

Q&A With Ken Robinson of Oregon Shakespeare Festival

This is Ken's first year in the acting company, where he's playing Freddy Eynsford-Hill in *My Fair Lady* and the Preacher in *The Unfortunates*.

OSF: Your first season here at OSF is turning out to be an adventure for the whole family. Can you tell us about that?

KR: Sure! My wife Christina and I are both new members of the OSF acting company. We moved to Ashland with our then six-month-old daughter Marilyn in December 2012. Now Christina and I are performing together in both *My Fair Lady* and *The Unfortunates*.

OSF: Where is home when you aren't in Ashland?

KR: We came to Ashland from Union City, New Jersey, right across the river from New York City. But as much as we loved it there, I wouldn't consider Union City home. Home is wherever we are.

OSF: How did you first become involved in theatre? Is it true that you were going down a different career path before you went to Yale School of Drama?

KR: I first became involved in the theatre in the fourth grade of Lakeview Elementary in Oakland, CA, where I played the lead in *Oliver*. Years later, I attended a performing arts magnet high school in Oakland called Skyline. But I didn't believe I could make a living as an artist. So I studied economics when I went to Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA. I graduated from Morehouse and landed a position as an analyst with an investment banking boutique

...my favorite authors are Toni Morrison, John Steinbeck and Walter Mosley.

in New York City. I worked in investment banking for four years, and then moved back to Atlanta and did management consulting for another five years. Once back in Atlanta, I started doing (and loving) community theatre. And after a couple of shows, I was cast in three shows at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta in one season. That was when I knew I could make a living at it — if I studied. So I left Atlanta again and went to grad school at Yale.

OSF: How's Ashland treating you so far?



Ken Robinson as Freddy Eynsford-Hill in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2013 production of *My Fair Lady*.

KR: So far so good... I was born and raised on the West Coast. I grew up in Oakland, CA. But, great weather and second syllables aside, Oakland is a far cry from Ashland.

OSF: You have such a beautiful singing voice. What music do you like to listen to?

KR: I love beautiful voices singing thoughtful lyrics with strong melodies. That love allows me to appreciate artists from many genres. I love singer/songwriters — Eric Roberson, Dolly Parton, Bill Withers, Alanis Morissette, Sarah McLachlan... But the voices who have influenced me the most are soul legend Donny Hathaway, R&B balladeer Will Downing and the gospel tenor of life, Daryl Coley.

OSF: With having to juggle work and family, reading books might be a luxury you don't have time for, but are there books on your nightstand calling out to you, or any you've read lately that you've liked?

KR: Are you kidding? I must read — each day. Even if it's just a couple of pages before bed, I'm always reading something. Right now, I'm reading Stephen Sondheim's



Ken Robinson as Preacher and Jesse Baldwin at the piano in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2013 world premiere production of *The Unfortunates*.

Look, I Made a Hat. Sondheim is as compelling an author as he is a composer/lyricist. But my favorite authors are Toni Morrison, John Steinbeck and Walter Mosley. I've read all of Morrison's novels. I'm about halfway through the Steinbeck and Mosley catalogues.

OSF: Are you a good cook? If so, what are your specialties?

KR: I would not call myself a good cook; I would call myself a good reader of directions. That said, I do make four things really well: breakfast, turkey lasagna, oatmeal cookies and smoothies.

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Movies

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drawn as tag teams of opposing professional wrestlers. Here's the storyline in 25 words or more. Dominic coaxes his cohorts (Tyrese, Paul Walker, Ludacris, Sung Kang and Gal Gadot) out of retirement for one last adventure, after rumors surface that his late-ex, Letty (Michelle Rodriguez), might miraculously still be alive.

They hatch a plan to rescue the damsel in distress who's suffering from amnesia and currently in the clutches of Owen Shaw (Luke Evans), a worthy adversary specializing in vehicular warfare. His posse's recent attack on a Russian military convoy explains why Diplomatic Security Service agent Hobbs (Dwayne Johnson) is desperately seeking the assistance of Dominic's crew.

They agree on the condition that, should this mission succeed, they'll be granted clemency for the host of crimes committed in F&F episodes 1-5. Hobbs okays the deal, and soon, a dogfight featuring fisticuffs, pyrotechnics and plenty of cartoon physics unfolds all over London, involving not only souped-up autos and

state-of-the-art gadgetry, but a tank and a plane, to boot.

The epitome of a summer blockbuster, complete with a post-credits set-up of F&F 7 (already slated to be

released in July of 2014). Just remember to check your brain at the box office, and you won't be disappointed.

Excellent (4 stars)

PG-13 for sexuality, pro-

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Saturday, June 15, 2013
Legacy Emanuel Field
NE Vancouver Avenue at NE Graham Street

12 Noon to 6:00 PM
The festival is a free family-friendly event.
Everyone is welcome.

juneteenthoregon@gmail.com