



Interview With Actress Nicole Oliver

By [Ruth](#) on September 2, 2016 in [Interview](#), [movie](#), [television](#)



Those of you who follow me regularly know of my fondness for Hallmark programming in general, and it is a true joy to interview all of the cast involved with their shows, films, etc.

because I figure if Hallmark hired them, they are indubitably positive, kind, generous and humble people. And all of those terms merely scratch the surface when describing the empyrean Nicole Oliver. Although it was the most current *Aurora Teagarden* film that caused me at last to learn her name, I have been aware of Nicole's existence due to other

Hallmark films as well as *First Wave*, one of my favorite shows of all-time. Earlier this summer,

I had the opportunity to have an intellectually stimulating and positively delightful chat with Nicole from one mom to another about a wide variety of topics ranging from life, careers, and everything in between.

RH: First of all, there was a group of *My Little Pony* fans who found out I was interviewing you, and they had so many questions for you—it was amazing!

NO: Aren't they the best? I love the fan groups, but I do want to caution parents on one thing. When your kids get involved in fandoms of any sort, it's fantastic, right? It gives them a creative outlet. But we still need to be parents and make sure that everyone in that community they're interacting with, especially online—which can be so anonymous—is as pure and as gentle-hearted as your child entering into it. As the mother of two kids myself, I choose to keep things on the PG level, but as always, that is up to each parent and child to work out for themselves. To each their own.

On a positive note, what I can say about the show is that being a part of *My Little Pony* has allowed me to travel the world, to meet people from all walks of life, to inspire me that us humans are going to be okay after all. If you would have told me that I'd be a part of a show—another generation of a show I used to watch when I was a kid about ponies—I would have called you crazy. *My Little Pony* has been this incredible quest on so many levels. And the fans—the Bronies—are outstanding. And they've grown so much and encompass all ages from two to a hundred and two. Men, women, teens, kids. All sorts of people come to the Brony conventions, and the show is really about a place where we can all come, and together we can be stronger. And that's such an incredible, wonderful message, especially in these days and times that we're in, right? That show has been phenomenal. The fans are amazing. The support of me on social media has been ridiculous. And it's super, super, super humbling when you have people come up to you and say how much you've affected them in a positive way. I've had fans throughout my career tell me how something I've done has affected them, and that just blows me away. I don't take any of that for granted. Especially having done some of the Brony conventions, I've had people who have—because they've met other Bronies—regained their hope. They didn't think anybody cared about them, but then they found a community where they feel like they belong. They think of that community as family, but more importantly, they think better of themselves and they can feel proud of themselves. There's always two sides to fandom, and I just choose to not engage with the uglier side of things. I remain with those who use the fandom for good.

In the show, my character is such a role model—almost like the Yoda of the ponies. That's a lot of pressure 'cause you're really not allowed to make mistakes. But as a person, I think fallible beings are amazing. From challenge comes growth. When you make a mistake, you learn. Princess Celestia, one of the characters I play, is so straight and tight and perfect in some ways with her words and her lessons and her support. When people meet you, sometimes people endow you with the qualities of your characters. And while I'm a mom, I'm a far cry from perfect. Sometimes those are big boots to fill.

It's been an interesting career about learning responsibility for social media. What you post, what you say, how you say it. You have to be true to yourself, but sometimes things can become more interesting than I'd imagined. There have been moments that inappropriate things have come across my feed in relation to my character, but I quickly put a stop to such things and let those involved know that this stops now and to remove themselves from my feed. But overall, the fans on social media have been really great. I've learned a lot. It blows my mind.



Picture Credit: Liz Rosa

KWIK KWOTE

Giles Pantan, co-worker/co-star/friend

“Nicole is a powerhouse. She’s an incredibly dedicated, knowledgeable, and professional actor and person. She’s also one of the most supportive actors I’ve met. She has this amazing momma bear [or Pony] quality that she brings to the entire community. She’s always looking out for us and making sure everyone is OK. Be it something simple like offering the most amazing lozenges for voice actors with a sore throat or something huge like taking the time to negotiate for all Canadian actors to help evolve union policies. Not to mention she’s so incredibly loving and supportive to her own family as well. To be honest, I have no idea where she finds the time to do it all. My guess is either cloning or she has some sort of time machine. “



It sounds to me like you're being a good role model for the kids/fans. You make it clear how far it goes, and if they go beyond that, they have to do that away from you. And I think that is great.

I love that people are creative with the show. It inspires people to draw. There's a Netflix documentary of a guy who used to be a graphic artist, and he did a couple of tours in Iraq, and as a result, he suffered from PTSD. He stopped drawing, and when he came back, he was just shell shocked. He was babysitting his niece—that was really all he could do. And he was watching My Little Pony, and it inspired him to start drawing again. He came to one of the first Brony conventions in New York—in 2012, I think it was—and he gave me his very first drawing, and it's framed above my desk. And it's inspired him to draw again.

"That's wild." I told him, "You're the one who did all that work. You did that. But thank you for saying that I inspired you." I mean, I have my heroes too who have inspired me. The kids still think I'm a hero, so there ya go. {laughs}

BronyCon is probably the biggest convention. It's in Baltimore every year. There was ten thousand fans last year—all *My Little Pony* fans. Ten thousand. And that's neat 'cause I'm a mother of two boys. The fans who are young men—between twelve and sixteen, seventeen—who are there who have had the courage to tell their parents that they want to go, and their parents go with them to support them. And it's so important having teenagers to let them know that whatever they're into, you've got to make them not feel weird about it. Whether it's heavy metal music or whatever it is to not—you know like my parents' generation who would make you feel like an idiot and then you wonder why both parents are like, "See ya!" I don't encourage bad things or negativity, but I certainly encourage exploring creativity and embracing who you are.

Shifting gears a bit, what was it that inspired you to become an actress?

Oh, such a good question. As I'm getting older, I find I'm asking myself all the time, "What was I thinking?" {laughs} But this is the only job I've ever done. I've been a performer for over twenty-six years. I started out as a dancer. I started dancing when I was three. My very first performance on stage, I walked out on stage, sat down and peed my pants in front of all those people. And then I ran off the stage. {laughs} And that's how it all began! I took dancing, and I loved dancing. I was on pointe when I was eight, but I blew my knees out when I was twelve. But I loved to perform. So I did the school play. I was a smart kid, so I fast-tracked through school. I finished high school when I was sixteen, seventeen years old. I did grades nine, ten, and eleven in two years. And I thought I'd be an entertainment lawyer 'cause when I was growing up, there were always lots art and music and movies in our house. My parents loved it all. My dad had a big screen TV in the '80's, and we had every VHS known to man. There was always music playing in the house. And we would go to musicals. They took me to the theater and the symphony—I was really lucky. They took me to sporting events too, so I had that side. But we were raised on a diet of not just watching TV and movies, but seeing doctors and lawyers and nurses and teachers. Seeing other people do creative, fantastical things for a living. So I thought I'd be a lawyer, but I thought I'd go into entertainment law. Maybe criminal law because as my parents knew, I was really good at an argument.

But I did the school play, and that was it. I was hooked. And I said to my parents, "I want to be an actress." And my parents said, "Okay, but you need to get an education." So I auditioned for theater schools at the university level. I was accepted at *York University* in Toronto, and I've never looked back. I remember walking out on stage and saying my first line, and I don't remember what happened in between, and then it was the end of the play and we were bowing. It was like I was somewhere else. To be in someone else's shoes is intoxicating and magical. And that's certainly what hooked me.



When I was reading the little biography on your IMDB page, it said you had gotten a Master's Degree?

Yes, I went back and got that Master's Degree. I made the decision when my kids were four and six to start that journey. I always said I had this plan that I was saving my money to rent a house in Italy for a couple of months when I turned that magic birthday—we won't say which one. Spain and Italy are two places I just melt when you say that—their country names. And I feel like I need to be there and smell it and be a part of it all. And so I thought, "Okay, this is what we're gonna do. We're gonna go for the summer. We're gonna rent a house. We'll just explore." And then I started getting really frustrated with the realities of a Type A personality. I'm a control freak. I'm very smart, and it's very difficult to be a performer where you just give yourself over. You're rejected all the time. And whether you get a job or not has nothing to do with how smart you are or how clever you are, right? Honestly, it just gets really frustrating. And I just needed to feel smart again. I just needed to feel that hard work would be rewarded with an "A." And I needed to prove to myself that I still could do it. And I wanted to bone up on my writing. So I went back and got my Master's, and it's inspired me to do some public speaking, some inspirational speaking—which I'm doing—and some writing. I don't know if that's my new little adventure or what. We'll see what happens. Kind of excited. But it will also allow me to teach 'cause I really believe in giving back. I really believe that if you've had some success and great luck to spread the joy and give people a hand up 'cause I sure had some great people in my life that helped me out.

And now I'm even more impressed with you. The reason I even thought about interviewing you is that I saw *Aurora Teagarden*—the most recent one. And I knew that I knew your name and that I had seen you in things here and there. And since I was planning on interviewing people from that movie, I came across your name. And now I'm thinking you are such an amazing woman.

Oh, thank you. I really appreciate that. Oh, you're so sweet. You know, it's so cool. I've been doing this a long time and I'll get looked at and people will ask me, "Did we go to high school together?" And I'm like, "No." But the great thing is I am that recognizable face and I've been around for a long time. I think my success is that every morning I get to follow my dream, and I'm fortunate enough to have people go, "Okay, yeah, you can." And that's not the case for everyone. There's lots of actors who are so talented, and they just don't get their break or their chance. I personally love—my favorite word is options. I love not being stuck. And so I think going and getting my education was a great thing for me, especially when I chose to start a family. There comes a responsibility with that. You gotta put a roof over people's heads. Every year, I have no idea what's coming. But I have to go into that dark, big question mark with the bravado of, "Oh yeah, I got this. It's fine." Which is easier said than done. As you get older, it's harder to put on that bravado. Even with the uncertainty in this business, I still don't think I'd do anything else. This crazy career has allowed me to spend time with my kids that other women who have to work don't get to do. When I work on a TV show, it's sixteen hours a day. No, I don't get to see my kids, and that sucks. Sometimes I get really impatient. With voiceover, I can actually go record the voice of a cartoon and pick my kids up from school.

I think you've already touched on this, but how is it that you are able to manage your family time with your career?

I'm able to manage it because I finally learned—maybe a little later than I should have—but I learned to ask for help. I have an incredible husband who we partner our parenting fifty-fifty. Absolutely. Neither one of us can do what we do without the other person, and we're not afraid to say that. We've also hired some nannies to help us. They've become like part of our family. Without them, it would be crazy, crazy. You know, when I came home from work, I didn't have to spend three hours doing laundry and cooking dinner. I could actually come home and play with my kids.

I understand the whole thing about not asking for help because there is often pressure on women that says you're supposed to handle the household and everything by yourself.

Well, it takes a village to raise a child. Isn't that what they say? It's true. And you can build your village. It might be your neighbors. It could be your best friend. It could be whomever. Especially as kids are getting older. I've got two boys, and they're not always gonna want to talk with me. I'm raising them, and I hope they want to talk with me. Our neighbors across the street they've known for ten years. We actually live in a neighborhood where we talk to our neighbors. We don't ignore our neighbors. We know our neighbors and the kids walk to school.

That's cool. That doesn't seem to happen much anymore.

No, sadly it doesn't.



KWIK KWOTE

Sebastian Spence, co-worker/co-star/friend

"I had the pleasure of working with Nicole on *First Wave* ... Whenever we run into each other, there's always a kiss on the cheek and smiles."



A lot of my readers are Hallmark fans, and they will know you from *Aurora Teagarden*.

I've also been in *Love on the Air*. I've been in lots of stuff with them. Hallmark's been very good to me.

So what is it that you like about working for Hallmark?

I love that they write strong female characters. I love that they have female executive producers. I love that they have female directors. I love that they let their leading ladies also be executive producers and input creatively. I am a feminist absolutely. But I love men. So I'm not saying anything against that or them. Gender equality is a big deal right now. Huge in our industry. And I love how Hallmark has quietly added their voice. Ageism is also a big deal right now. Hallmark has quietly trumpeted and can claim that they are giving women of all ages and all colors amazing opportunities. And women are flourishing. Candace Cameron-Bure—she's not just the actress on that project. It's just fantastic. You know, Barbara Niven—I love Barbara Niven. And it just gives one who has been in the business for a long time hope that the business—you know, I don't want to go anywhere. Us actresses as we get older it's a tough bracket sometimes because men are allowed to age. But women—oh no no no no no! We don't want to see a fifty-year-old man with a fifty-year-old woman. Why? Why? We want to see 'em with a twenty-five-year-old woman. I have nothing against my younger actresses. I know how hard they have to work, and they have a whole other level of crap to deal with. And I was there once myself. But I love how Hallmark—to me anyway—is providing opportunities and growth, and I hope other networks follow their lead.

Men have had this figured out for a while now. We call it the “boy's club.” They support each other without question. We as women need to support each other. It doesn't mean we have to agree all the time. But understand if we disagree, it's okay. And it's okay for a woman to speak her mind. It's okay for a woman to say how she feels and what she wants. It's okay for a woman to be in charge dramatically, emotionally, intellectually, all of those things. 'Cause every day we put on so many hats, so why not?

Working on *Aurora Teagarden*—I have always loved Marilu Henner. I used to watch her on *Taxi*. And she's a mom to two boys. And I've read some of her books. And as a “fan” of her work, I just think she's really cool. I thought, “Wow, here's a woman who dances and she sings. She's got so many amazing talents and abilities.” And so you go to meet someone like that. Sometimes I've met people, and it's really, really disappointing. We get disappointed too when we work with our heroes and they turn out to be not so great. Well, Marilu Henner is phenomenal. It was an absolute pleasure. She was such a pro. She is so kind, and she naturally is amazing. I really enjoyed having a chance to chat with her and to see another woman who has been in this business a long time who also does many different things. Is always creating and putting herself out there. I just was really impressed with all of that and want more of that.

That's cool. I've heard other people say similar things about her, but you've elaborated on it which is great.

She is genuine. She's the real deal. That's my impression anyway.

So do you have any other upcoming works you can mention?

I do. I'm in the feature film *Phil*. It's Greg Kinnear's directorial debut. He was in *As Good As It Gets*. I play his ex-wife, Rosemary. It was my first time working with an actor who was also your director. So that was trippy. And my director of photography—his name is John Bailey. People who know him knows he's done everything, been there, done that, written that book. I worked with John twenty years ago in a film called *Mariette in Ecstasy*, which is on the shelf 'cause there's a company called Orion Pictures that went out of business. But it had Linda Hunt, Mary McDonnell, John Mahoney, Rutger Hauer, Eva Marie Saint—crazy, crazy cast in it. And John was my DP, and so I got to work with him again twenty years later. It was very lovely. So I have that project coming out this fall.

And then voiceover-wise, I have three voices I do in Seth Rogen's *Sausage Party* which is currently out in theaters. Seth Rogen and company—Kristen Wiig, Salma Hayek, James Franco, Jonah Hill. It's an animated feature, and they made it kind of like a Pixar film, but it's not family-friendly. It's all about how the food understands at last that when it leaves the supermarket, it does not go to Nirvana. It gets eaten. They decide to fight back against the humans. So I'm the voice of Sally Bun, which Kristen Wiig is the main hot dog bun to Seth Rogen's hot dog. There's always six buns in a pack, and I'm Sally Bun, the squished bun at the back of the pack. And I also voice the Ice Cream and the Female Shopper at the big ending. I'm excited about this film because it's just ridiculous, but it's so much fun to be a part of.

And I have been recording songs and scenes for the *My Little Pony* feature film which is coming out in 2017, with Liev Schreiber and Taye Diggs and Emily Blunt and Kristin Chenoweth, and many, many more. But it's really exciting. We have been working on this film in some way, stretch or form since the spring, and here we are recording stuff when we're still a year away from it coming out. It is amazing to be involved in something like that on such a huge scale like this.

And one more bit of exciting news. I am currently filming *Wonder* with Jacob Tremblay, Julia Roberts, and Owen Wilson. It is based on the young adult novel of the same name, and it is a very inspirational story. I play Jack Will's mom. Jack is played by the delightful Nathaniel Jute. So it looks like there is plenty to keep me busy right now.

So you mentioned you're also writing?

Yeah, I've got a couple of projects underway. You have to decide what's your passion. What makes you excited? And I'm really excited about women's health and skin care and passing along some of the things I've learned over the years being in the business. So I'm starting a blog that I'm planning to launch in the fall. I'll be sure to let everyone know about that when that comes out—I'm pretty excited about that.

But I also want to direct a short film. That's one of the areas I'd like to move into. So I'm writing. I'm actually putting ideas down and shaping some stuff so I can make that happen.

Those are two of my passion projects. But that's where the writing is coming into play.

And then I'm part of a group called *Leading Moms* in Vancouver, and in September, I'm one of the speakers there. It's like a "Tedesque Mommy talk." So I'm writing various speeches. Some of it I'm taking from my master's thesis. I did my thesis on the "SuperMom." What I've always been about is nothing is a mistake. Everything you can fold into and use in some way to keep moving you forward.

And then I like to throw weird, random things out there to keep me from being complacent and to challenge me. It's great to be scared every once in awhile. This blog and the idea of directing something. It scares me, but that's exactly where I need to be.

Last question. What advice would you give to someone who wishes to enter this profession?

Part of me wants to say, "Run! Run! Run as fast as you can in the opposite direction." But that never works. {laughs} And of course, I'm laughing and joking. So what I would say is that ultimately, you have to be able to survive. You need to put a roof over your head and some food in your belly. So that's the first thing. But you know, your dreams and passions are your dreams and passions. And they deserve to be honored. And so you need to go for it. Surround yourself with good teachers, good mentors. If you want to be an actor, get into a program. Go to a class. Start observing life. There's so much more available now. When I started out way back in the old days when we had to walk uphill both ways to school and back through snow in June, there wasn't as many resources as today. You want to be taught by people who are doing it, who have lived it, who have breathed it. So I think getting into a class is great. But honor yourself by saying, "Hey, I think I want to try." And then grant yourself permission to try. My parents said to me the worst thing you could ever say is what would have happened if...And that's something I've tried to live my life by and support my kids as they move through life. It's your dream, so only you can make it real. You've gotta have the courage to share it with others and scream it from the rooftops so it will be heard.



As I told Nicole at the conclusion of our chat, I can definitely see her as a motivational speaker—especially for women. There is something about the way she phrases things. She gives solid, easy-to-understand advice, but she takes it a step further by adding credibility and emotion that prompt you to just want to step out in faith and attempt to attain your dreams. Moreover, Nicole taught me so much more than I could ever explain here, and as a lifelong learner, my most cherished interviews are always those ones when I glean truth that I can infuse into my own life. As an intelligent, accomplished, busy mother who has endeavored arduously to actualize her dreams, I find Nicole the very epitome of inspiration. She knows where her priorities lie, and she has discovered the secret to balance—admitting you cannot do it on your own and requesting help. In retrospect, I believe Nicole's message resonated with me on a myriad of levels because I can relate. I am painfully aware that far too often in this world of electronics, fast-paced travel, and relentless occupation, we often tend to find ourselves isolated more than ever before. Furthermore, women have a tendency to still compete with one another no matter how developed our society purports to be the opposite. While Nicole is but a small voice in the sea of millions, Nicole's message is judicious, poignant, and bona fide. In addition to this, her talent and energy are effervescently inexhaustible as well as being infectious. So, be sure that you follow Nicole at all the links below and watch out for her upcoming works as they may arrive sooner than anticipated. And be sure that you permit Nicole to stimulate you to magnificence as only she can do.