

Alumna loses her head to role as Marie Antoinette

September 09, 2015 11:00 AM Fran Simon
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Cecile Monteyne plays the title role in The NOLA Project production of *Marie Antoinette*, which runs through Sept. 20 at NOCCA's Nims Black Box Theatre. She concentrated on finding the humanity in the script. "My character can be a real bitch on the page. I don't want the audience to say, "Yay, she's dead!" at the end [of the play]." (Photo by John B. Barrois)

By day, Cecile Monteyne is administrator of a medical clinic. By night, she is Marie Antoinette.

Monteyne, a native New Orleanian who graduated from Tulane University in 2005 as a theater and environmental policy major, also is managing director of [The NOLA](#)

[Project](#) theater company. In the company's current production of *Marie Antoinette*, she embodies the role of the beleaguered queen of France whose life unraveled during the French Revolution.

In the demanding role, Monteyne never leaves the stage, which is a shiny metallic proscenium in the shape of a guillotine blade. The play requires Monteyne to portray Marie Antoinette as a sympathetic and tragic character. She begins as an uneducated and frivolous young girl from Austria who marries Louis XVI. In the end (no spoiler alert needed) rebels imprison her, and she loses her head.

"I felt ashamed by my judgments of her before I read her biography," says Monteyne. "I think she is one of the most misunderstood characters in history."

This year, *Gambit*'s Big Easy Awards crowned Monteyne Entertainer of the Year, and she is on the nola.com Entertainers to Watch list.

For several years, Monteyne trained in New York before she returned to New Orleans in 2010. She played roles in The NOLA Project's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Shiner*, *Twelfth Night* and *Balm in Gilead*.

She is transitioning from spending about 50 percent of her time in theater to nearly full-time work.

Monteyne improvises with the duo called [machine A](#), and is creator/producer of the theater/improvisation hybrid [You Don't Know the Half of It](#), currently in its fourth season. Her latest producing credit is *By Any Scenes Necessary*, The NOLA Project's new theater/improv comedy show.

In November, Monteyne will play paralegal Catherine Brame in Southern Rep's world premiere of [Song of a Man Coming Through](#). In December, she and her brother are shooting a movie with a screenplay they co-wrote.