

Q&A with the director of 'Shrek, The Musical'



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Shrek (Mark VanBeever) and Princess Fiona (Melissa Miller) will be on stage in "Shrek the musical" through Oct. 28.

Q: What is your performance background and how did you get involved with Cottage Theatre?

A: Director Keith Kessler: I have been involved with Cottage Theatre since 1991. I have acted, directed and written for the stage at Cottage Theatre and I have been on several committees and the board. I was involved when Cottage Theatre began their summer kids' programs and have the playwright for the summer melodramas. Prior to working with Cottage Theatre, I had the opportunity to work as a props master and assistant director/stage manager with Ed Ragozzino for the Eugene Festival of Musical Theatre at the Hult Center.

Q: What are the challenges to staging a show that, essentially, the audience knows only as an ani-mated story?

A: When people know the show, it is a two-sided coin.

Immediately you have audience recognition and the desire for people to come and see it on stage. We are now in a time where a number of stage shows have come from movies or animation that I believe most people are fascinated to see how the "next" show for them will be accomplished.

The other side is that you hope that you don't disappoint the audience who have loved the animated movie: in this case "Shrek the Musical" has had such a successful track record that as a director you know that it is a wonderful script and my job is to help it come life on Cottage Theatre's stage.

Q: "Shrek" has obviously been on larger stages when it transformed into a musical. Did you take any inspiration from prior stages of the show and is there anything particularly different or unique about your telling of it?

A: I have watched the Netflix version of the Broadway show and that has obviously influence my choices. There are some differences from the Broadway version and what is given to us from MTI to produce after Broadway. Knowing that I work hard at having a collaborative relationship with my actors and creative team and I want them to bring their ideas and interpretations to the stage. I believe we are better together than we are alone.

I also am always looking for places that I can bring my own personal touch to each production. Shows like "Shrek" have great stories and powerful life lessons so I am on the hunt for ways that I can emphasize those ideas and themes.

Q: The dragon. Does it make it into the show and if it does, how?

A: Yes, the Dragon appears and is brought to life through Tony Rust's Dragon's design, Sophie Blades and Stephani Anderson's decorating, the Dragon being voiced by Angela Pearson and seven Dragonette puppeteers. It is even more wonderful than I ever thought possible and people over the first weekend are really responding to it as a character.

Q: What should audiences be on the lookout for during

the show? Any hidden gems or a particular-ly stand out performance?

A: Our three main leads, Shrek Mark — VanBeever, Fiona — Melissa Miller and Donkey — Matt Arscott are marvelous.

Josh Sayre playing Lord Farquaad surprises everyone on his first entrance. Our three Fiona's blend so well on their song together. There are many songs in the show that are the kind of songs that make you happy that you are involved in musical theatre.

And finally, we have tap dancing rats and a singing bird that will surprise everyone.

Q: Why should people come to see "Shrek?"

A: It is a show that has more laughs than anyone can imagine. The music is memorable and toe tapping along with great ballads. It is a night of enjoyable entertainment at the theatre and the story is one that resonates and touches people at a heart level.

People leave smiling and uplifted and if you come stay all the way through the song "I'm a Believer."

Shrek is playing at Cottage Theatre through Oct. 28. For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit cottagetheatre.org.

Pet tips 'N' tales

By Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"



'Super' Pets

Dogs and cats are amazing. They teach us to be kind and compassionate while wiggling their way into our hearts, making us feel loved and making us laugh. We call them family, but for many they are also our best friend.

Edith's border collie, Batman, flew in as a puppy on a rescue mission to help her young daughter, Kate, conquer her fear of dogs. His superhero powers worked so well that years later, Kate supplemented her college tuition with dog sitting.

"Batman was our son, Ain's, only brother," said Edith. "When the kids and the dog were little, my husband played 'football' with them. Their game consisted of a child kicking the ball to the other two at the other end of the yard. Dad would protect or dodge, helping both sides in the mad dash to get a touchdown. Dad would 'throw' the ball — and Katie would kick the ball while Batman zipped around herding them.

"The one exception was when Ain's turn came to kick," Edith continued. "Batman jumped in and 'blocked' each of Ain's kicks midair! He only blocked our son's kicks ... That beloved dog also helped my son learn soccer by trying to get the ball from him while Ain practiced."

On another note, Edith said the dog walked into Ain's room to *specifically* pick out a toy Batman figurine — to munch on.

"One time, we found Batman on the wrong side of our fence. When he heard us calling him, instead of crawling back home, he spidey-crawled like Spider-Man under the



Edith, her daughter, Kate, and Kate's first child, Denali the Super Cat.

neighbor's side fence. Then he walked to their *front* yard and happily bounded home like, 'Oh! Here I am! Did you want me?' We were blessed with that spunky, fun-loving dog for 16 years," said Edith.

When Kate married, she adopted Denali, the cutest soft-as-a-bunny white and black fur ball kitten. For their "baby's" pleasure, Kate's iPad has a swimming fish app that Denali plays with for hours.

He then created the game "cat tag" by stalking his parents, hiding, and — when he deems it the right time — he runs and pounces on his 'prey,' tagging them with light touches to an ankle.

Then, he zooms off.

Appropriately, Kate's superhero nickname for their fun-loving cat is "Catman."

TIPS:

"While Denali was on 'vacation' with us, I bought him a pet stroller after reading about Mary Ellen Angel Scribe's success with her pets' stroller," said Edith.

"Well, our furry house guest loves it. I cut and fit foam for his mattress and his comfort. He sleeps in his buggy through the day and enjoys snooper-ving us outside while we garden. My daughter and son-in-law were embarrassed by the stroller, until they saw how much Denali loves it and they are enjoying taking him out, too. The stroller makes their walks enjoyable and Denali naps from the fresh air. How much does he love his new stroller? He considers it his condo and won't sleep with his pet parents! It keeps cat hairs off their bed and it has made its purr-chase worthwhile."

Also, collapsible-canvas wagons work wonders for elderly dogs. Adding a mattress comforts old bones and elevates the dog so they can see over the wagon's edge. The wagons fold up into almost nothing for storage, and in the summer transport lawn chairs to the beach or use it to fill with plants at the garden store when your pet opts to stay home!

And it is great for walking tired "real" children too.

Share your fun, amazing or crazing pet tips and tales at angelscribe@msn.com or Follow Pet Tips 'n' Tales on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PetTipsandTales. Adopt loving pets online at www.PetFinder.com. For spay or neutering, call the Humane Society at 541-942-2789.

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FRIDAY

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Sunny

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Sunny

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