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NEWS BRANTFORD-BRANT

Word Has It

It's cat's meow for musical's director



By Susan Gamble, Brantford Expositor
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Submitted Photo On the set of CATS, which opened this week at the Panasonic Theatre in Toronto, Dave Campbell is proving that he, too, has nine CATS lives.

He's the Brantford boy who did good, better and best.

DAVE CAMPBELL - once a Brantford Collegiate student who did dishes at the old Ponderosa restaurant - has worked his way up the theatre chain, proving himself in both talent and flexibility until this week he "arrived" as director of his first downtown Toronto musical.

And, yes, Dave admits there's something about finally hitting Yonge Street that is so worth celebrating.

"It was like an out-of-body experience to walk into the Panasonic Theatre but 10 minutes after I started working with the cast I was in

the groove and forgot all about it."

Maybe that's because Dave has nine lives with Cats.

In fact, his resume goes something like this: singing and dancing in musicals, Cats, Tokyo Disney, directing at the Orillia Sunshine Festival, Cats, choreographer for the Gemini Awards, Cats, choreographer for Canadian Idol, Cats, choreographer for Deal or No Deal, YTV's The Next Star and a Walk of Fame special, and Cats.

The cats just keep multiplying.

Now Dave is bringing back what was the first Canadian mega-musical 28 years ago and he's got his extensive feline experience to share.

"This is a smaller cast and a smaller theatre. It has just 700 seats and the space on stage is a lot smaller and the audience a lot closer to the actors. People can see the cats interacting on the stage and with the audience."

Coincidentally, one of those cats is another Brantford boy - MICHAEL DONALD.

The new Panasonic also offers a high-tech system with clean lines so the set spills easily out into the auditorium.

The show opened Tuesday and the majority of reviews are "amazing," says Dave.

Especially the reviews from Dave's proud parents, BILL and DOROTHY CAMPBELL, who were in the audience, likely regretting they tried to force their artistic son into business school back in the day.

Cats is set to run until the end of July but, since it's already been extended once, Dave expects it will run the breadth of the summer.

Meanwhile, Dave's off to the Orillia Sunshine Festival for the summer and then to Florida where his allergy to snow has drawn him into several award-winning shows.

"I don't get a lot of recognition here but they love me down south," he says with a laugh.

No worries - there's always the next life.

* * *

It's difficult to know how to help someone who is grieving the death of a loved one.

ANNE KING found just the right note when she enlisted the help of Canada Post and brought a year-long smile to the face of her friend, CATHERINE CAMP-PAYNTER.

"It's been just amazing," says Catherine, who lost her beloved comedian husband, GORD PAYNTER, in April last year.

"Anne is an artist and every week she sends me these glorious postcards. They're always unique and wonderful and they always make me smile. It's her way of saying she's thinking of me."

The cards are a reflection of both Anne and Catherine's wacky senses of humour.

They include: a picture of Anne's sandwich, a shot of the inside of Anne's fridge, a close-up of Anne's grandmother's lace tablecloth, tickets from a play made into a postcard and, occasionally, actual store-bought postcards!

"I started putting them up on a bulletin board in Gord's office downstairs and now they're three deep! She sends them every week and sometimes sends two or three a week."

Anne and her hubby GEORGE WALE have been friends of the Paynters for years and Anne shares simple words of encouragement on the cards as well, ranging from "thinking about you" to "I really like this image."

"One of them is a cutout from a Corn Flakes box and another is an arrow that says This Side Up. They're just phenomenal: I'm laughing just thinking about them."

Catherine has a staunch group of friends that help her through the tough days and she's been fortunate to step into two plays since Gord's sudden death.

"My theatre family really helps me hold things together but it's still sad because I come home after the show and want to tell him all about it and he's not here."

Still ... there's always the daily mail to cheer a girl up.

* * *

Six Nations' MARK MONTURE would have received the Medal of Bravery ages ago - but no one could find him.

In 2008, Mark visited family on the northern reserve of Mishkeegogamang just in time to rush into a burning house and help save an unconscious boy.

Monture, 29, was finally honoured last week when the Gov. Gen. DAVID JOHNSTON presented him with a Medal of Bravery at a ceremony at Rideau Hall.

According to the Tekawennake, a Six Nations weekly newspaper, Monture couldn't be located for years after his heroics.

The Governor General's office said Monture, along with two others from the Mishkeegogamang reserve, went into a burning house when the parents, who were safely out with several other children, indicated in Ojibwa, there was still a child in the home.

Monture had only arrived a scant hour or two before, visiting family on the remote reserve which had no emergency services.

In the -42-degree weather, the three men battled intense heat by wrapping water-soaked curtains around themselves before finding the 13-year-old boy unconscious on the second level of the home.

The boy recovered from burns and smoke inhalation.

Monture spent two weeks in hospital due to smoke inhalation and was left with some traumatic reminders of the event, including an obsessive compulsive need to wash himself.

The two other men involved were given medals in 2010 but Monture couldn't be found.

He was finally located by the Governor General's office this year. And, with more than 40 others, Monture was awarded the medal of bravery for his actions last Friday.

Created in 1972, the medal of bravery recognizes those who have risked their lives to try and save or protect others under hazardous circumstances.

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If you have news about something funny, interesting or quirky, contact Susan Gamble by phone 519-756-2020, ext. 2233, email susan.gamble@sunmedia.ca or mail Word Has It, 195 Henry St., Brantford, N3S 5C9. Follow her on Twitter: [EXPSGamble](#)

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