

# Scene and Heard: Mama Cast



Photo Credit: Deb Gagnon

This summer was the best. I had the pleasure of working on two big time productions - HBO's "Newsroom" (in small quarters with the two major stars of that show), and then shortly after, found myself standing two feet from Emma Stone and Joaquin Phoenix in that oft-talked-about summertime film, the Woody Allen Project. I was called in about three days before on each, and I jumped at the chance. This is, in part, a big thank you to a behind-the-scenes lady who makes it all happen. It's also a little bit of history on Rhode Island's own Mama Cast (yup, not Cass). It ain't easy but she makes it look that way.

Need an old church, or a guy who's got Louie IV pantaloons and a ruffled shirt? How about people who can show up at a moment's notice for a park scene or a rock concert mosh pit? A guy with a long, red scraggly beard? No problem. The Hollywood folks know where to go because she's hot! And, she's got this great new website, a slew of cool jobs and a bunch of neat-o connections - especially for the actors in these parts!

Who is she? She's Anne Mulhall of LDI Casting. And how the heck did she get into casting? She was an actor in RI, of course — mostly theater. She did some auditioning as an actor at CP Casting in Boston, and acted here and there. She made her move to NY and, lo and behold (you'll see that phrase more than once in this article), she ended up starring in her own one woman Lily Tomlin-esque show in NYC, called "Relatively Speaking," while also working a regular job. I told you she was impressive. She decided she wanted to get into production and the back end of things, so she moved to LA. Friends in NY and Cali gave her names and numbers, she called a few and, lo and behold (told ya), she gets herself a job on "MAD TV." Wow. Not bad for a first timer who was tenacious and made a few calls. She ended up as an assistant to one of the executive producers. She observed and learned there how the casting process happened, and also got more involved in work besides "MAD TV."

It's now 1999 and she returns to her beloved RI. She did some stage managing for The Gamm Theatre. She also helped Trinity audition actors and saw a ton of people from all over. She also reconnected with CP Casting, but soon realized there wasn't any casting going on down in Rhody. In 2001, she decided to go out on her own. After watching local commercials and television shows, she'd call the production company and ask, "Who did your commercial?," pushing for info, making suggestions, and offering help in any way that she could. At that time the work was very sporadic, not even a part time thing. But, as they say, life is change, and things were about to do just that.

It's around 2006 now. Enter "Brotherhood," an American television drama series created by Blake Masters about the intertwining lives of the Irish-American Caffee brothers from Providence. "Brotherhood" received widespread critical acclaim with critics particularly praising Masters and Bromell's nuanced writing and the central performances of the two Jasons, Clarke and Isaacs. The show even won a Peabody Award, but did not attract a large audience.

After producer Elizabeth Guber Stephen was told they couldn't shoot in Boston due to budget, she worked out a deal with the Rhode Island Film Office to work within the network budget. The RI Film Office's Steve Feinberg wrote the complex legislation that led to the tax incentives, which was quite an accomplishment on Feinberg's part. But before that happened, he was responsible for obtaining a grant to bring the pilot here from its original location in Toronto, even though they had offices there already. It resulted in the show being shot here, definitely a boon for our little state.

The new legislation made it a very busy time for Anne, and LDI was born.

Anne is still a busy lady. Right now, she's casting for a film from New York, another one called *Knightsville*, which is a major flick about to be done in RI, and of course stuff that's under wraps. But that doesn't stop her from casting student films. She even got the chance to flex her acting chops recently, in the soon-to-be-released *Almost Mercy* by Tommy DeNucci and the Woodhaven gang. (It's fun - go see it).

I asked Anne to name one of the obstacles that keeps our local actors from getting hired more on the Hollywood films that come through our little state. Her answer was "talent level," meaning that if someone lives in LA and goes on auditions constantly and is taking classes and working their craft all the time, then we RI actors should be stepping up our game, too. I know a lot of film actors don't want to hear this but, hell yeah! Do some stage! Get some coaching, put yourself out there in unfamiliar situations and push yourself beyond your comfort limits so that you can sport the different things that come through your life as an actor. Aw, go on, do it! You know you can.

These days, Anne works out of her space at Kay Studios, which she also manages and markets for the owner and personal friend Greg Gormley. Kay Studios is the only green screen in RI, and is a forerunner in film production, music services and corporate commercials. Other services include constructing and striking sets. Greg and Anne also are opening the studio up to all kinds of things. They're considering everything and everyone. The space can be used for things like music videos, high school bands, musical band rehearsal or commercial work. They are clearly thinking outside the box.

As crazy as the film business is - as I like to say, the Jenga tower or house of cards that it can be - the business still makes Anne's heart beat wildly. She knows she should be doing this. She knows she should be doing this in Rhode Island. In addition to finding talent, she can coach and teach someone how to conduct themselves in an audition, and give them the knowledge they need to nail the audition or perfect the role once they've got it. Anne is one of those ladies who has a multitude of talents, whether she is in front of the camera, or working the scenes behind it. From anyone's vantage point, her star is clearly on the rise.

To learn more about Anne Mulhall and LDI Casting and the services she provides, please visit her website at [ldipro.com](http://ldipro.com). And also visit the website of Kay Studios for information on their services, which can be found here: [kaystudiosri.com/index.asp](http://kaystudiosri.com/index.asp), or call Greg at 401-865-6306. You'll be glad you did. And don't forget - film is rolling people. Especially in Rhode Island.

