

Interview: Mary Kay Cook Presents ‘Wednesday’s Child’ at Women in Film Chicago Event

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 18, 2012 - 4:40pm

- [Anna Jung](#) [2]
- [Emerging Talent: Females in Focus](#) [3]
- [Fitting](#) [4]
- [Grace McPhillips](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Interview](#) [7]
- [Mary Kay Cook](#) [8]
- [Off Into Space](#) [9]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [10]
- [Wednesday's Child](#) [11]
- [Women in Film Chicago](#) [12]

CHICAGO – One of the best organizations in the local arts community is Women in Film Chicago. Known for their networking events, they will be highlighting three filmmakers on Monday, March 19th. The “Emerging Talent: Females in Focus” program features the short films “Fitting” (Grace McPhillips), “Off Into Space” (Anna Jung) and “Wednesday’s Child,” produced by Mary Kay Cook.



L to R: Mary Kay Cook (‘Wednesday’s Child’), Grace McPhillips (‘Fitting’) and Anna Jung (‘Off Into Space’)
Photo credit: Heather Stumpf Popio

“Wednesday’s Child” is a compelling narrative piece, an example of extreme parenting taken too far. “Fitting” is a slice-of-life, set in a bridal shop during the ritualistic tailoring of the gown and bridesmaid’s dresses. The documentary short is “Off Into Space,” a story about a Chicagoan, his 15 minutes of fame and the aftermath. The program (information below) will be at the Cultural Center in downtown Chicago.

One of the filmmakers representing the evening is producer and actress Mary Kay Cook, who spoke with HollywoodChicago.com about the various roles in her career, and the element of the female voice in the film industry.

HollywoodChicago.com: You will be showing the film that you produced, ‘Wednesday’s Child’ as part of a Women in Film Chicago Event at the Cultural Center. What excites you about being part of this program, and how will it best celebrate women filmmakers in Chicago?

Mary Kay Cook: I’m excited to be part of something that celebrates female creativity. Also, it’s an event that targeted toward the advertising community and the film production community. I see Women in Film Chicago as a connector between those two sets of great people. We don’t often get to come together for events like this, so this gives us an opportunity to meet some new people.

HollywoodChicago.com: You just spoke of ‘female creativity.’ What do you think that spark is about, and what makes it distinct?

Cook: It allows me a platform to dream, to share my viewpoint, to provoke and excite people. I think as filmmakers, that everyone has a story

to share. For me, female insight is not as well represented on the big screen as men in the business, so that particular spark is an empowering way to share my stories to the world.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the genesis or your involvement as producer with 'Wednesday's Child,' and what satisfied you the most on how it came together?

Cook: I was brought the project. It had been in development for five years, and it hadn't gotten off the ground. I had worked with director Rocco Cataldo and cinematographer Michael Kwieford before, and they said to me that they wanted someone who shared their vision, dream and sensibility for this project, and asked me to do it. I mistakenly said 'yes.' [laughs] Seriously, it's really been a wonderful journey ever since.

What really satisfied me the most about the film that when everything was done, it looked like how we wanted it to look like in the beginning. And so often with projects, especially short films, things go wrong, you can't do a particular scene, you can't find a chicken. [laughs] But everything we set out to do we did, it has a whimsical lightness contrasted with a very dark storyline. I was really glad that all those elements came together.

HollywoodChicago.com: You are sharing this short film night with the narrative piece called 'Fitting,' which is written, performed and produced by Grace McPhillips, and a short documentary called "Off Into Space" by Anna Jung. What is it about these two filmmakers that makes them distinct in their approach?

Cook: I think what is interesting is that both of these women come from different backgrounds, and they have distinct and different points of view. The fact that all three of us are sharing the same stage just shows the wide range of female talent and perception.

HollywoodChicago.com: What advantages have you had in being associated with Women in Film Chicago, and what message can you relay about the organization for women who are may be considering joining up?

Cook: Women in Film Chicago is a great organization because it really works to empower its members, which by the way are not all women. It is a female focused group, but exists to help all their members. They have a backlot series where you can tour different production houses in Chicago. At their Executive Breakfast, you get to meet and network with powerful women in the industry. There is a mentor program for students, where more established industry people help beginning careers get their foot in the door. And at their end-of-the-year gala, the Focus Awards, they celebrate distinguished females in the arts. Basically, the opportunities and networking they provide throughout the year offers a continued and varied benefit.

HollywoodChicago.com: A film producer is defined in so many ways, especially in smaller budgeted films. What is your favorite element of being a producer, and what type of task or tasks have you done on a film that really made you feel like that role works for you?

Cook: With my background in acting, I really enjoy the casting process and have a lot of fun with that. Because I've been on both sides of the table, I can really help the director get the best performances for what they need, which makes it easier for them. Another thing I enjoy is that it's never the same thing on any given day. For example, on 'Wednesday's Child,' one day I was in a truck on my way to see a priest, the next day I was scouring the city for a live chicken and the next day I was wrangling kids for a scene in the schoolhouse. The fact that it's always different is exciting and challenging for me.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since you are also an actress, what element when you were a child really made you interested in becoming a performer?



Actress and Producer Mary Kay Cook
Photo credit: Chris Popio

Cook: It's hard for me to be specific about what made me want to be a performer when I was a child, because I was always doing things that

were performance oriented. If I have to go to a singular event, one of my first acting jobs was to help my mother meet Neil Diamond. She was a 'Diamond Girl,' and Neil was in town. She was obsessed with meeting him. We staked out the local hotel where we thought he was staying, and we heard a security guard saying into a walkie-talkie, 'the 'Frog Prince' has moved to the 16th floor,' meaning of course Neil.

We went up to the 16th floor, and my Mom sent me up to the security desk that they had set up. I went skipping up, and said 'hi, what's going on?' And they just told me to move along. And I shot back, 'oh no, my uncle runs this hotel and you can't tell me what to do.' I was making it all up on the spot. The door behind the desk opened, and I knew it was Neil, from all the album covers. I called out to him, he gave me a smile and shut the door. So then we knew he was in the hotel. Later, we found out that the manager of the hotel was African-American. [laughs]

So we went around the back, and sure enough he shows up. We'd made brownies for him and I ran up and gave them to him, and it included a letter from my Mom. About a month later, we got a headshot and a personal note back from Neil Diamond thanking us for the brownies. The note stayed on our mantle for the next decade. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: What have you learned about yourself specifically in the process of auditioning and performing?

Cook: I learned during the process that I was a lot more sensitive than I thought I was, and also stronger than I knew.

HollywoodChicago.com: So many of the great Chicago actors eventually move onto New York and Los Angeles. Is there something that Chicago can do, in trying to establish their own identity as a film town, to keep good actors interested in local production?

Cook: My answer is not what you'd expect. What sets Chicago apart, and should be used as the core of its Identity, is that we have so much going on besides film. We have industries that are thriving that should also be celebrated, they provide so much input into the creative life. Instead of being a town where the only topic is film, we can have conversations about art, music, food, architecture and all of these different, vibrant communities. There is so much that feeds you as an artist here, that you can never get stagnant. It is just so rich here.

HollywoodChicago.com: When you are studying for a role, what is the most important step in the process for you, regarding taking the script and developing a character?

Cook: When I hear that character's voice, that's when I know that I'm hooked into it. It's a springboard from there to everything else. It's a fluid process, and it's different every time and different for every character. There are several techniques to get there, but in the end it's about getting to the voice and just rolling with it.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is coming up for you, either in the producer or acting realm?

Cook: I am a producer with Potenza Productions in Chicago, a full service digital production company. It's a great job because I get to work on a variety of projects, from short films and music videos, to corporate videos and commercials. The great thing about that is I use both sides of my brain – the concept and creative side, plus the side that puts together a list to make it happen. I get to play, and I get to tell people what to do. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally, at what point in your career so far, did you stop and think 'how did I get here?'

Cook: You want the real story, or the story you can print? [laughs] There were so many, from an acting point of view, but probably when I premiered a film at the Sundance Film Festival, the whole experience surrounding it and the whole vibe.

"Emerging Talent: Females in Focus" will be presented by Women in Film Chicago at the Cultural Center in Chicago on Monday, March 19th at 6pm. Admission is free. Featuring the short films "Fitting" by Grace McPhillips, "Off Into Space" by Anna Jung and "Wednesday's Child," produced by Mary Kay Cook. [Click here](#) [13]for information and registration.



[14]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [15]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [14]

© 2012 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 19 2024 - 5:38pm):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/17872/interview-producer-mary-kay-cook-presenting-wednesday-s-child-at-women-in-film-chicago-ev>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/anna-jung>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/emerging-talent-females-in-focus>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/fitting>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/grace-mcphillips>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/mary-kay-cook>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/off-into-space>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/wednesday-s-child>



[12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/women-in-film-chicago>
[13] <http://www.wifchicago.org/events?eventId=463372&EventViewMode=2&CalendarViewType=1&SelectedDate=3/6/2012>
[14] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
[15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>