

TALKING WITH SHERIE RENE SCOTT and DICK SCANLAN

When did the concept for this show arise? How did the two of you come to work together?

DICK: We started working together in 2000, when we collaborated on the (very unorthodox) liner notes for Sherie's CD, *Men I've Had*. While we were working on the liner notes, Sherie was asked to perform at a Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS event. Sherie wanted to give back to the community, but felt uncomfortable (always has and always will) singing a song outside the context of a character. So we created a character called Sherie Rene Scott, whose life story is similar to Sherie's (though not, by any means, identical), and whose personality is different; indeed, the constructed Sherie Rene Scott loves singing - anytime, anywhere.

SHERIE: After a series of such benefits over several years, we realized that we had the makings of a show. In 2006, we were asked to do an evening as a benefit for the Gay & Lesbian Center. So we locked ourselves in a studio for three months (as co-owner of Sh-K-Boom Records, I have a rehearsal space that we can use), and talked and dreamed and allowed ourselves to live in the not knowing in order to discover what this piece wanted to be. The show for Second Stage has grown enormously from that first showing, but its roots are still in those endless conversations we had in the Sh-K-Boom room.

Can you talk about the title *Everyday Rapture*?

DICK: The title *Everyday Rapture* was suggested by Carole Rothman (one of the many very helpful suggestions Carole has offered). In its earlier phases of development, the show straddled genres: part concert/part play. All of us wanted to delve into the "play" aspect of the piece, and leave the concert remnants behind. Part of that meant coming up with a new title. Sherie and I suggested several obscure, writerly titles (the kind that the authors like, and everyone else says, "Huh?").

SHERIE: Carole came across the phrase "everyday rapture" in the newspaper, and we were immediately taken with it. To Mennonites (Mennonites figure prominently in the play), everyday rapture is the idea of



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living everyday as if the rapture is imminent, and we love the idea that the character ultimately realizes that in the well-lived life, the everyday is rapturous. "Rapture" also has sexual and artistic connotations, both of which are part of the character's journey.

What's on your iPod?

SHERIE: Lots of jazz, including vocalists Sarah [Vaughn] and Ella [Fitzgerald]. Gods of rock - The Who, The Beatles, Stones, U2, Springsteen. Alternative, like Beck, Steely Dan, Dire Straits, Ricki Lee Jones. Now, lots of cast albums, all SH-K-Boom/Ghostlight Records oddly enough.

DICK: The same music I had in my record collection when I was 10 years old: the Beatles, the Supremes, the Mamas and the Papas, Julie Andrews (it's embarrassing but true), Judy Garland, Simon & Garfunkel, and lots of shows. And the Beethoven piano sonatas. Add to that Green Day's *American Idiot*, *Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison*, and the stuff you find on most gay men's iPods

(Liza, Barbra, Barbara Cook) and you've got my number.

You've been a leading lady in countless shows written by other people. How does it feel being a leading lady on your own?

SHERIE: So far it feels like it has very little to do with me, which has been refreshing. Being involved in a project since conception makes working on the piece, the story, the most important and interesting thing. Different than being cast into something and only being able to focus (or over-focus) on my part of telling the story. It sounds like a great dream to act in a show I co-wrote and not be self-absorbed, but dreams can come true!

In terms of inspiration, it is often said that religion and art are closely related. How is the relationship between spirituality and theatre reflected in *Everyday Rapture*?

DICK: For me, faith (a crucial element in any spiritual practice) is a necessary element in theatre, because the theatre is frankly artificial. The audience is aware that the actors they are watching on stage are not actually living through the events being depicted. Instead, the audience forms a pact with the actors (and, by extension, the authors, director, designers, producers, etc.) to believe that what they are seeing is true, even as they know it is not. This is a form of faith, and I think that faith-qua-faith is spiritually enriching. In other words, the mere act of believing in the impossible or the unseen is nourishment to the human soul. Thus, the "artificial" quality in *Everyday Rapture* (the show is not, nor is it intended to be, naturalistic) heightens the possibility of a "rapturous" response from the audience, if rapture is defined as a mystical experience of being transported into the spiritual realm.

SHERIE: I think for this character there has never been a separation between her spiritual life and any other aspect of her life. So then every expression, artistic or otherwise, must be a spiritual expression or experience, and that weighs on her and causes conflict with her base self. I find this hard to identify with but hopefully by April I will.