

Actress, writer and Morristown resident Alison Larkin is now a proud Jersey girl, but her roots, and her cultured accent, are clearly imported from Great Britain.

And Tennessee.

Allow me to clarify. Or clear it up for yourself by attending her one-woman show, **"The English American,"** Saturday at the Morris Museum's **Bickford Theatre** in Morris Township.

Larkin, a classically trained actress, grew up as an adopted child in middle-class England. But at age 25, she came to America to track down her birth mother and found her in Tennessee.

Her stateside adventures eventually brought her to New York City, where, one night at the Comedy Store nightclub, she stood up and declared in a posh accent that would make Dame Edna proud, "Hallo, my name is Alison Larkin and I come from Bald Mountain, Tennessee."

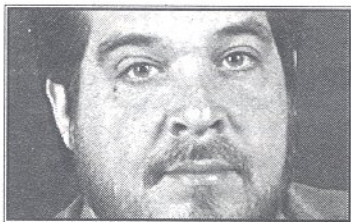
"And they all cracked up," she said. "And I thought: I never thought about standup comedy before, but with standup comedy, you can combine writing and acting."

She remained in the United States but sat on the standup idea as her acting career took off. She quickly got a lot of commercial and voiceover work, which led to a move to Los Angeles and a sitcom development deal, which ultimately fell through.

Now married with two young children, she decided Los Angeles was the wrong place to raise them, so they picked up stakes and moved east.

"My husband (a native of Roselle Park) had a friend in Morristown who was kind enough to put our entire family up," she said. "We didn't know quite where we were going to live, but we wanted somewhere that would be great to raise children. I was thinking Princeton, because it was so English, but then we looked at Morristown and fell in love with it. We found a house that we loved, thought that the schools were great, that the people were very friendly and, in comparison with Los Angeles, very normal."

With her family settled, Larkin began to develop "The



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English American," which takes a humorous look at the difference between the English and Americans as she adopts the roles and perspectives of her English and American mothers.

She took the show to London's West End, where it was a critical and commercial hit. Currently, she has producers and financial backing in place to bring it Off-Broadway some time next year.

The one-night-only performance at the Bickford is a warm-up for an upcoming benefit performance in Los Angeles.

"I love being there (the Bickford) because I'm always at the museum with my train-obsessed son to see the trains there," she said. "I think (artistic director) Eric Hafen is very charming, and they've all been wonderful to work with."

In the meantime, she's doing more commercial and voiceover work, which lets her practice all manner of accents, including a sassy, gum-cracking "Joisey."

"No prahblum," she said enthusiastically. "It just depends on what part of Jersey you're from."

And how do all these voices affect her children?

"Well, they say 'baahth' and 'wadder,' so I guess you could say they are 'haahlf' and 'haff,'" she giggled.

Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25; \$20 for museum members and seniors; \$15 for students. The theater is at 6 Normandy Heights Road. For more information, call (973) 971-3706.

■ If you're Wilde about Oscar, you know **"The Importance of Being Earnest."** And you should also know that the famed playwright's best-known comedy is opening this week at the **Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey** in Madison.

Acclaimed British director Tamara Harvey crosses the pond to direct a cast that fea-