

# Director's Vision

## By Darko Tresnjak



**Tell us about your inspirations for *City of Angels*.**

I love film noir. I grew up watching Bogart and Bacall in *The Big Sleep*, Lana Turner and John Garfield in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Gene Tierney and Dana Andrews in *Laura*, Burt Lancaster and Ava Gardner in *The Killers*, Rita Hayworth and Glen Ford in *Gilda*, and Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity*, *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*, *Sorry, Wrong Number*, etc. etc. If one of these moves is on AMC or TMC late at night, I simply can't resist them and will stay up watching them well into the morning. I love the stunning, carefully composed images and the fact that the acting in these movies is somehow both heightened and completely honest. The actors seemed to care that someone was watching from the other side of the screen - and they shaped their lines and their moves accordingly. So I was overjoyed when the opportunity to direct *City of Angels*, a musical that pays tribute to noir films, came along. I had already done all of my research.

Another inspiration... I have lived in Southern California for the past seven years and spent a great deal of time between Los Angeles and San Diego. Many of the most famous hardboiled crime novels and noir films are set in that part of the world. So before leaving Southern California, I took mental snapshots of the 1940s bungalows and palm trees in the moonlight, and I thought about the way that one feels when the hot and dry Santa Anna winds sweep across the desert.

**Tell us about the challenges to staging *City of Angels* in this unique venue.**

I think that *City of Angels* is technically one of the most sophisticated musicals ever written. The scenes alternate between the black-and-white world of film noir and the Technicolor world of the film studio that is making the film. With the exception of two actors, who play Stone and Stine, all of the actors play parts in both the noir and the Technicolor world. I am told that the original production used over forty sets. Needless to say, at Goodspeed, where the backstage space is rather limited, this was not an option. David Gordon, our set designer for *City of Angels*, and I have spent many sleepless night trying to figure out how to move effortlessly, filmic-ally from location to location on the Goodspeed stage. I knew that projections and video would play one part of the solution – it is a musical about movies, after all. But, for me, the big breakthrough was the realization that many scenes in noir films take place in almost obsessive, carefully lit, close-ups. I realized that many scenes could be staged and lit in very tight formations - allowing us to swop out locations on the other parts of the stage.

**What can the audience expect to see?**

Over the past year, I have realized that *City of Angels* has an extraordinary following and that it has attained somewhat of a cult status - especially with the musical theatre folk. And with good reason, too. The score is marvelous; the book is superb; and the show requires a great deal from the performers, as both singers *and* actors. It's a smart, sexy, and sophisticated. The fact that it is rarely produced by the regional theatres is, for me, a tribute to the show – it demands a great deal from everyone involved. This is a rare chance to see it and I am so proud of Goodspeed Musicals for programming it.