

Where are they now?

HERE IS THE FULL INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR SCOTT J. CAMPBELL

This is the full email interview with actor Scott J. Campbell. An edited version appears on the back page of the January Grand.

FLASHBACK:

In January 2011 writer Barbara Aggerholm tracked down Waterloo native Scott J. Campbell in New York City where he was pursuing his acting dreams. He was our cover feature for that issue.

At the time, Campbell had a swing role in the Broadway production of Jersey Boys, ready to go on stage at any time in one of seven roles. It was just the latest in a list of stage and TV credits since his days in musical theatre in Waterloo Region.

TODAY:

Campbell is back on our side of the border for a few weeks, playing one of the lead roles in the touring production of American Idiot. The play kicked off its tour with a run at the Toronto Centre for the Arts, continuing to Jan. 15. Then the show heads across the U.S., including San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston and Chicago.

The play, featuring music by Green Day, centres round three lifelong friends — Johnny, Will and Tunny. Campbell plays Tunny. The play had rave reviews during its Broadway run and among the original cast on tour is actor Van Hughes as Johnny.

Campbell's local fan base will be cheering him on in his new role.

"Needless to say, I am very proud of him," his mother Martha Campbell writes in an email. "And his family and local followers can't wait to see him on stage in Toronto."

For more information and tickets, check out www.Americanidiotthemusical.com.

Grand editor Kathy Storrington caught up with Campbell by email during rehearsals.



Scott J. Campbell, shown in rehearsals, had to learn to play guitar for his role as Tunny in American Idiot.

Photography • Doug Hamilton

Kathy Storrington: *First, congratulations on your role in American Idiot. That's fantastic! And so nice for your friends and family that the tour launches in Toronto.*

As Grand magazine's "coverboy" last January, I am wondering if you can spare us a few moments for a short piece on our back page called Where Are They Now? I know



readers will love to hear about your latest success.

Scott J. Campbell: Thanks so much for reaching out! I'm so stoked for this show; you have no idea! It's a different genre that requires a different skill set.

I had to learn to play the guitar for the show. I didn't know C from G before walking in the audition and got the role anyway, so I've been at it for the past few months . . . sounding solid!

I just finished an initial rehearsal for a suspended aerial ballet that takes place in the show.

We rehearsed several days in Charleston, S.C. It's a gorgeous place. Now (in early December) we're in the midst of rehearsal in NYC. Just a few days in and already my body is screaming at me. And everyone is so talented and committed to being there.

Anyway, that it opens in Toronto is just the icing on the cake. We also have sit downs in L.A. and San Francisco that I'm crazy excited about. I haven't seen most of the places we're playing, so it'll be a great opportunity to get to know the country.

And yes, it's a big deal to have several Canadians in principal roles for a 1st National Tour. Jake Epstein of DeGrassi Next Generation and Spring Awakening 1st National Tour fame is playing opposite me as Will; I'm really excited to work with him and Gabe Antonacci and Talia Aaron, all fellow Canadians!

Kathy Storrington: *First I need to confirm a couple of key things about the show: You are playing Tunny, one of the three main roles in the production. Among the original Broadway cast members on tour is Van Hughes as Johnny.*

Scott J. Campbell: Yes, I am playing Tunny, one of the three main roles in the play. I originally auditioned for the show in general. They gave me a bunch of stuff to sing/read. That was way back for the original Broadway cast. Then I auditioned again for the replacement cast and I think by then they had an idea that they wanted me for Tunny. I was in Jersey Boys on Broadway at the time and remember running in to Michael Mayer at an event

and him telling me they had their eye on me so that was exciting. Then I went out for the tour casting process and won the role through a couple of callbacks.

Among the reprising Broadway cast members on tour are Van Hughes as Johnny; Krystina Alabado as The Extraordinary Girl/Whatsername cover and Leslie McDonel as Heather.

Kathy Storrington: *When Grand last spoke to you, you were a swing in Jersey Boys. How long did that role run? Were there other roles between then and now or did you basically go from Jersey Boys to rehearsals for American Idiot?*

Scott J. Campbell: Yeah. Jersey Boys. I was with the show for 7 months; it was pretty wonderful. I went on a bunch for Bob Gaudio — one time in the middle of the show on Christmas Day. That was intense. The show stopped, they stripped the microphone off of the actor who had lost his voice, slapped it on me and basically pushed me out onstage for the middle of the big 'televised' number, Sherry. After Jersey Boys, I was auditioning again; did a Verizon commercial and found out in June that I had booked American Idiot.

Kathy Storrington: *What is it about American Idiot — and the Tunny character — that attracts you?*

Scott J. Campbell: I love American Idiot because it's not easily classifiable as a musical or a rock opera, etc. Billy Joe and the band call it a play. The book is pretty minimal so the lines and dialogue are really the songs. So the opportunity to create and really communicate directly with the audience is a huge lure.

Michael Mayer's been very clear about moving in a different direction than the show has been done in the past and he invites so much creative participation with the cast.

Tunny has so much rage welled up within him. You have to remember this is a post-9/11-inspired album and show. He's seething and searching for meaning and peace in his life at a time when everything around him is

static and chaotic. That journey is something any actor is hungry for.

Kathy Storrington: *Were you a Green Day fan already or is this music new to you?*

Scott J. Campbell: I was, actually. I remember when I was growing up having those companies like Columbia and BMG that offered you 12 CDs for \$1. You had to choose them all in advance and they'd arrive by mail. I had Green Day on there for sure; their albums Dookie and Nimrod were some of my very first music purchases.

Kathy Storrington: *By the current touring calendar, you are going to be on the road for at least six months. Some stops are only for a few days. That sounds gruelling. How do you keep the role fresh when the hassles of travel wear you down — or is that adrenaline rush just there as soon as you step onto a stage?*

Scott J. Campbell: The show is, by nature, gruelling. For everyone involved. Keeping things fresh means taking care of yourself — physically, vocally, mentally. Right now, in rehearsal, Steven Hoggett is kicking our asses into shape. The idea in the company is to reach a level of physical and vocal stamina and then maintain that by constantly keeping at it.

Normal Actors Equity rules state that our call time for a show is 30 minutes before the curtain. With American Idiot, the cast agrees to come in 1 hour beforehand (myself 1 1/2 hours before to rehearse flying).

So we spend almost as much time preparing for the show on a daily basis as we do performing the show. As for keeping Tunny fresh, I don't really know how to explain my process other than by saying that every show is a little different in live theatre — it's my job to be physically and vocally healthy, mentally sharp, and emotionally open so I can play with my fellow actors.

Kathy Storrington: *Is there anything else that you would like to tell Grand readers?*

Scott J. Campbell: It's a crazy show. I hope every Grand reader has a chance to come and see it. 🍷