



News: Interview with Lisa Rothauser & Tor Hyams of ‘LIFE. WTF?’



Tor Hyams and Lisa Rothauser. The Couple behind ‘LIFE. WTF?’

After sold out shows at Joe’s Pub and 42 West, the dynamic new songwriting team of Tor & Lisa (Grammy-nominated producer/songwriter Tor Hyams and Broadway singer/actress Lisa Rothauser) are back for one night only – with the next evolution of *LIFE. WTF?* It’s their fun-filled evening of song, truth and laughter as Lisa traces some of life’s unexpected twists and turns.

Life doesn’t always go according to plan. St. Louis native and Broadway actress and singer, Lisa Rothauser, grew up with a passion for singing and a

love of showbiz. She broke away from small town life and made it to the bright lights of Broadway only to be swept away to the 'burbs by the man of her mother's dreams. WTF? Ready for a change, Lisa sent the husband packing, dropped the kids off at school, and is headed straight back to the stage. *LIFE. WTF?* is her hilarious and inspiring musical transformation from Broadway performer to Stepford wife and back again.

New York Theatre Guide caught up with Lisa and Tor as they were polishing up the show, and they were kind enough to share a few things with us.

NYTG: First off, how did each of you choose this as a career? How did you meet?

Lisa: I fell in love with being a musical theatre performer while playing Aldonza in *Man of La Mancha* junior year of high school and knew I needed to be in living in New York City making it happen. After performing in the 2nd National Tour and Broadway companies of *The Producers*, my life turned to raising two boys and trying to fit-in as a Stepford wife in CT. Ehem. I continued to do voice-over and commercial work but we kept moving and I kept getting farther away from what I set out to do. After meeting Tor, we naturally fell-into writing for musical theatre, starting with a semblance of our our own story depicted in our first musical *Stealing Time*. I'd written songs in the past but this was something different; more elevated ... special. Ironically it has brought me back to performing more than ever with a deeper understanding of storytelling, character, musicality and passion I had no idea was possible.

Tor: I was a record producer and composer in Los Angeles. About the time I turned forty, I had a small, well, maybe a rather large crisis of faith. I was working in music, but for some reason, I still wasn't content. After coming across a Facebook group from the performing arts camp I attended as a kid, I realized I needed to go back to my roots in musical theater. I wrote my first show, *Greenwood*, with Adam LeBow, which debuted at NYMF in 2011. The experience was so moving and felt so right, I knew I had finally found my true musical path in life.

After *Greenwood*, an agent approached Tor about performing a showcase of his material. Shortly after that, we met at a industry meet-n-greet. Lisa needed a demo produced and Tor needed his showcase produced. So we

made a deal. Little did we know that both our lives were about to change dramatically.

NYTG: What is the best part of being “married” to your collaborator? And the most trying part?

Lisa & Tor: Well, one thing’s for sure. We’re not married. But, yeah, basically, we are ... just without all that legal stuff getting in the way of collaboration! The best part of sharing our lives and working together is that we’re constantly deepening the way in which we work and our communication gets more evolved the more we know each other. We’re very close to being at the point where we don’t have to talk at all! That’s actually kind of true. The musical and lyrical language we speak now is at the point where we know what the other is going to say before we have to say it. That’s pretty special. The most trying part is actually the opposite side of that same coin. It can be difficult to separate the work from the personal. We make sure we remember to have fun so we don’t get too bogged down and also create some separate time to process our own individual thoughts and instincts which can get morphed when living all-in!

NYTG: How do you keep family issues from affecting work, and vice versa? Or do you?

L&T: We are both very focused on family. We are also partners in every way so when one side of our family is taking precedence, the other can do the work, and vice versa. Sometimes, when something seems like it is blocking the work, there is an opportunity to use it in the writing. That’s always a fun and a twisted surprise. Then again, if you aren’t putting yourself into what you are doing, the product isn’t going to be good.

NYTG: How do you work out artistic differences?

L&T: I would assume pretty much like everyone. We talk it out, argue, yell, walk away...just with us we can make out at the end of it. Oh, and a martini helps.

NYTG: What has you excited about *LIFE*. *WTF*?

Lisa: The message. It’s a hero’s journey. It’s a female journey. It’s my story, but it is also the story of what is happening inside most women ie. the

struggle to be successful at a profession, and be the perfect wife, and the perfect mother. There was an article in the NYTimes this weekend titled 'Poor Little Rich Women' by Wednesday Martin and she nailed something that I actually lived, but escaped; the prison we put ourselves in when we look to a man for security, approval, and self-worth. When you lose yourself in order to please one of the masters of the universe, you become a shell of a human and pretty much running around doing everything half-assed and pleasing no one. I woke up and realized that I have a voice. And that voice needed to belt out some show tunes!

NYTG: What do the two of you want to achieve as a team in your careers?

L&T: We would love to see our productions through to Broadway. That is the ultimate destination and we want to see it...and soon!

NYTG: Thank you so much, Tracy, for taking time out of your very busy schedules to talk to the New York Theatre Guide. We will be seeing much more of you in the future!

LIFE. WTF? will be presented at "Broadway's Supper Club" 54 Below (254 West 54th Street – between Broadway & 8th Avenue) on Friday, May 29th at 9:30p.m. There is a \$35 music charge (and a \$25 food/drink minimum). For tickets and information, click [here](#). Tickets on the day of performance after 4:00 are only available by calling (646) 476-3551.