

Willoughby woman working her way through an alphabetical reshooting of scenes from Streep movies

By Mark Meszoros

Entertainment@News-Herald.com

It's 2 p.m. on a Tuesday, and Nancy Telzerow is sitting on a hospital bed and having a piece of birthday cake.

While it is her birthday, she's not sick — the hospital bed is in a room where nursing students learn their skills at the Eastern Campus of Cuyahoga Community College. No, Telzerow is more than fine, having just shot a scene from 1990's "Postcards From the Edge." In the scene, Suzanne Vale (Meryl Streep in the film) is visiting her mom, Doris Mann (Shirley MacLaine) in the hospital.

The scene has just been re-enacted and filmed for "A to Z With Meryl and Me," a project in which Telzerow is playing roles first played by Streep in 26 movies, one for each letter of the alphabet. The "P" movie is in the books.

Telzerow, who lives in Willoughby, got the idea from last year's "Julie & Julia," in which a woman decides to work her way through Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" by making all the dishes and blogging about the experience. Streep portrayed Child in the film, thus the connection.

The project began in earnest on Valentine's Day with the posting of a scene from "Adaptation."

"And it will end Feb. 14," says Telzerow, now sitting at a nearby desk with her piece of cake. "I refer to it as my 'love project.'"

"I love it, which is why I'm working on my birthday. You have to love it."

Telzerow, who grew up in Ashtabula and attended Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, has made a career of acting while living in various Cleveland suburbs. Her résumé boasts film and theater work, and, like almost any actor, she's always looking for more.

Although it's clearly fun for her, she hopes "A to Z With Meryl and Me" also will boost her career.

"I knew that I would have a great reel when it was all said and done," she says. "I'm acting 26 different scenes in completely different roles and broadening my range as an actor."

In truth, there wasn't a movie for every letter in the alphabet, so there are a few "wild card" movies

— films picked at random. However, each of the 26 scenes was chosen by Telzerow, with practicality in mind. A scene couldn't call for rain, for example; nor could it call for many actors.

That's because "A to Z" is being done for next to nothing, she says, because every person involved has donated his or her time.

"The idea is cross-promotion," says Telzerow, who writes about her collaborators in her blog. "A lot of people have already gotten work from it. I'm trying to get people work from it, and, if not, I'm trying to get them press."

She says she's used a few of the same crew members repeatedly but many different actors, most of whom are friends.

"We have a great talent pool here — just not everyone knows about them," she says. "These are all professionals."

Credited at the end of the "Postcards" scene as working with Telzerow this day are actor Marje Rody as Doris Mann, location manager Maria Ecks, production assistant Lee Johnson and Terri Negrón (tech support).

Although not involved with the "Postcards" scene, Devon Collins of Cleveland has filmed many of the scenes and says they've been a fun challenge for a filmmaker because there's no location scouting.

"It's been a real guerrilla-type production," Collins says. "It's a great exercise for me.")

Along with Tri-C in Highland Hills, shooting locales have included Visible Voice Books in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood, The WallEye Gallery in Cleveland and Divine Word Catholic Church in Kirtland. She has gone as far as Mansfield, but also shot one scene in her Willoughby apartment.

After filming, scenes are finished quickly and typically posted the next day to YouTube, where Telzerow has a channel. She also blogs extensively about all aspects of the project.

"I blog every single day because there's stuff that goes on in between (shoots)," she says. "There's a lot of prep work."

What's left, besides films for the rest of the alphabet? The big fish.

"Now I've got my eyes set on Meryl," Telzerow says. "It's time for her to make me a phone call."

A tall order, maybe, but she says she's been in contact with Streep's agent, assistant and publicist and says that each has promised to forward her request to the actress. The dream, Telzerow says, is a meeting on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

"She is one of my favorites," Telzerow says of Streep. "Of all of the actors out there, she's the best

that's out there right now. And she has the most diversity, so I knew if I had to do scenes that she'd done, I knew, for sure, I'd have a great range when it was all said and done"

And she wants to be clear that she isn't trying to mimic Streep's performances. These are Telzerow's interpretations of the roles.

"My approach has nothing at all to do with what she did, nothing," Telzerow says. "No one should ever try to do it as Meryl did. She's amazing."

Still, she can't help but compare the performances once her scenes are finished.

"I almost always think hers is better," she says.

"Once in a while, I think, 'I did that justice.' "

She says she didn't expect all the assistance, love and support she's gotten since starting the project.

"A lot of people say, 'I can't believe what a great idea it is.' A lot of people were inspired by it," she says. "But I think a lot of people are waiting to crash and burn."

Collins says he was skeptical at first and has been impressed that she's pulling everything together.

"She brings a tremendous amount of effort to every shoot, to every piece of the project," he says. "When you have someone who cares about it as much as she does ... as a professional you can't help but give the same kind of effort."

Although Telzerow has a sense of humor about the project — check out the official trailer for "Meryl and Me" (tinyurl.com/36yufec) — she takes it very seriously.

"It's the most important work I've ever done in my life."

Online

Nancy Telzerow's webpage: www.nancytelzerow.com

Her blog: www.nancytelzerow.blogspot.com

YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/NancyTelzero

