



DIVINE ACCEPTANCE

Tony-winning musical Kinky Boots kicks up its heels at the Hult

Winner of the 2013 Tony award for best musical, *Kinky Boots* resonates with audiences worldwide.

Based on a true story — the UK’s Steve Pateman was struggling to save his family-run shoe factory from closure and decided to produce fetish footwear for men, under the brand name “Divine Footwear” — the musical features work by the powerhouse combo of Harvey Fierstein and Cyndi Lauper. (If you don’t tap your feet to this one, you might be dead.)

Eugene Weekly recently caught up with one of the touring production’s stars, South African-born Adam du Plessis, who plays Don, the foreman of the shoe factory and a bit of a nemesis to the show’s lead drag queen, Lola.

“The story shows the tragedy and inevitability of commercialism and industrialism on local and family-owned businesses,” du Plessis says. “Its uniqueness comes from ingenuity and boldness of the main character, Charlie Price (Steve Pateman), coming up with an idea so ‘out of the box’ that it challenges both himself and everyone around him to have a hard look in the mirror and decide who they are and who they are going to be.”

Kinky Boots features book by Fierstein (*La Cage Aux Folles*, *Torch Song Trilogy*) and

lyrics by the inimitable Lauper.

“Lauper brings her music through a range of color and emotion, from upbeat and positive to thoughtful and sincere, to soaring and uplifting, to comic genius,” du Plessis says. “Harvey Fierstein creates a book that doesn’t take itself too seriously at times, but still has the ability to gently but firmly get its point across.”

I ask du Plessis what is the core message of *Kinky Boots*: What do we go home thinking about?

“Acceptance,” he says. “Accepting not only others but accepting yourself too. There are themes of bigotry and bullying and self-doubt and insecurity, but it all comes down to acceptance.”

“And yes, I think the world could do with some acceptance right now, but the same can be said for the entire history of the human race,” he continues. “But it is stories like this that can make a difference — perhaps just a small one. But if we can change just one mind with each performance, then we’ve done our job.”

Kinky Boots plays 7:30 pm Tuesday through Thursday, Feb. 27 through March 1, at the Hult; \$43-\$111, with college, youth and active military discounts available, at hultcenter.org.

JUST BEING DAN

Local legend stars in a play about himself with My Happy Hour with Pegoda

When I heard that Paul Calandrino had written a new play called *My Happy Hour with Pegoda* — as in *the Dan Pegoda*, as in man-about-town-bon-vivant and *Eugene Weekly* cartoonist Dan Pegoda — I had to show up.

The following is an interview with Calandrino, Pegoda and actor Ellen Chace.

Why write this play?

Paul Calandrino: The very first germ of an idea was wanting to be in a play with Dan Pegoda — world-famous Eugene actor — and never really expecting to get a chance to do that because I’m not in the echelon of actor that he is. We’ve been in a play together, but I wanted to have more lines with him. And then we met for a happy hour, and I was greasing the wheels and asking Dan if he’d be interested in doing a play with me, and I asked him if he had some stories that I could work into a script. And he didn’t respond.

Dan Pegoda: I couldn’t think of anything.

Nothing interesting ever happens to Dan.

Pegoda: That’s why I do plays.

Calandrino: Dan shifted the focus. He said, “Hey, we could make it about us not having any ideas for a play.” And I said, “Perfect! We’ll start from that point!” And that’s what we did.

And how does Ellen get involved? Where do you drop into this tale?

Ellen Chace: I don’t know the answer to that question, but in the play, I want to be in the play with Dan and Paul.

Who doesn’t?

Calandrino: She happens to walk in. Early on we were thinking, “Just two guys, that’s not very interesting. We should have a female onstage.”

Like the movies *The Trip*, *My Dinner with Andre* ...

Calandrino: Exactly. And that was the other inspiration; I love the way those actors banter. I wanted to explore that genre — actors portraying themselves or close facsimiles of themselves onstage.

So what is the biggest challenge, creatively?

Chace: It is kind of a challenge to portray your self, because it’s a play. And it’s Paul’s vision. It’s how Paul sees Ellen. I go about it with the same tools as I would create any character. It’s a fictionalized Ellen.

What’s it been like playing “Dan”?

Pegoda: I’m just showing up and trying to be myself.

Dan is a man of few words, but just gives off a kind of quiet genius.

Calandrino: That’s Dan.

Not all of the play is based on Dan, Ellen or Paul’s own personal lives. The creative team leaves it to the audience to try to find the line between truth and fiction.

— *By Rachael Carnes*

My Happy Hour With Pegoda runs Feb. 23-25 and March 2-3. All performances take place at Capitello Wines Tasting Room, 540 Charnelton Street. Tickets are \$15 and will be available for purchase at Capitello Wines and at capitellowines.com.