

LAKE COUNTRY WEEKEND

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Packet photo/John Swartz

Director Dave Campbell, right, and set designer Tim Webb are the creative team behind some of the best plays the Sunshine Festival has produced. Kiss Me Kate opens tonight at the Opera House.



DYNAMIC DUO

Director Dave Campbell has leaned heavily on set designer Tim Webb to bring Kiss Me Kate to the stage

By John Swartz
The Packet & Times

To put on a play, at least the kind people are expected to buy tickets for, takes a lot of work.

All we see from the 24th row are actors and actresses, maybe the band or orchestra, and we judge the value of what went on in a two-hour time frame based on that, without realizing there are just as many people off-stage making it happen.

If it's not to our liking, well, it wasn't a good performance. If we like it, as audiences for Jesus Christ

Superstar did, then the actors did OK.

Is that the way it is?

You can't have 20 actors, as you do in Kiss Me Kate, deciding for themselves how they are going to play their roles and making decisions on how and when to enter and exit, etc.

That would be a state beyond chaos, and the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital emergency department would be overloaded with bruised egos.

Someone has to be in charge — and that someone is the director.

Every production, even those with flawed scripts, can be great in perfor-

mance with a good director.

Dave Campbell, Kiss Me Kate's director, has already proven to Sunshine Festival audiences that he can direct.

Already, word has leaked that this production of Kiss Me Kate might be a tad on the suggestive side.

"I don't know if it's going to be sexually controversial, but we've gone for a much more Chicago kind of take on the story," said Campbell. "I'd say it's kind of a lot more edge than the 1952 one."

He's updating it in other ways, too. The original was set in 1952, when it premiered, but Campbell's set-

ting it in the modern day.

That means language that has no meaning today has been replaced, and so have some conventions that don't exist anymore. One thing, the music, remains the same.

"Being a Cole Porter show, there's probably not going to be anything that people don't recognize," said Campbell. "There's a lot of classic music from this show."

An undertaking like this is a big job for one person, so Campbell has enlisted a familiar name to help.

While Bell had Watson, Kirk had Spock, and Cheney has Bush, Campbell

has set designer Tim Webb.

He's done sets for the Canadian Children's Opera and the Life Network. He also did the Sunfest's Cats and Jesus Christ Superstar. Campbell and Webb are the lynchpins of all three productions.

"I think it's going to be entirely different," said Webb of the contrast between JCS and Kiss Me Kate, "which is why we wanted to put these shows back to back. One challenges people with its edginess and the other one satisfies people with its full-on theatricality."

If you saw JCS, you'll know something is differ-

ent the second you walk into the theatre and see the Kiss Me Kate set.

"With something like Kiss Me Kate, the set is very integrated with the story line. It's going with the full vaudevillian thing: lots of different set changes, beautiful costumes, very lavish, very lush. There's just a lot going on onstage."

Kiss Me Kate runs all month at the Opera House with matinee and evening performances. Get tickets at the Sunshine Festival box office (325-2074), the Opera House box office (326-8011) or online at www.sunshinefestival.ca.