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# Scott Warrender returns to Dallas with new world premiere, 'Blankity-Blank'

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By LAWSON TAITTE / The Dallas Morning News  
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Scott Warrender says he "can't get arrested" in his hometown, [Seattle](#), where the number of theaters that produce musical comedies has been dwindling, but he has become one of Dallas' most popular theater composers.

His biggest hit, *Das Barbecu*, had a Dallas Theater Center production before it went to New York, and two excellent revivals have followed recently at other local companies. Lyric Stage gave his *Cinderella* (since retitled *The Plexiglass Slipper*) its first outing in 2002. Theatre Three gave his *Blankity-Blank* its world premiere Monday night in its basement space.

Texas diva Julie Johnson won her Theatre World award in the off-Broadway *Das Barbecu* and had the largest role, the Fairy Godmother, in *Cinderella*. She's starring in *Blankity-Blank*, though it turns out she's doing only about half the performances because she was later cast in the Dallas Theater Center's *It's a Bird ... It's a Plane ... It's Superman* as well.

Johnson has become Warrender's good friend as well as an admiring colleague.

"I really don't think Scott knows how good he is. His heart is as big as the vocal range he writes for his female singers," she says. "He has the quirkiest sense of humor, too. He's so funny."

Funny is what *Blankity-Blank* is all about. It somewhat resembles that parlor game in which people submit nouns and verbs to be worked into a story. In Warrender's new musical, the five performers have to keep incorporating the audience's suggestions throughout the show. Even their characters' names change from night to night.

"The hardest part for the actors is keeping a straight face," says director K. Doug Miller.

At the end of the show, the audience also gets to vote on which character to eliminate, so the actors have had to learn four different final songs.

This show is definitely light comedy, but Warrender says he hopes it "demonstrates some craft and some wit."

His colleagues agree that it does.

"When Scott was here for the first week of rehearsals, he mostly worked on the music, which is so hard. It doesn't go where you think it's going to go. It feels unfamiliar. I've tried to keep that in the choreography,

too," Miller says. "Actually, I think he's a genius."

As anyone who has seen any of the three area productions of *Das Barbecu* knows, this particular brand of genius is quite compatible with hilarity of the silliest kind.

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