annual checkup with my oncologist. Although I’m still processing everything, I’ve come to realize that my cancer diagnosis helped me put a lot of things into perspective. I try to not sweat the small stuff, to be kinder to myself and others, and to accept that I cannot control everything.

My scars make me beautiful. They remind me every day that I am a survivor. Cancer isn't as strong as I am. I realize now that I am stronger than I ever knew.
JUDY BLUE (Soap Star) is once again delighted to be a part of this celebration of women with this incredible company. She is proud to have been a part of the Chicago company of Menopause, the Musical for over 2 years and a veteran of many adventurous MTM tours. Some of Judy's credits include: Gary, and The Way West (Steppenwolf Theatre); Talking Pictures/Blind Date, Frank's Home, House/Garden, and A Little Night Music (Goodman Theatre); Romeo and Juliet, Richard III, and Winter's Tale (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); I Am Going to Change the World, Grande Hysterie, and Liquid Moon (Chicago Dramatists). Most recently having directed a well-received production of Mia McCullough's Impenetrable at Clockwise Theatre she is currently narrating the audio book series of The Sleuth Sisters. Favorite musical roles have included the Baker's Wife in Into the Woods, Edith Piaf in Piaf and Eva Peron in Evita. Other theatre's include: Writers Theatre, Collaboraction, Theatre At the Center, Dallas Theater Center, B Street Theatre, Syzygy, NY Henry Street, Arkansas Rep, Theatre Three and Stagewest. TV/Film includes: Chicago PD, Breakfast with Joe, The Onion, and Hollywood Jerome. An Actors' Equity member for almost three decades, she is also a member and served on the board of SAG-AFTRA. She is an associate of The Shakespeare Project of Chicago, Chicago Dramatists and Syzygy Theatre of L.A. Love to the Girlie Girls.

MY STORY
Ah, the story. I am so grateful for here and now. I feel like the luckiest person. My breast cancer in 2011 could be removed with a lumpectomy and controlled with radiation and (seemingly) endless medication. All around me are other women who have gone through a similar experience and those women who are forced to embrace a much deeper battle. I remember the daily fear of not knowing, and the happiness and sweet smile of my surgeon, Dr. Jeruss, when she reassures me that my surgery was successful and I can begin to feel normal again without the worry. I will never forget the friend who called and simply said, “well, …you’re in the club.” Gee, that's exactly how it feels. Now there is a responsibility to myself and to others to do what I can to keep the disease from returning. And a responsibility to pass on the information that is flooding to me, that has taken me out of denial. I am ready to find the answer for my nieces, their children, my friends and their children – I am not ready to welcome any more women into this club. We have better places to be.
MEET THE CAST: MEGAN CAVANAGH

MEGAN CAVANAGH (Earth Mother) is most recognized as Marla Hooch, from the Penny Marshall movie, A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN. Other film credits include: Mel Brooks’ ROBIN HOOD: MEN IN TIGHTS (Broomhilde) and (Essie) DRACULA: DEAD AND LOVING IT. She starred with Tim Allen and Kirstie Ally in FOR RICHER OR POORER (Levinia Yoder). She also starred with Christina Ricci in Disney’s remake of THAT DARN CAT (Lu). Megan voiced Judy Neutron in The Academy Award Nominated Animated Feature JIMMY NEUTRON: BOY GENIUS, and she also had the pleasure of doing the Nickelodeon TV series. Other Cartoon voices are: Queen Luna on the Nickelodeon animated series, WINX CLUB, Slog on TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU, and Amy Poehler’s animated series THE MIGHTY B, where Megan played Hillary Higgenbottom (Bessie’s Mom). Other TV credits include: Recurring character Trudy (who married Al on the last episode) on HOME IMPROVEMENT. Guest Starring on FRIENDS, WILL & GRACE, JUST SHOOT ME, WEST WING, ER, ROSEANNE and many others. Megan did eight episodes with Betty White and Bob Newhart in his series, BOB. She has performed in MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL® Since 2004 as Earth Mother and Iowa Housewife in San Francisco and Kuala Lampur, Malaysia. Noted Regional Credits include: Blithe Spirit (Madame Arcati), A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (Pseudolus), Jubilee (Queen/Butch), High Spirits (Madam Arcati). Megan is a proud member of Actors’ Equity Association Since 1987. MeganCavanagh.com

MY STORY
January 24, 2014 I had a routine mammogram and a 9mm node was discovered. I had a biopsy and was told I wouldn’t hear the results till Tuesday at the earliest, so when my phone rang at 8am Monday morning I knew it probably wasn’t good news. And I was right - “invasive carcinoma,” was the diagnosis. My head reeled. I was on tour with Menopause the Musical in Springfield, IL and I started to google what “invasive carcinoma” meant.

I returned home and met with my surgeon, Kristi Funk at Pink Lotus (she sounds like a rock star) and she explained that given the size of the node I was probably Stage I ILC (Invasive Lobular Carcinoma) and wouldn’t have to undergo chemotherapy just radiation, but we would have to go in and get the lump out and get it looked at under the microscope to see what we were dealing with. After a MRI five more nodes were found and I was scheduled for surgery March 3rd.

I had a partial mastectomy and four lymph nodes removed from under my left arm. Three of the four lymph nodes tested positive for cancer so I was back under the knife a week later to remove seven more lymph nodes - which, thankfully, all came back negative. But those blasted three positive nodes meant I was going to have to endure chemotherapy. I was now Stage II ILC.

I had four chemotherapy sessions every three weeks, and lost all my hair everywhere, then thirty radiation treatments. The radiation was intense but I got through it without a rash. During my treatments I discovered a cancer support center called WeSpark, in Woodland Hills, CA. Finding this place helped me so much! I joined an in-treatment support group and had a harp lesson. I got Reiki and acupuncture for free. I did mindful meditation and hypnotherapy. WeSpark is my new best friend and when I’m home between tours I race right back there to join my post treatment support group. I can’t emphasize enough the importance of having this kind of support when you are facing something as daunting as cancer.

The day after my last radiation treatment, I was on a flight to the east coast to attend my nephew’s wedding and then join a new Menopause the Musical tour. I was bald and worried that I wouldn’t have the energy, but with the support of my spouse
and the cast and crew I did it — followed by forty-eight more shows!

I now am dealing with lymphodema of the left breast. I undergo physical therapy two to three times a week and have to wear a device to help (the liquid that the lymph nodes would normally take care of) drain properly, along with a compression shirt.
I also have to take Tamoxifen for five years. This drug inhibits the estrogen production in my body, as my cancer feeds on estrogen, but it also majorly increases hot flashes and night sweats. While traveling on tour I single-handedly steam up the van windows near me and I have totally become my Earth Mother character - dripping and dropping!!

October 23, 2010 my sister, Mary Cay, died from brain cancer (glioblastoma). I miss her every day and I’m grateful that my cancer could show myself and my family that a diagnosis of cancer doesn’t necessarily mean death. My living through this has made me so much more alive - living each day and loving my life. Thanks to my immediate family, my WeSpark Family and my Menopause the Musical G4 family for being so supportive.
MEET THE CAST: LINDA BOSTON

LINDA BOSTON (Professional Woman) - Multi-talented performer with theater, film, music credits and a long run with MTM. Her theater accomplishments include “Crowns,” “Sophisticated Ladies” and the award-winning one-woman-show “Jackie ‘Moms’ Mabley: The Naked Truth.” (www.lindaboston.com). As a singer-songwriter and requested vocalist, she’s sung before Pres. Bill Clinton, Rev. Jesse Jackson, requested opening vocalist at the 2006 Detroit Mayoral Inauguration and much more. “Boston’s chops carry the set. Serve this one with moonlight and good conversation,” says Ambassador Magazine about her music CD, Permission: The Power Of Being. She’s heard in local, regional and national commercials, has over 20 supporting film credits, been recognized by the San Diego Black, Uptown and New Harvest Film Festivals, and has worked with performance greats including Michael Chiklis, Ray Liotta, Bencio Del Toro, Anthony Mackie, Whitney Houston, Tamala Mann and Pearl Cleage. Her 501c3 nonprofit, PEER Inc. (www.peerincredible.org), collaborates with organizations helping individuals develop their creative experiences. Linda says: “For everlasting change to come, KNOW we are all connected as ONE.” Thanks GFour, for connecting.

MY STORY
Challenges build integrity, while integrity builds fortitude. Is there any chance of it all building character?

Well, that's a spiritual concept that must be seen intuitively to be recognized externally. In my life, cancer, Alzheimers, relocations in and out of state, marriage, child birth, mortality and divorce lumped themselves together. Unfortunately at the same time. And when your anguish is tied to and with those you love, you question all of what 'challenges' are supposed to build. However, I know love is MAAT which is the Kemetic, Dogon or Egyptian word for creativity. There is no destruction in the midst of creativity regardless of the challenge; other than what is rectified through the process of balance and harmony. And then, even in that, there is no destruction, only correction. It's simply the processes of change. And the only thing constant is the change.

Our family was raised in Chicago. Knowing that two of my aunts and other friends and family members had passed on via their challenges with breast, uterine and other cancers, my sister Lorna boston had been working at MCI Telecommunications for eight years when she was diagnosed with bladder cancer. Additionally, our mother began showing signs of Alzheimer's disease. Yes, 1985 began the race toward the test. Lorna endured three years of chemotherapy and nine surgeries. At that time I was living in Detroit but I would go to help care for her as her marriage was dissolving. Trials and stress led to her unemployment and divorce, but it also grew her into the world of self-employment via the music industry. She formed her own band and began working in Chicago's well known music establishment, Lonie Walker's Underground Wonderbar, where she is still employed today and hosting the Tuesday Night Pro Jam. Simultaneously, our older brother, Lamonte was a major music influence to us both and was an integral part of the Wonderbar fabric, as well, known as LB's Machine, which made a major impact throughout Chicago's Rhythm & Blues community. Ironically, he was diagnosed with Lymphatic Leukemia in 1994.

You can bet, much had been happening. In 1988 I moved our mother, Pearline Boston to my home in Detroit to manage her care. I married, gave birth to a daughter Aziza Gilbert, divorced and learned of the beauty, inspiration and strength in home hospice can and will provide. Our mother made her transition in 1998 and my intuitive awakening became clearer. 'Purpose' was in the process of revelation so incidentally, her passing encouraged me to start a non-profit 501c3 organization called PEER Inc. (www.peerincredible.org). Then, after a long hard fight and several moments of remission, a
virus further complicated our brother's immune system and he made his spiritual transition in 2007.

There was more to come. 2008 to 2011, I had severe health challenges myself. One battle, in particular, brought me to the ebb of my own transitional mortality. Had stress caused dis-ease? No doubt, my past, present and future purpose had become evident?

WHAT AN AWAKENING!!!

Yes, we ARE spirits having human experiences. And though we may leave this earthen realm...as ancestors, we really go no where. This is just a training ground for the next phase. Now, more than ever, it is encouraging for me to surround myself with those who fervently seek the need to know and heal themselves from ALL diagnosis', by changing their diets, aligning themselves holistically and meditating spiritually and metaphysically.

You may ask, "Why....when the doctor knows best?"

Well, you can bet I realized something was going on, making the picture much bigger, greater, grander than the past pains, wars and challenges anyone in my family had been through, and music was a healing tool for all of us. Most importantly for my brother and sister. Our mother and father planted in us, the seeds of healing embedded in creativity. In fact, the songs I've written on my CD "Permission: The Power Of Being" reflect the spiritual walk I've been on. Through each and every challenge, to religious independence, onto metaphysical enlightenment...a paradigm shift, if you will, has taken place. Now, I seek the need to see myself as being part of the whole...incapsulated with past, present, future, earthen and cosmic realities. I now know I have the chance and choice to manifest my own intentions. And through my very own imagination, I WANT and WILL, to share in a process that manifests YOUR healing as well, regardless of the challenge.

In the words of master physicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, "....we're all connected to each other biologically, to earth chemically, and to the rest of the universe atomically....". To over-stand and maybe even inner-stand my walk and connection to the Creator Of All Things, visit PEER's satellite division at www.stompministries.com. There, you will see why and how I choose to KNOW LOVE IS MAAT...MAAT IS ETERNAL... and we have the power to heal the land, ourselves and each other...holistically.

Join me, won't you?  Ase.