

[IMAGE]

The Quest for Health

By Editorial Staff

A takeoff on the cult classic "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," the Tony Award-winning musical "Spamalot" has entertained audiences all over the U.S. Nikki Crawford, who plays the famed Lady of the Lake, describes how she stays healthy despite the physical and emotional pressures of show biz.

The Quest For Health - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The year 1969 will forever be remembered as the year a person first walked on the moon. But that same year, "Monty Python's Flying Circus" made its debut on BBC television in the United Kingdom. The irreverently funny show lasted four seasons, a total of 45 episodes.

In addition to the television program, several motion pictures were produced by the Pythons. Their first, "And Now for Something Completely Different," opened in 1971. The second, "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," opened four years later. Even with an extremely low budget (a mere \$400,000), the satirical look at King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table was an instant success.

"Spamalot" is presented as a musical "lovingly ripped off from" the Holy Grail movie. The stage show opened on Broadway and is currently playing in New York City, London, Las Vegas and on tour in the United States.

Monty Python's Spamalot at the Grail Theater at Wynn Las Vegas with Nikki Crawford and cast. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Monty Python's "Spamalot," the deliriously funny live spectacle, is playing in the Grail Theater at Wynn Las Vegas. Photo includes Nikki Crawford and cast. Photo credit: Carol Rosegg. Starring in one of the leading roles, the Lady of the Lake, is actress Nikki Crawford. How does she meet the constant physical and emotional demands of performing? As Nikki explains in this exclusive interview with *To Your Health*, her blueprint for success involves focus, perseverance, and wellness strategies such as exercise, diet and regular chiropractic care.

Can you tell us about the story of "Spamalot"? It is basically the story of King Arthur and his knights - Sir Gallahad, Sir Lancelot and a few others - and their quest to find the Holy Grail. At the end, he finds the grail and marries my character, the Lady of the Lake.

Spamalot at Wynn Las Vegas with John O'Hurley, Nikki Crawford and cast. - Copyright © Stock Photo /

Register Mark "Spamalot" opened March 8, 2007 at Wynn Las Vegas. The production stars John O'Hurley ("Seinfeld," "Family Feud"), Nikki Crawford and a distinguished cast. Photo credit: Carol Rosegg. **Tell us a bit about the Lady of the Lake and her role in the original Monty Python movie.** The Lady of the Lake is a mythical character. In most stories, she gives King Arthur the Excalibur - the magical sword. I'm there to serve King Arthur and to put him in the right direction of finding the grail. I also get to sing some great songs.

What are some of the songs you sing? I sing a parody of "Phantom," a duet called "The Song That Goes Like This," which is a hilarious song I sing with Sir Gallahad. I have another great tune called "Whatever Happened to My Part" because I've been offstage for awhile. I sing to the audience that I've been offstage for awhile and ask, "Why is that?"

My character is constantly breaking the fourth wall between the actors and the audience. I have a fabulous gospel number called "The Holy Grail."

Can you give us an idea of some of the other things you've done in your career? I've done a lot of television and a couple films. I have an independent feature called "Duck" that came out May 11 in selected theaters in Los Angeles and New York. The feature before that, with Vanessa Williams, is called "Contradictions of the Heart." In terms of theater, I was in "Play On!" which aired on PBS. I also was in "Class Act" at the Pasadena Playhouse. I did some theater in Orange County, California, and had my own show at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts.

You're an exceptional singer and an accomplished actress. What does it take to do what you do?

Perseverance. I have a strong belief in God and I believe this career is the Lord's will for my life. My religious beliefs have kept me focused and prevented me from getting caught up in the craziness in the business, low self-esteem, and the things that often are associated with this business.

A lot of people turn to drugs and alcohol after getting knocked down. It doesn't happen overnight; it's something that chips away at you year after year, rejection after rejection. Remembering that this is God's will for my life has kept me on the straight and narrow. I'm starting to see the fruits of that now more so than ever.

Nikki Crawford the Lady of the Lake. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **What would you say to anyone who wants to be a singer/actress?** I would say study. My generation, and the generation that's coming up, are now seeing overnight success with American Idol and get-rich-quick shows. It's so important to understand your craft, but also the business side. To this day, I still take acting classes. I have a vocal coach here in Las Vegas, and I will continue to study.

I'll never get to the point that I say, "I'm good enough." It'll never happen. It's vitally important for them to study and truly understand the craft. It's like studying to be a doctor.

How do you keep yourself healthy with such a demanding schedule? Since I've been here in Las Vegas, my sleeping schedule has shifted because this is a nocturnal town. Last night, I went to bed at 4 a.m. and I got up in the afternoon. I have two shows, the last at 10 p.m., and I don't get out 'till midnight. I get 10-12 hours of sleep every night because of my environment.

I work out five times a week. After the two shows, I'll go swim laps at the gym or I'll take [exercise] classes. I eat a lot of vegetables and drink a ton of water and Gatorade.

What else do you do to stay healthy and fit? I hold a gigantic grail in the show during the Holy Grail number, and I was having problems with my back and neck. My chiropractor here in Las Vegas helped me tremendously by aligning my back and adjusting me. I do eight shows a week, and it's such a rigorous schedule. It's easy for my body to get out of whack. If I don't get adjusted, I get headaches and I won't sleep well.

Are the costumes heavy? They're all hand-beaded. One costume weighs 25 pounds, which affects how I support myself. I have to stay strong. I'm singing in the stratosphere in the show and then holding on to these costumes on top of it, so it's important for me to be strong and fit.

How often are you adjusted? In general, I go once a week. Right now, I'm seeing my chiropractor once a month.

What about your eating and nutritional needs? I eat lots of vegetables during the show - maybe a salad or soup. I eat whole-grain cereal in the morning with fruit. I try to stay away from sweets. These costumes are custom-built and cost several thousand dollars, so I have to maintain my weight. I also take vitamin B₁₂, E, a multivitamin and an iron tablet daily.

As you look to the future, where do you see yourself going next? I've fought being a singer for a long time, but I know that's what God wants me to do. I've gotten a lot of jobs singing. I certainly see a career in musical theater and I'm sure it'll take me to New York at some point. I'm not a fan of New York, but if it's the right project, I'll go.

I'd love to do film. I really want to do it all. I'd love to do a concert, go back and forth between film, television and a show on Broadway, and just keep growing in each medium.

What is your personal philosophy on what it takes to be successful? The key is staying grounded and humble. Don't believe the hype, and keep your focus on the Lord. There's success beyond what I've had so far. In this industry, there are so many ways to lose yourself. If you stay focused on your beliefs and who you are, you'll be OK with whatever you're doing.

John O'Hurley, Nikki Crawford and the Las Vegas cast of Spamalot on stage. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark John O'Hurley, Nikki Crawford and the Las Vegas cast of "Spamalot" on stage. Photo credit: Carol Rosegg. **Who are the Pythons?**

While six actors starred in the original "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," three of the Pythons are more widely recognized based, at least in part, on their more recent work in the entertainment industry:

John Cleese

- King Harold in "Shrek the Third"
- Q in "James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing" and "Die Another Day"
- Mr. Munday in "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle"
- Nearly Headless Nick in "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" and "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone"

Terry Gilliam

- "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" (screenplay and director)
- "The Brothers Grimm" (director)
- "The Fisher King" (director)
- "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" (screenplay)

Eric Idle

- Merlin in "Shrek the Third"
- Narrator in "Ella Enchanted"
- Waddlesworth in "102 Dalmations"

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