

Pucker up: It's time to kiss and tell (us)

By **JONNO ROBERTS**

MAY 9, 2010, 12:05 AM | SAN DIEGO

Jonno Roberts: Theater diary

Jonno Roberts is writing weekly about his experiences rehearsing and performing in the Old Globe's Summer Shakespeare Festival for the Union-Tribune's Sunday Arts section. Roberts is playing Petruchio in "The Taming of the Shrew" and Edmund in "King Lear."

Read his entries here:

More...



Learn more about Jonno Roberts at jonnoroberts.com.

Learn more about The Old Globe Theater at oldglobe.org.

I'll never forget my first kiss. Not my first real kiss — that moment of back-seat fumbling or behind-the-toolshed fondling was lost long ago in the sinkhole of my memory. But my first stage kiss? Unforgettable. Sixteen years old; the show was "West Side Story," and she was (I tremble at the name) Lucy Brooke. And I looked forward to that kiss like nothing else ever in my life, as we slowly built up to it in rehearsals. And then, one Thursday night, we kissed. Her breath was sweeter, and her lips softer, than anything I had ever known.

Flash forward. I'm now about 27, my first role in New York, a new play at a big theater, with a big-name director and a big-name cast. On day two, we're up on our feet, scripts in hand, stumbling around the stage and exploring the first scenes. I expect us to just mark the kiss with an "all right, here's where we'll kiss," because that is how it worked in high school, but no. In the big leagues, the kiss just comes. A big, wet, sloppy pash. But this time, it's from someone called Jake.

And I just laugh for what seems like half an hour until our darling director has to tell me to shut up, grow up and get back to work.

A year later, I'm naked, wet and soapy in a baseball clubhouse shower, replicated on a Broadway stage. The lead character jumps on me and pretends he's going to rape me. Nothing makes an actor question the validity of his career choices like the soapy junk of one of People magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People" mashed up against his thigh, eight shows a week.

Next show: Naked onstage again. For a l-o-n-g time, with an older woman. We end up covered in blood and bugs. The show after that: I strangle a man with my tie and make love to his wife over his corpse.

Are you seeing a pattern?

But this leads us to today. We're discovering that our production of "The Taming of the Shrew" really deserves the

subtitle “A Love Story.”

And love stories have a very particular kind of kiss. There are three great kisses in this show. One is comical and occurs offstage — another character tells everyone about it. The second is awkward, the first fumbling kiss of a husband and wife who are actually falling in love. The third? A kiss of passion that pretty much ends the play.

We’ve been working chronologically, and hadn’t yet gotten to the kissy bits. As a result of my character’s frustration, I have even added an extra one in — where I desperately want to kiss her, but as I can’t, I kiss one of the guys instead (although I really should have warned the poor actor first).

And then today? Kate and Petruchio get pulled out of “Shrew” rehearsals and go into “Lear” to play Goneril and Edmund: two nasty, nasty characters. In there, we finally kissed. It was cold, calculating and ugly.

And I felt right at home.

Jonno Roberts: Old Globe theater diary

- [Breaking bad? He’s ready for the dark side](#)
- [The vectors of insanity are converging](#)
- [Pucker up: It’s time to kiss and tell \(us\)](#)
- [Directors can curb an actor’s enthusiasm](#)
- [A horse is a horse, of course, of course ...](#)
- [Words and superstitions, passed down years](#)
- [Hello, Tech rehearsal; farewell, Outside Life](#)
- [Somewhere in the middle of the park, a creature stirs](#)
- [He’s lookin’ good \(he hopes\), but how would he know?](#)
- [For an actor, sculpting a role is an ever-changing work of creation](#)
- [To the play! But first, a nap and playtime ...](#)
- [In awe of the Bard — and with good reason](#)