

Timothy ([00:09](#)):

<silence> Hello, I'm Timothy Dunn and welcome to CVRAP. This is a show where I sit down and have discussions with the actors and directors who are performing at CVRAP, members of the artistic staff, and from the CV Rep Conservatory. And this happens to be the premier of CVRAP. So, we thought we'd just start at the top and with the executive, artistic director, and his name is Adam Karsten.

So, tell us in 25 words or less, give or take, who is Adam Karsten?

Adam: Let's see. I definitely would say, I'm a father that probably has become pretty prominent in my life. I like to think that I am a creative, a collaborator, somebody who enjoys challenges. Whenever I feel afraid, I think I'm going in the right direction, and somebody who likes to be inspired and inspire others. And that's why I do what I do.

Timothy ([01:56](#)):

So, what drew you, drew you to being, I love the word impresario, so we're gonna use the word impresario. <laugh>

Adam ([02:02](#)):

Okay.

Timothy ([02:03](#)):

Um, so to be able to put together seasons and artists and performers, what, what attracts that to you?

Adam ([02:11](#)):

I, I think it's about bringing people together. So, because that's what those things do, and I think for me at some point, doing theater. So I began doing theater pretty early on, um, even before I really knew what theater was. I think I recognized later in life as I was doing it professionally and as I trained that theater was an art form that was collaborative. So whether you were building, uh, a set or acting in a show, or directing or producing, it wasn't just you. Even if you're doing a person show, it is a collaborative art form where you bring creative minds together to create something larger than one person, bigger than ourselves, and hopefully in the end, larger than life. And that was exciting. And I wanted to be able to do that at high levels. Um, and I wanted to be able to do that, uh, with people that I really enjoyed doing that with. And that's part of my job. And the great part of my job is I get to surround myself with people that are probably better at everything than I that they do than I am. Um, because in some ways you're only as good as the people that you surround yourself with.

Timothy ([03:36](#)):

So once you have put everything together, you, you know, sets costumes, everyone's rehearsed, it's done, it's out there. What do you hope your audience is going to, if you can say that, what are they going to walk away with?

Adam ([03:49](#)):

I don't know that there's one answer to that question. What I always kind of think of is that what I want to be able to create are, are experiences in stories and storytelling experiences that the audience is really touched by and moved by. I'm smart enough to recognize that if I'm sitting in that audience, the person in front of me, the person behind me, the person next to me is having a different experience or

maybe thinking something very different. But as long as that experience is so intimate and so powerful that whatever they want, that they walk, walk away affected by it, they walk away really being touched, that they really felt some, felt something genuine in that story that they could identify with or connect with or even be angry about in some ways. Um, because I think theater teaches us so many things in that regard. So that's, I guess what I hope for.

Timothy ([04:48](#)):

Yeah. What's interesting, you're saying that too, is everyone has can have be affected differently, but at the same time that audience can be out there, so totally united and in the same space.

Adam ([04:59](#)):

Yes. Yeah. Which is

Timothy ([05:00](#)):

Wonderful.

Adam ([05:01](#)):

I, I think I read recently in research that there's actual research, research that shows that an audience during a theatrical performance, the heartbeats synchronize and CV rep is exactly that kind of experience, because it's small, it's intimate. You are, uh, comfortably <laugh>. I like to say that about CV rep. It's very comfortable,

Timothy ([05:23](#)):

Like

Adam ([05:24](#)):

First class, um, sitting and, and sharing in a very personal experience. And you're not very far away from it. And if you do it at a high quality, you're, it's inevitable that it's gonna affect everybody.

Timothy ([05:38](#)):

You know, you're, you're talking about, you know, the proximity of artists to, um, to the audience. I think that's, it makes it a huge difference. Just different than in being in a mammoth, you know, 3000 seat theater and you're looking at someone highly mic'd from far away. Yeah. And the, the exchange that you get and the effect that you can have both ways is so strong in this type of theater. I think,

Adam ([06:05](#)):

I, I completely agree. It's exactly why I was so excited to be able to come here. It was the, it's the potential of that experience that was very attractive for me when I started talking about the position. And I, I, it, it's the, it's kind of like, okay, if you're going to an opera, and I know you can be very far away from an opera, but you, you often get engrossed in the music and the music can take you away. It's the difference of, of being able to watch Michelangelo paint up close as opposed to, you know, a thousand feet away. Um, it's gonna be a different experience.

Timothy ([06:47](#)):

Yeah.

Adam ([06:47](#)):

And it's wonderful that you have a space, we have a space here where we're bringing really high quality intimate theater where you're in, not, none of the seats are bad seats. You're really close up in, in all of them. And they're always a good place to have that experience.

Timothy ([07:03](#)):

You're almost forced to become part of that celebration of that experience, which I think is wonderful.

Adam ([07:08](#)):

Yeah.

Timothy ([07:09](#)):

Really brings everyone, you have to be present.

Adam ([07:11](#)):

Yeah, it's true. I'm not sure I like that term forced.

Timothy ([07:13](#)):

Yeah. But it's, it's

Adam ([07:14](#)):

True. Yeah. 'cause we don't Exactly, we have two aisles on the side, so if you're in the middle No, no, no. You can't get up <laugh>.

Timothy ([07:20](#)):

Yeah, that's right. We'll let you up. Don't worry. Right. We'll let you know when it's time. <laugh>. So I, and I know you're putting together the first show of the season, so I was thought for this episode of CV Rapp, maybe to mention, uh, certainly the first show, *The Fantasticks*, and then a little bit about what's coming up in the season.

Adam ([07:42](#)):

Do you want me to do that?

Timothy ([07:44](#)):

Well, there you are. Shows <laugh>.

Adam ([07:47](#)):

I wish they were my

Timothy ([07:47](#)):

Show with that.

Adam ([07:49](#)):

The first show is exciting because it's only been done twice before. It'll be the West Coast premier, and we're really getting an opportunity to do the show before it potentially lands on Broadway again. And it's the Fantastics, but it's been reimaged by Tom Jones, and it's really special. And the wonderful thing about it is, one, the director that you're gonna hear about from later, I think on, on your show, Craig Wells is approaching it and knows the show, and knows, uh, Schmidt and Jones well, and their works well, knows the producer who's allowing us to do the show. Well, that it's, again, that really collaborative environment. But he's approaching it like he would approach any love story. And that to me is the simplicity of something that's gonna be so powerful because of it. But the, the reality of it is, is in this version, which is different from the original, in the original version, Matt falls in love with Louisa over a wall and our new reimaged version, Matt falls in love with Louis over a wall.

([08:53](#)):

And instead of them being manipulated by their two gardening fathers, they're manipulated, but also understood by their two gardening mothers. Um, so it's a twist and a change, but in the end, it's the same simple love story that Tom and Harvey told that is so human and so, identifiable with so many of us, and the talent that we're bringing to the stage, introducing the two young, men in the play and the, the mothers and the old actor and Mortimer is, and even the Mute is just exceptional. So, we're excited about it. So that's what I can tell you about the first one. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Timothy ([09:41](#)):

Fantastic. And I think something that's so interesting, and, and I don't wanna step on Craig's comments, but is also that you have the, the boy and the girl and the two boys, and you kind of, you come out feeling the same, the the emotions, the feelings are all the same.

Adam ([09:57](#)):

And, you know, Timothy's, in some ways I kind of feel like, well, why wouldn't you? But it's just the world that we know, uh, that for at least many people in our, in our generation, they would question that for somebody like my kids, um, my daughter and my, my son who grew up going to school at first in New York City wouldn't think anything other than of course, why wouldn't they? So that's exactly the hope is that you really walk out with that experience. And again, it's gonna be different for everybody and anyone who's who's in the audience that night,

Timothy ([10:34](#)):

And it's not, it's not messaging, which is so nice. Yes. It's just, it's natural.

Adam ([10:39](#)):

I Exactly. Yeah. And I think that's exactly how Craig's approaching it, and I'm excited to be able to present it and produce it.

Timothy ([10:46](#)):

So, uh, and then you're coming to your, your world premiere.

Adam ([10:50](#)):

Yes. A world premiere.

Timothy ([10:52](#)):

This I can

Adam ([10:53](#)):

Pick up capital W

Timothy ([10:55](#)):

Yes, that's true. Yes.

Adam ([10:57](#)):

It's exciting because this one, this was, uh, kind of discovered through our, our new Works development program, origins, and that's all begun just last year here at CV Rep. But something that we wanna be, a program we want to be able to continue and are excited about, and it's where we take plays, uh, that have never been produced before or even read before. Sometimes from hundreds of submissions. We select four do readings, and then choose one of those four to go into our next season. And this will be the first year, the inaugural year that we're gonna do that with summer Sessions from The Bones Brigade by Kirby Fields. This play is young, riveting, powerful, but also old. And I say that it's old because it takes place in Middle America in 1980s. Um, but it deals with six young people coming of age, uh, and the issues and things that they're feeling are not any different from the issues and things that young people today are dealing with.

([11:55](#)):

And that's the magic of it. That it's raw, it's real, it's something that, yes, I know that we weren't staring into our iPhones, uh, in 1980s, but it doesn't mean that the pain or the difficulty of relationships and growing up were any different. So it's gonna be great for old, uh, people to come back and see and, and remind themselves of, of 1980s and being young and growing up, but it's also gonna be great for young people that we hope come into the theater and, and see, share this experience. And the play's unique. It's six young people for young boys who are skateboarders and two young women, and they build a halfpipe and skate on the stage. And the power, the power of that alone, uh, reflects what they're going through. Um, it's extremely well written. Kirby, the playwright's gonna be here with us for the rehearsal process and the opening night, and we're excited to be able to share this experience with them. And the hope is that these plays go on that don't just get presented here at CV Rep and disappear, but they go on. Because the goal of the program in the end is that we're looking for the next Broadway show.

Timothy ([13:03](#)):

And, uh, two points first that, um, Kirby will undoubtedly be doing one of our podcasts. So that'll be fun. Mm-hmm. The other is in the development of New Works. That's part of the goal that you, I think you bring to CVRAP.

Adam ([13:20](#)):

Yeah. When I talked about what excited me about CVRAP and the potential that was one of them, and I knew that from the beginning that we exist and, uh, serve a community that's very theater knowledgeable. Um, there are many Broadway veterans, and even Broadway producers and directors that live in the Valley very nearby that some that attend CB rep. Uh, so it has all of that potential. So, um, it seemed key, it seemed obvious. That doesn't make it easy. There still are challenges in creating such a program, and the, the way we want to present it is that it's not at a cost to the writers and the

creators and the creatives that it's something that we want to be able to produce and give back to the art form and create and bring those people together and, and be able to do that without a cost to them.

Timothy ([14:07](#)):

It's exciting. It's,

Adam ([14:08](#)):

Yeah,

Timothy ([14:09](#)):

A lot of times people will be able to sit, I knew them when <laugh> I not the premiere of that.

Adam ([14:13](#)):

Yes.

Timothy ([14:14](#)):

Yeah. That's fun. Yeah. So, um, and then cabaret.

Adam ([14:18](#)):

Oh, yes. So

Timothy ([14:20](#)):

Close to your heart.

Adam ([14:21](#)):

It is, it's, I'm, I won't even get into some of the things that are going on today that make it even more relevant than ever. But I will say that this is also another play that when we talk about history and what we can learn from and experience from, and, and the way we're gonna approach the show is what would you do? Asking that question. But the way we're going to create the show is by making it immersive, semi-immersive, if not fully immersive. So when you step off the sidewalk and into the playhouse, you walk into 1930s Berlin, and I may take it a step further in saying that, what I'd like to be able to, to create is when you walk in, you're in 1919 Berlin, the end of Versailles Treaty, and you travel through an informational experience that will take you to 1930s, kit Kat Club Berlin, when you're inside the actual playhouse, and then create that for the audience and create the environment and the experience and how that might feel throughout the play, so that when Faulein Schneider does ask, what would you do? It's a direct question to us all. and that's one of those experiences that I talk about that I have, um, such a passion, uh, to be able to share with audiences and create for audiences.

Timothy ([15:37](#)):

And it, and it's, you take it beyond the immediate show and the music and kind of, it shows how the arts cover decades and eras.

Adam ([15:49](#)):

Isn't that true? Whether it's entertainment, whether it's thought provoking or whether it's substantial or not, it's, it can cover so much and in those combined art forms and, and touch us all and hopefully enrich us, you know, the, in the end, the goal and the hope is that we all come out better versions of ourselves, the more we expose ourselves to those experiences

Timothy ([16:16](#)):

POTUS, which should be hysterical. I'm really looking forward to that. Yeah. After cabaret you need POTUS, you need it <laugh>.

Adam ([16:23](#)):

That's, yes. We've opened with some drama. It's time. And we're gonna be in an, in an election year. Yeah. So we're gonna all need it. Um, I love the second half of the, the title of the play because it kind of says it all, which is behind every great dumbass or seven women trying to keep him alive. I think I said the other day, well, there's my wife, there was my mother, there's my daughter. So that's three <laugh>.

Timothy ([16:48](#)):

Yes. Um,

Adam ([16:49](#)):

But it's, it's the, the ability to find ridiculous in the things that are most frightening in some ways that we need as humans. Um, and this play will have you on the edge of the seat, not because it's dramatic, but because you're laughing. And I think that's gonna be, um, therapeutic in many ways.

Timothy ([17:15](#)):

The two shows so interesting how the one is, is, is so dramatic mm-hmm.

Adam ([17:19](#)):

<affirmative>

Timothy ([17:19](#)):

And the other one is so funny mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And yet they kind of still address, um, concerns or issues or

Adam ([17:27](#)):

Yeah.

Timothy ([17:27](#)):

Timeless things that Yeah. History hasn't changed.

Adam ([17:31](#)):

Yeah. And look, in my job, there's not an agenda. I don't have, it's neither one of these plays in my opinion, is, is pushing an agenda, uh, in any way. It's, uh, giving you, again, an experience, but you're right, you're, you're not gonna be able to walk out saying, well, that didn't have to do with anything, because it takes a, a political, um, yeah. Genre or theme or time of in, in place in time, uh, to, to develop

the historian platform from. But the ridiculousness of the second one can definitely counter the seriousness of the first one.

Timothy ([18:07](#)):

And then there's the, uh, final show that you have all singing, all dancing, all. It's wonderful.

Adam ([18:13](#)):

It's wonderful. It, the show itself is, which is titled *Nice Work, if you Can Get It*, is based on George and I Gershwin's, o k, and that's o o h, second word, KWA. Uh, but it's kind of modernized and, uh, addition, they've added some of their other popular tunes, whether it's someone to watch over me or Fascinating rhythm, to create this, even though it takes place in olden times, which is wonderful. The, the beauty of it, Timothy, is that it's George and I, were Gershwin at its best. It's so enjoyable, so fun. So you, you'll walk out humming and, and whistling the tunes and, uh, it will stay with you. But it's also a big, fun roaring twenties stance show, um, which our stage is designed and built for. So it's gonna be exciting, it's gonna be challenging, but I'm looking forward to it because I do have to say that golden age of musical theater is just something to die for and something I love.

Timothy ([19:23](#)):

Yeah. And again, what a wonderful, incredible show to end the season.

Adam ([19:27](#)):

Yeah, it's

Timothy ([19:28](#)):

Good because it's happy, it's, it's big and it's

Adam ([19:30](#)):

Agreed. It's a good way to go out,

Timothy ([19:32](#)):

And you can certainly hum the tunes.

Adam ([19:34](#)):

Yeah. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Timothy ([19:38](#)):

I hope you're enjoying this CV RAP. If you'd like to learn more about CVRAP and the shows in the upcoming 2024 season, please visit our website at www.cvrap.org. And if you'd like, be sure to wrap back to us on Facebook and now back to our show. So now we come to the part of, of the, uh, CVRAP to the cv, rapid fire

Adam ([20:05](#)):

<laugh>

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Timothy ([20:06](#)):

Questions,

Adam ([20:07](#)):

CVRAP, rapid fire

Timothy ([20:08](#)):

Questions. Okay. I, I tried to say that together once. That's it did not, not work.

Adam ([20:13](#)):

Yes. Gimme that 10 times

Timothy ([20:14](#)):

Fast. Yeah. Okay. You ready?

Adam ([20:17](#)):

I, I'm as ready as I think I could be. Yes. Yeah.

Timothy ([20:19](#)):

What sign are you?

Adam ([20:21](#)):

Cancer,

Timothy ([20:23](#)):

Uh, three famous playwrights you'd like to have coffee with. Ooh.

Adam ([20:27](#)):

Tony Kushner, Lynn Nottage. I should probably say Shakespeare, but I don't know if he and I would be able to communicate well or relate. So I'll say Eugene O'Neal.

Timothy ([20:45](#)):

Yeah.

Adam ([20:46](#)):

Yeah. Or maybe check off. It's again, that might be a, you know,

Timothy ([20:50](#)):

I should have given you five.

Adam ([20:51](#)):

So what was it, three? I was supposed to say three.

Timothy ([20:55](#)):

We'll give you five.

Timothy ([21:02](#)):

And I was thinking, aside from the Rapid Fire, as you're saying those names, there are so many that just the character themselves would be fun to have lunch with. Yes.

Adam ([21:11](#)):

To meet people, meet them as individuals. Yeah. Yeah. Not just to talk about their plays. Yeah, totally. Right.

Timothy ([21:17](#)):

But we digress. Um, a favorite actor or actress from the past that you would love to direct or have worked with?

my wife is reading a biography in Frank Sinatra. Um, and he seems like a really interesting character. An individual might not want to work with him. He might be kind of difficult, but I would say that I would say Audrey Hepburn just, I mean, how could you not fall in love with that?

Timothy ([21:50](#)):

Yeah.

Adam ([21:50](#)):

Grace Kelly, I grew up watching Gene Kelly.

Timothy ([21:58](#)):

Yeah.

Adam ([21:59](#)):

And just was enamored with him, and he was, he spent some time in Pittsburgh, and I'm a big Pittsburgh fan, so maybe that again, how many, this is rapid fire, right? I'm not, I'm giving you way too many answers.

Timothy ([22:09](#)):

Sorry's. It is, but it's our first, this is the test. Rapid Fire <laugh>. Okay. This is the, I don't know, favorite sports team.

Adam ([22:16](#)):

Seriously.

Timothy ([22:18](#)):

It's right there on the list.

Adam ([22:19](#)):

Pittsburgh Steelers.

Timothy ([22:21](#)):

Yeah. <laugh>. That was such a giveaway. <laugh>. <laugh>. Um, so if, if you were, if you are reincarnated,

Adam ([22:30](#)):

Who were you before or hoped you were? Oh, I, I get it. Who was in my previous life?

Timothy ([22:35](#)):

Yes.

Adam ([22:37](#)):

I think I was a candle maker. I don't know my name, but I had some strange identification with candles. I know. It seems bizarre.

Timothy ([23:03](#)):

It's interesting.

Adam ([23:04](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Timothy ([23:06](#)):

Um, do you have a personal motto or, uh, mantra

Adam ([23:12](#)):

Motto or mantra? Uh, be inspired. No, that's too cliché. I think it's what I said earlier, which I'm beginning to identify with, but it's not something that I've lived by for long, but it's when I feel, uh, frightened or scared, I'm probably on the right track and I'm trying to live more by that and go towards it as opposed to run away from it.

Timothy ([23:38](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> a guilty pleasure.

Adam ([23:43](#)):

Oh, that's easy. Hazelnut coffee, creamer, <laugh>. And there are quite a few people who probably know that, who are probably nodding their heads right now. Uh, I don't know which brand it comes in a big yellow, red bottle. Really big, because that's why I buy it then. I don't have to be without it for <laugh>.

Timothy ([24:01](#)):

So what a hint for people to bring that to you here at the theater. Yes. Everybody walks in with here. This is, this is for Adam. Yeah.

Adam ([24:07](#)):

Flowers. Oh yeah. Nice. Thank you. <laugh> Coffee Creamer. Hey,

Timothy ([24:11](#)):

It's board of directors right now, <laugh>. So, um, last one, sort of not too rapid fire, but your farewell season five works that you would say. This is my swan song.

Adam ([24:27](#)):

Ah, like shows. Okay. Um, okay. Hmm. Plays, uh, well, I wanted, I'd like to take on indecent at some point and, uh, in the season, hopefully to come. I love *Amadeus*. Uh, I loved this movie, but I think it'd be fun to try and put up on the stage as well. *Curious Incident of the Dog* is too technical, but amazing and a great plate. There's a play called *Frozen*, not the Musical, A plate that's awful in its subject matter, but so powerful. And it was Brian F. O'Bryne, who I think won the Tony for it, but it was just, it knocked my socks off. Um, then I would switch over to musicals and look at some musicals. Um, I have a, a, a Fondness in my Heart for *Miss Saigon*. It's a big show. I don't know if it'd be too big for us. *Les Mis*. I love. Um, and then, I don't know, um, I, I like the idea of putting on new works too. So, uh, one of, I would throw in, oh wait, how many shows did we do season two counting. We've expanded,

Timothy ([25:35](#)):

We're

Adam ([25:35](#)):

Expanding into the some.

Timothy ([25:36](#)):

Exactly. Yes. Uh,

Adam ([25:37](#)):

Yes. That's hard because there's so many great works out there that deal that covers such a wide gamut of, uh, of different kind of feelings and genres that it, it's hard to choose. If I could go on and on

Timothy ([25:51](#)):

Last question. Yeah. It's, when you were just saying this, if you were to program, um, in a season, is there's something about putting two shows together, uh, uh, two plays or musicals together, one that's older, classical or classic, and one that is more contemporary that you might, I was reminding of that, that *Miss Saigon*, you know, 'cause bringing something else in or lemme just,

Adam ([26:14](#)):

I definitely

Timothy ([26:15](#)):

Compare and contrast.

Adam ([26:16](#)):

That is absolutely part of my thinking. I mean, when we talk about seasons, you talk about balance, and you're not just balancing it with subject matter or genre. You, you're also balancing it with old and new. Um, and we're definitely doing that now more because we're gonna present a premier work each year. We don't just do premieres. I want to be able to bring back Golden Age or classics or, or, and it doesn't mean that they're re-imagined or re-envisioned all the time, either. There's real value in bringing them back in the way they're done. I remember I had a great discussion at a dinner the other day, um, and the discussion was whether or not, uh, operas should be modernized. Oh, Enrico Caruso, that's another person I would name on that

Timothy ([26:56](#)):

List. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Adam ([26:57](#)):

Um, and I think it was Peter Sellers who did wonderful modern AP adaptations of them. But there's also something that is really wonderful about seeing them in their original classic form. Um, so I think there's value in both, but I definitely like the idea of old and new, um, coming in into a season together.

Timothy ([27:17](#)):

Yeah.

Adam ([27:18](#)):

Makes a lot of sense to me.

Timothy ([27:19](#)):

I think the advice of just give it a chance is so important.

Adam ([27:23](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I, that's a great statement actually, when you think of a season because you wanna create a season that doesn't, that is balanced, but you also wanna create a season that everybody's gonna be willing to actually attend and challenge themselves with, um, and say, okay, I'm gonna go in and see how this makes me feel without bias.

Timothy ([27:41](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Adam ([27:41](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Timothy ([27:42](#)):

Yeah.

Adam ([27:42](#)):

Yeah.

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Timothy ([27:44](#)):

Well, thank you. We have, I think, drawn to, to a close of this premiere. I think it was a good premiere.

Adam ([27:48](#)):

Yeah. Thank you. I

Timothy ([27:49](#)):

Would applaud it.

Adam ([27:50](#)):

<laugh>. It was

Timothy ([27:51](#)):

Fun.

Adam ([27:51](#)):

Yeah. Thanks for having me.

Timothy ([27:52](#)):

Uh, we'll have you back. Thanks.