

SHREK THE MUSICAL THEATRE REVIEW BY ANDREW EDLIN

Way Off Broadway closes its summer season triumphantly with the universal favorite *Shrek*. Based on the iconic movie, this is a family musical that truly entertains children *and* adults.

A cast of 50 is led by moving and funny Chaz Williams-Ali as the green ogre, Nicole Santiago-Barrero (Kim in *Miss Saigon*) as a surefooted and comedic Princess Fiona, Jonathan Christopher as a simply wonderful Donkey, and Adam Jedlicka as a hugely entertaining Lord Farquaad. (This show reveals why he comes up short). Jenna Murphy as the dragon is... immense.

Sidney Eric Wright's choreography adds zest to a joyous and energetic feel good show that leaves the audience grinning. My music favorites are 'I Know It's Today' with the three Fionas at different ages; Maya Gottshall and Julia Fritz singing lovely harmony with Nicole giving me goose bumps; and the comedic duo 'I Think I've Got You Beat' between Shrek and Fiona. The show closes with 'I'm a Believer,' which would have got the audience to its feet, but they were there already to give the huge, talented and committed cast a standing ovation.

The singing quality in both solo and chorus is outstanding, and a special shout



out to the multimedia elements and the set, which really enhanced the show. Kudos to Randy West and all associated with a wonderful and varied summer of musical theater. And it's not over yet...don't miss *Shrek*!

***Shrek* plays at the Sondheim Center, on Thursday-Saturday, August 15-17 at 7:30, with a final Sunday matinee August 18 at 2 p.m.**

Finding Home: How Americans Prevail Sally Ooms Gives Book Talk, Aug. 24

Author Sally Ooms will be speaking at Revelations bookstore on Saturday, August 24 at 1 p.m.

What is a home? In *FINDING HOME: HOW AMERICANS PREVAIL*, journalist Sally Ooms showcases everyday people around the country who say home is rarely just the structure they live in.

Americans are dealing with housing problems on a daily basis: vets and foster kids, single moms and laid-off workers, retirees and small business owners. Using her reporter's skills to talk with people who had been displaced, Ooms wanted to understand what the word home really meant to people and find out how they created, recreated, or retained their homes.

The 50 people, speaking in their own voices, have had the experience of losing what they called home. Their calamities range from natural disasters to growing up in foster homes, from combat soldiers returning with uneasy feelings about their home to immigrants building a new life in America. There are elderly people adjusting to retirement home life and Native Americans fighting for the preservation of their land and their ways. Homeless people have a voice as well.

"What surprised me listening to people were the things they had in common, even though they didn't seem to be alike in

the least," Ooms says. "I started to see how ubiquitous the need to call a place home is."

Because these individuals are prevailing over their circumstances, there is much valor manifesting itself on the pages of *Finding Home*. The characteristics that bind these seemingly dissimilar Americans are perseverance, a never-say-die approach to their problems and generally upbeat attitudes. No woe is me. No whiners.

"Displacement is becoming more and more common in this country," Ooms says. "From natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy, tornados in Oklahoma and fires in Colorado to the increasing homeless population, the state of being without a home is becoming more prevalent."

"I will feel good if these stories inspire others in surmounting their difficulties. But even more, I hope that people who read the book will gain a better understanding of what we so often refer to as the average American and what they yearn for to complete themselves."

Ooms traveled 10 states in the process of listening to people's life stories. She has called 23 locations home, and has moved twice in the several years she spent collecting the tales. She now lives in San Francisco but "I too, in my own way, still am searching," she says.

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