



The Making of *Something Rotten!*

Most Broadway newcomers don't get their first show produced by Tony Award winner Kevin McCollum, land Tony winner Casey Nicholaw as their director-choreographer, or score a major hit when they opt to open directly on Broadway.

But Karey Kirkpatrick, Wayne Kirkpatrick and John O'Farrell, the creators of the ten-time Tony Award-nominated *Something Rotten!*, are unusual Broadway first timers.

Careers took the Kirkpatrick brothers and O'Farrell down different creative paths: Karey to success as an animated-film screenwriter, songwriter and director; Wayne to acclaim as a Grammy Award-winning songwriter; the British O'Farrell to multifaceted writing success.

The seeds of *Something Rotten!* were sewn in the mid-1990s when the Kirkpatricks started kicking ideas around.

"It was, 'What would it be like to be writing in the shadow of William Shakespeare, after *Romeo and Juliet* just opened?," Karey recalls.

"Eventually it was, 'If we're going to do this, we should really get serious about it,'" Wayne says.

The brothers buckled down, and in 2010, Karey reached out to producer McCollum, his friend since they worked together years earlier at Disney World.

"We called Kevin and said, 'What do you need?'" He said that *Avenue Q* was three songs and an idea," Karey says.

Karey brought in O'Farrell, whom he'd met writing *Chicken Run*, to help craft the book and the brothers created the music and lyrics. What they had, after a multi-year developmental process, is a buoyant show set in Shakespeare's day that imagines the creation of the very first musical.

Something Rotten! centers around Nick and Nigel Bottom, brothers desperate for a hit in Elizabethan London, where William Shakespeare is a rock star-like god of the stage.

Nick's wife Bea, a can-do gal in the style of cross-dressing Shakespearean heroines, tries to help. Nigel falls for a pretty Puritan named Portia, whose daddy disapproves. Flawed soothsayer Thomas Nostradamus looks into the future and predicts Shakespeare's next big hit will be a musical titled *Omelette*.

A success since it opened on Broadway in April 2015, *Something Rotten!* is laced throughout with humor for Shakespeare aficionados and musical theater geeks.

But as O'Farrell observes, "It works as a musical for people who don't know musicals or Shakespeare, then I'm happy. It's about show business and putting on a show. The show works on many levels, but the main level it works on, I hope, is that it's just a great fun night out."

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