

# Sweet to sultry

► Kate Shindle, a former Miss America, plays risqué Sally Bowles in 'Cabaret.'

By John Gregory  
Special to The Press-Enterprise

A sultry woman roams the stage in seductive garb. She smokes, she drinks, she takes drugs. Doesn't sound like Miss America, but it is.

Kate Shindle, Miss America 1998, arrived in Southern California this week to play the role of Sally Bowles in "Cabaret," the racy musical set in Germany during the beginning of the Third Reich.

Shindle confessed that she's often asked how an All-American girl could play a character of such questionable morals. The switch is not at all difficult for her to explain.

"Obviously it's a situation where no one is holding up Sally Bowles as a role model. I don't think there are too many people who walk out of the theater and think 'I want to live my life exactly like she does,'" Shindle says. "There are definitely some racy elements to the show, but I truly do believe that it's superseded by the integrity of the piece itself. It's not gratuitous. It tells the story of a specific time period in a specific city and there were seamy things going on."

Shindle says she also gained a respect for the play's dynamics.

"The show as a whole is really fantastic and really well planned, well written and well directed," she says. "It's exciting to be part of it and to tell the story of someone whose life is going down the tubes while she tries to pretend that everything is fine."

Does Sally Bowles have any positive traits?

"On the surface they seem to be pretty few and far between," says Shindle. "She's energetic. In some ways I would say she's very optimistic, although it's really an effort for her to bury her past and come to terms with the things going on around her. She's intelligent, but she doesn't have a whole lot of common sense. So, for every good thing there are two or three things you wish she'd change, but she's a fascinating character."

Shindle performs five songs solos in and does a bit of dancing as well.

"The Kit Kat girls do more dancing than I do, but I certainly have to keep up," she says.

Shindle didn't know a soul when she joined the cast, but says virtually everyone has been wonderful to



Kate Shindle is the sultry Sally Bowles in "Cabaret."

## PREVIEW

### "Cabaret"

**San Diego:** 7:30 Tuesday through Thursday, 8 p.m. Aug. 4, 2 and 8 p.m. Aug. 5, 1 and 6 p.m. Aug. 6, San Diego Civic Theatre, Third Avenue and B Street, San Diego, \$24-\$60, (619) 570-1100, (619) 220-8497.

**Costa Mesa:** Opens Aug. 8 and runs Tuesday-Sunday through Aug. 13, Orange County Performing Arts Center, 600 Town Center Drive, \$28.50-\$62.50, (714) 556-2787.

**Information:** Ticketmaster (714) 740-2000, (619) 220-8497.

**On the internet:** [www.sdplaygoers.com](http://www.sdplaygoers.com) or [www.ocpac.org](http://www.ocpac.org).

work with.

"It's an entirely different situation when you feel like you can trust the other people on the stage and feel safe creating things even if it's taking things in a slightly different direction than you've taken it before," she says.

She is exuberant about the opportunity to be on the road again with a troupe of performers. The musical's week-long run in each city is a welcome pace for someone who traveled 20,000 miles a month during her reign as Miss America.

Shindle joined the "Cabaret" cast in Denver recently and replaced actress Leah Thompson, who was headed to perform on Broadway. Before that, she rehearsed a week in New York, joined the cast in Atlanta, re-

hearsed a week there, rehearsed in Houston and then went into the show. She has been on the tour since July 11, eight shows a week. Last week was an exception — she was doing her 16th performance in a row.

"I'm coming from the other end of the spectrum where it was one night in each city, pack your stuff and let's go," she says. "So this is a nice little job I think."

The former Miss America didn't slow down after her year holding the pageant title. A few days after her reign ended, she went back to Northwestern to finish her education. During the summer of 1999 she worked at two summer stock companies and recorded a CD to benefit the National AIDS Fund. In December of 1999 she moved to New York where she even did a stint waiting tables near her apartment.

She has a feeling she'll be heading back to New York when her "Cabaret" contract is over in January 2001, although she has an option to renew. Then she will see what's next on her career agenda.

"I would love to eventually do film. That's something I would like to work in," she says. "Theater is my background and that's where I'm most comfortable, and to have an opportunity to play a role that's this demanding is something that comes along pretty rarely. So I'm just enjoying it while I've got it."