

DIRECTOR'S VISION BY ROB RUGGIERO

La Cage
aux
Folles



Director Rob Ruggiero

*"I am what I am
I am my own special creation."*

Those iconic lyrics from the score of *La Cage aux Folles* have resonated with audiences since the show premiered in 1983. And they don't just belong to every gay person in the world—they belong to all of us. That song has become an anthem for every human being's expression of individuality, and a source of strength and inspiration for so many people. In these words lie

only a part of what makes *La Cage aux Folles* resonate with audiences.

"I wanted to write a show about two sweet men that the audience would love and take into their hearts." -Jerry Herman

La Cage is many things. It is great entertainment. It is also a unique love story. It is about standing up for yourself and fighting bigotry. But when it comes right down to it, *La Cage* is about acceptance, love, and family. It's about the power of relationship, the journey to loving yourself, fully embracing one's individuality, and re-examining the definition of family beyond the traditional structure of mother, father and child. All this—plus a sensational Jerry Herman score, great characters, fabulous costumes, outlandish humor, spectacular dances...and drag queens! What more could you ask for!?

*"It's rather gaudy but it's also rather grand
And while the waiter pads your check he'll kiss your hand
The clever gigolos romance the wealthy matrons
At La Cage Aux Folles."*

Without compromising all the outrageous "fun" of the show, this *La Cage* will be grounded in a focus on family and relationship. One of the most powerful moments in the story comes when Georges tries to help his son Jean-Michel (the young man who was raised by Georges and Albin) see beyond his embarrassment and the fear of losing his fiancé to understand the gift of parental love.

"How often is someone concerned with the tiniest thread of your life?"

*Concerned with whatever you feel and whatever you touch
Look over there, look over there
Somebody cares that much.*

*When your world spins too fast, and your bubble has burst
Someone puts himself last, so that you can come first.*

So count all your loves who will love you from now 'til the end of your life.

*And when you have added the loves who have loved you before
Look over there, look over there
Somebody loves you more."*

You can't find a more universal human emotion than the love and respect for a parent. Ultimately, Jean-Michel comes to embrace that the love of a "mother" exists far beyond gender. The success of *La Cage* proves this kind of material is timeless and can exist without boundary.

Our set designer, Michael Schweikardt, has outdone himself with a set that is deliciously over the top, glamorous, and very pink! It is not only beautiful, but skillfully re-invents itself with imaginative scenic gestures. Michael McDonald has designed an array of dazzling and spangled costumes to enhance this exotic world. Our choreographer, Ralph Perkins, has a keen understanding of the style of the show, and has created dances that celebrate this unique world with a few fun surprises.

One of the biggest decisions when directing *La Cage* is the casting of Georges and Albin. Quite often, they are cast with more mature actors. On the advice of librettist Harvey Fierstein, we cast two attractive men in their 40s who could truthfully embody a gay partnership. The outrageously talented Jamison Stern is our Albin. He is brave, funny, and delightfully unpredictable. Our Georges is the wonderful James Lloyd Reynolds, who brings a warm charm and intelligence to the role. Beyond the "show" element of *La Cage*, this relationship is key to anchoring the story of an untraditional family. They are surrounded by a fantastically talented company of actors, including the seven "Notorious Cagelles" ...so fasten your seatbelts!

La Cage has never been produced on the Goodspeed stage, so I am particularly excited to bring this delightful musical to Connecticut audiences in this intimate theater. After working on a production of *Hello, Dolly!* in St. Louis last summer, I found a new appreciation for the brilliance of a Jerry Herman musical. Combined with the remarkable comic writing and story-telling talents of Harvey Fierstein, *La Cage aux Folles* is a director's dream. It is clear these men found unique inspiration from this story and these characters. I hope this production will celebrate that uniqueness and bring a new understanding to this remarkable story of love and family.

*"And now, I beg you...open your eyes.
You have arrived at LA CAGE AUX FOLLES!!!"*