

Band Geeks!

A NEW MUSICAL

Director's Vision by Gordon Greenberg

You know that feeling you get when you hear music for the first time and can only think about how much fun it's going to be to tell your friends about it? You just want it in your life and on your iPod. That was my experience with *Band Geeks!*.

About two years ago, Goodspeed producers Donna Lynn Hilton and Bob Alwine called and asked me to come hear the work of some terrific young song writers they had met through NYU's graduate program. Among the songs performed in that concert were four that they had written for a new musical idea about marching bands. In just four songs, I was smitten. Even without a script or story, it was already clear that this was a world in which I wanted to spend time; full of joy and melodic generosity. I didn't realize then that I would be fortunate enough to become a resident of that world, joining the writing team to create the book with Tommy Newman.

We chose to set the show in the early 1990s, just prior to the advent of email, cell phones, and internet. It was, in many ways, our last gasp of innocence — before information and instant access became our dictators. When you were on the phone, you got a busy signal. When you returned from summer vacation, you told your friends what happened or wrote an essay. Connection was direct and human, if less readily available. It's remarkable how much has changed in less than 20 years, and going back in time gave our story a measure of magic and sweetness.

The past two years of working on the show have been a productive whirlwind, cultivating a cast of quirky characters and a story that happily traces their search for identity and pride. What was most compelling to me was the opportunity to use their attempts to collaborate musically as a metaphor for their personal struggles. The lessons music teaches us are the same ones that we need to learn in life. And in our story, they happen at the time in our lives when we need them most — high school.

It is enormously rewarding to be able to direct our inaugural production of *Band Geeks!* at Goodspeed's Norma Terris Theatre, a space that is as warm and welcoming as the show itself. After developing *Pirates of Penzance*, *Happy Days*, and *The Bakers Wife* here at Goodspeed, it feels like I'm like coming home; safe and protected, with firm encouragement to strive for excellence. It's good to know that we are surrounded by a staff of smart resourceful colleagues who care deeply about the work they produce. Their abundance of heart, humor, and humanity are an inspiration for the characters we are crafting. What a gift it is to explore the marching band family here with our artistic family.