

[Comments \(0\)](#) | [Recommend \(2\)](#)

Buzz up!

- [Print](#)
- [Reprint or License](#)
- [Share](#)

'Charlotte Squawks' had plenty to work from in 2009

The year delivered an abundance of celebrity-foible fodder for the annual satirical musical show.

By Julie Reed

Special to the Observer

Posted: Monday, Feb. 08, 2010

Lawyer Brian Kahn sums up the year that was 2009: "It's been incredible how many people have done stupid things, both on a local and national level."

The behavior of local and national celebrities, politicians and institutions is the bread and butter of the satirical revue "Charlotte Squawks," now in its sixth iteration, titled "Six Degrees of Desecration."

Kahn and WFAE-FM's Mike Collins (of "Charlotte Talks") are behind the production, and along with eight performers, they poke fun at Charlotte and the country through original lyrics set to well-known songs. Finding targets was easy this year, Kahn and Collins said during an e-mail interview.

"We could probably spend the entire show on celebrity or politician extramarital affairs if we wanted to," Kahn said.

Inspiration is all around. "The only place we don't look, of course, is the mirror," Collins said.

The style of the send-ups is in the vein of Mark Russell, Weird Al Yankovich and "Saturday Night Live," Kahn says.

Their base of well-known songs that would make good parodies is getting shorter by the year, though. "I may have to start listening to new music on the radio instead of Mike's show," Kahn says, adding: "Just kidding - nobody listens to that show."

Collins says Kahn can find the humor in some of the saddest situations. "It's a real talent, and thank God he has it, because he can neither sing nor dance yet insists on doing both."

When "Charlotte Squawks" began in 2004, the audience was a bit timid, Collins says. "I think they were shocked that anyone would go against the grain of Southern gentility and make fun of everything and everyone."

But each year audiences have increasingly warmed to the humor, "so we've gotten just a little bit

tougher with each edition, hence the name "Six Degrees of Desecration."

Kahn said he thinks the political and economic climate gives them more opportunities to be sarcastic, as it seems that everyone is in that mood already.

Collins said he and Kahn started writing this year's show in July; they've scrubbed a few numbers because they were no longer topical, and altered some lyrics because the stories they were based on changed.

The two come up with a list of topics, try to find their point of view, marry it to a song that everyone knows and write lyrics that fit. Collins claims that if he writes a number, Kahn will change every lyric, but when Kahn comes up with something, he looks at it and agrees. "I never try and change anything," Collins says, "because he's an attorney and will sue me for damaging his intellectual property."

The news and the scoundrels who make the headlines keep the show fresh and relevant, Collins says. "There are some songs we bring back which are about timeless topics that folks seem to love, Kahn says, "such as songs about the streets changing names suddenly and without warning, how schools seem to close at the mere forecast of snow and male erectile dysfunction pills."

"Charlotte Squawks" pokes fun at many public figures in Charlotte, and Collins says Jennifer Roberts and several other county commissioners have seen the show, along with a number of bankers and a few mayors. Kahn says that former Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory came once and there was a song about him having higher political aspirations.

"I think we may have inspired his run for governor," Kahn says. "Sorry about that, Pat. Our bad."



[Subscribe to The Charlotte Observer & Earn Miles.](#)