

Theater director flips the script

Peter Burke / Press-Banner | Posted: Thursday, January 14, 2010 12:00 am

Director Scott Kravitz has an unorthodox style of cultivating the young actors and actresses he works with on stage each year.

He asks questions.

Instead of giving direction about how characters should feel during a particularly poignant moment in a play, Kravitz asks the actors what they think.

In fact, the actors rarely know his opinion.

“He doesn’t answer questions,” said Michael Wiggins of Ben Lomond with mock exasperation. “He makes me find answers on my own — and that makes it mean so much more to me.”

Wiggins, who has acted under Kravitz at San Lorenzo Valley High School, plays a lead role in the upcoming performance of “The Fantasticks,” put on by Mountain Community Theater at Park Hall in Ben Lomond.

Kravitz’s directing style comes from trial and error — he’s learned that his aim is to allow his actors to take ownership of the parts, to draw out the personality and passion of each individual character.

“My job as director is to allow actors to execute their art to the best of their ability,” Kravitz says. “As it often turns out, the show will take on a life of its own.”

During a recent audition, Kravitz had one of his actors perform the audition while pretending to be a screw. Yes, a piece of hardware.

“I want their response to be honest and immediate,” Kravitz said. “I want them to bring it.”

Originally from Long Island, N.Y., Kravitz met his eventual wife, Taunie Kravitz, on the Internet and moved to Ben Lomond in 2002. He quickly jumped into the theater community with a part in “The Rocky Horror Picture Show” and then directed “Twilight Zone” twice for MCT. In fall 2009, he directed “The Sound of Music” for Scotts Valley Performing Arts.

Kravitz’s latest directing endeavor is “The Fantasticks,” a look into the angst that exists between teens and their parents as a boy and girl act out a teen romance with their fathers in the way.

The musical features songs by Harvey Schmidt and lyrics by Tom Jones and includes “Soon It’s Gonna Rain,” “They Were You,” and the well-known “Try to Remember.”

Kravitz has chosen actors and actresses he worked with while directing plays and musicals for San Lorenzo Valley High School, including Sidney Frizzell-Gorham, Abe Olson and Wiggins.



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Cast members Matt Wiggins (from left), Abe Olson, Sydney Frizzell-Gorham, director Scott Kravitz and musical director Ashley Sue Moore discuss the upcoming production of “The Fantasticks.” Lucjan Szewczyk/Press-Banner

“The great thing about high school kids is they are really hungry to learn,” Kravitz said. “It’s great to see actors who really want to grow and develop and really take their craft seriously and see how far they go.”

Kravitz has become well-known in the Santa Cruz County theater community, and there’s no end in sight.

“I love doing this,” Kravitz said. “It’s such a pleasure to come into a space and create something that’s purely organic and where everyone brings something that’s part of the picture.”

At a glance

- **WHAT:** Mountain Community Theater presents “The Fantasticks”
- **WHEN:** 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays: Jan. 22, 23, 29, 30 and 31 and Feb. 4, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 14
- **WHERE:** Park Hall, 9370 Mill St., in Ben Lomond
- **TIX:** \$20 from www.mctshows.org or at the door