

The Story of My Life

Director's Vision by Richard Maltby, Jr.

Great writing is some kind of miracle. Even the writers who produce it often say they don't actually know where it comes from, or how it was accomplished. And when it involves writing for the musical theatre, a perfect, effortless combination of meaning and melody, wit, and emotion is, to me, simply thrilling to encounter.

When I was introduced to a "work in progress" called *The Story of My Life* at a presentation of BMI's Advanced Musical Theatre Program, it was obvious that Neil Bartram and Brian Hill were writers of surprising and impeccable craft, professionalism, and depth. The four songs they presented were elegant, witty, and best of all deeply moving, all in the service of a story about the friendship between two men, and how one life can intersect with another, that was freshly observed, and – OMG – actually original. It wasn't based on a movie or a play. They were doing it the hard way: inventing a story from scratch.

I was thrilled with what I heard that first day, and said so to the authors, and I was doubly thrilled two years later when the authors were invited to present their now complete show at a festival of new musicals in New York City, and asked if I might direct it. I read the finished version and it was clear that the authors had done what they had set out to do. Here was a fresh, new, original work, filled with, yes, really terrific writing. In rehearsals it also became clear that, as with all really well-written pieces for the theatre, the work came to astonishing life when fine actors began to work with it. The presentation was the triumph of the festival, with cheering audiences jumping up and hugging whoever was next to them, even if they were total strangers. It was obvious that *The Story of My Life* was ready for a full production.

As it turns out, Michael Price and Bob Alwine at Goodspeed had also been tracking the progress of *The Story of My Life* and they invited us to bring the show to the Terris Theatre, a perfect first step for this show. The Goodspeed audience is quite remarkable, as I learned when I directed *The 60's Project* here several years ago. This audience is intelligent, sharp, and best of all, prepared and eager to come to a theatre to see something new.

I'm happy to return to Chester where I had such a terrific time before, to bring another brand new musical to the Goodspeed audience. Some of the creative team who worked with me, Lisa Shriver and Ken Billington, have returned, along with set designer Robert Brill, costume designer Wade Laboissoniere, musical director David Holcenberg, and Broadway's pre-eminent orchestrator Jonathan Tunick. The cast is two Broadway stars, Will Chase and Malcolm Gets, and they are remarkable.

It's an original musical. You're going to experience some very fine writing. I consider that to be a kind of present.