Krystal Joy Brown is a sing, actor, dancer, writer, songwriter, and director. She has worked with some of the greatest names in musical theatre, including Diane Paulus. Brown is a frequent face on Broadway stages, and has expanded her career into all areas of the arts.

I reached out to Krystal through Instagram, not expecting a response from such a big-time Broadway star, but she took the time to answer all of my questions! Her kindness only further cemented me as a huge fan of hers.

I first discovered Brown as Rosanna in the original cast recording of *Calvin Berger.* In fact, I love her role in that so much that I even have one of Rosanna’s songs in my repertoire! Slowly, I discovered more and more about her fabulous theatrical career. She is where I would ultimately like to be, and in addition, I greatly admire her versatility. It’s something I feel is important in order to make it in this field, and I want to exemplify that well-rounded-ness within my own career. She is a hard-working, true professional who has made it through grit and determination.

(The following answers are direct quotes, please excuse any grammatical or spelling errors.)

* **What was your original plan for your career? How has this gone or not gone accordingly?**

“Since I was about 5, I knew I wanted to perform so I always focused on sharpening my skills as a singer, dancer actress. There was definitely a time I had this desire to become a pop star but once I started writing and acting I realized I wanted to focus on being a storyteller...no matter the medium. There were moments I wanted to just be wildly adored for my talents and dedication to making people happy while I performed on stage but that evolved (Thank God!) I still want to make people happy, but I want to make them feel, grow, care, expand their empathy and stretch myself as an artist and story teller.

What has changed is, when I got the things I thought I wanted, it was never enough. Never. It was when I started to focus on the work, the teams I worked with and what I threw myself in I loved it found reasons to love it. I’m curious and I want to do everything I can in this life, films, tv, voiceovers, writing, directing, producing and I never knew I could do all that before. I know I can now. I would have been so sad if I never explored the many parts of me or chosen to just do one thing. I love the period I am in now where I am all sides of the table. I’m learning so much and I never thought I was a creator before. Now I know what I am and I’m just starting to see what else I can do.

This career is amazing and terrifying because there is no linear path and it can be whatever you make it. Everything changes and letting things change is the best gift you can give yourself.”

* **What are some of the biggest stumbling blocks you’ve hit, and how have you dealt with those?**

“Rejection. Which is the number one ingredient in this career path. Developing a thick skin. And also learning to hold on to my self-worth no matter what may be happening. Loving myself truly and deeply is the medicine for any failure or disappointment and sometimes that can be hard to hold on to if people say “no” to you.

Also, being sober is awesome and helps me to always be clear and present. Seeing things as clearly as possible and keeping my head up gives me a ton of resilience.

Having a solid support system is key. Friends that uplift you and motivate you and don’t tear you down.

Knowing when and where to get help when I can’t do things on my own. I’m a believer in therapy, mental health and self-care above all else. When you are “the product” you are selling you must care for yourself as best you can.”

* **What makes you and your work unique?**

“I believe we are all unique but I think well, I hope that I bring honesty, vulnerability, inclusivity, dedication, heart, joy, and love to all things I work on. I want to be a joy on set. I want to enjoy the process of creation and help those around me enjoy the process as well.

I am also finding my voice as artist and have an easier time talking with writers and directors about the work and the content and the “why” or the story. I try to really understand the projects I’m working on and elevate them the best I can. I have a voice and an opinion and it deserves to be in the narrative of whatever I am working on so I try to connect with the creatives as best as I can for any piece to be able to insert my true self and get to the heart of the piece or character.”

* **Do you have a brand or artist statement?**

“I don’t really have a ‘”brand” but I am here for the development of human compassion and growing conscious as best I can. I am a firm believer that we learn from each other and we set examples for one another and so I try to be a positive example no matter what I do, no matter what I am involved in or where I am. I am a woman, a black woman and an artist in today’s world -and that is already a big statement right there.

I am vegan, sober and believe in sustainability...I’m just a hippy at heart.”

* **Do you have a mission or vision?**

“I want to tell more women’s stories and particularly women of color and the nuances of our emotional depth. I want to be apart of great art, work with inspiring minds and create opportunities for other people. I am excited to start showing the world more of the projects I am creating and have been working on in the wings.”

* **Do you have career goals laid out for the next 5-10 years?**

“I have goals but everything changes. I never thought I would be so fascinated with creating my own works. So, more of that and really getting out there. Produce art and support fellow artists and also act and work in things I love and care about. I would love to do more to impact social change and be apart of work that makes me think and connect.”

* **How are you connecting and building audiences and how do you market to them?**

“I’m terrible at social media most of the time. But it’s a great tool these days. Sometimes it feels like, however, I am giving more away then the world deserves so I am selective on how much I use social media in my life and work.

But I try to promote projects I do that I am really excited about and engage in stories I want people to know I care about.

 I also have a podcast called “How We Do This” (available on iTunes) that is about society and pop culture and it helps me connect to people even more in a totally different way I never dreamt would be something I would do.”

* **What opportunities are you on the lookout for?**

“I want to work with innovative, imaginative people and companies that are here to tell fearless stories and grant access to wider perspectives. For example working with DreamWorks (on Netflix) She-Ra voicing a black character who is married to woman and this show is for children. It’s amazing to see the media landscape changing and evolving- becoming much more inclusive and I love being apart of that change.

I want to work with more women and People of color in leadership roles. I also want to find more opportunities where I can be an asset in community. More charity and volunteer work because I realizing for me being of service gives me more joy than I could have ever imagined.”

* **How do you fund your work?**

“I know my worth and always to get paid accordingly. It’s hard to hold on to your value sometimes but you need something/stability to be able to show up to work everyday and give 100%. This job is not stable AT ALL so you learn to diversify your skills and revenue. I like doing many many things and seeing all the things I can do.

I am directing my first short film in April and we raised $36,000 by crowdfunding! 7k over what we needed! I was shocked and honored that so many people helped us make our goal and are excited to see what I will come up with. It is truly an honor to have people believe in you. So collaboration and asking your community for help can sometime yield incredible results.”

* **How did you initially get funding?**

“Worked really hard and book big production contracts for broadway shows, tv shows etc. “

* **What networks or organizations do you belong to and which ones have helped you the most?**

“I threw a charity event in 2014 for toys for tots and orphan children born with aids. I have lost many people to cancer and fight to raise funds and awareness in lower income communities.

Homelessness and addiction are also two social issues I have begun finding more ways to be impactful and marching in the woman’s marches as well as Black Lives Matter rallies and awareness protests have given me more purpose to deepened my desire to create  art that heals.

To be an actor is to be an empathetic storyteller and I can not (nor would I want to) divorce that part of me from the person I am every day. Being an actor and creator only emphasizes what I hope to be and leave behind on this planet - a positive, progressive, loving soul who gives comfort, hope and guidance for those around her and, maybe, for those to come.”