



Director's Vision **By Christopher Gattelli**

Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas has been my favorite Christmas special since it first appeared on television. To be able to work on the piece and bring it to Goodspeed audiences is more than a dream come true. My hope is to maintain what many love and hold dear about the television special, while introducing a whole new audience and generation to the experience of this beautiful holiday story.

Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas made its television premiere in 1977 and was based on a book by Russell and Lillian Hoban of the same name. Originally directed by Jim Henson and adapted by Jerry Juhl, it boasted music and lyrics by Paul Williams. Mr. Williams will collaborate with us on this incarnation as well. He will bring with him all of the original music as well as a slew of new material written just for our production.

The Jim Henson Company has been an integral part of this production and its development, led by Jim Henson's talented son Brian Henson and his team. With them, we will bring the Henson magic to Goodspeed when The Jim Henson Company continues its involvement with the show and their famous puppets share the stage with our actors. I can't think of a better story to incorporate Henson puppets into live theatre.

It is not a complete coincidence that Emmet ended up here. Years ago, when discussions began about the show, I mentioned to a few people that Goodspeed would be the place to do it. Not just because it is one of my favorite theaters in the country to work with, but because the story takes place in the woods, on a river, with an Opera House and a Riverside Rest. Goodspeed audiences know this place and they'll be surrounded by the atmosphere of Frogtown Hollow before they even walk in the doors of the theater.

I believe that Goodspeed audiences will enjoy this show because they have been exposed to many different genres of theater. From seeing classics at the Opera House to newer, fresh off the page pieces at The Norma Terris Theatre, they participate in and appreciate the experience. I have worked on a variety of projects here in the past and feel *Emmet Otter* would be welcomed at Goodspeed.

It's exciting because there truly is something for everyone in this show. All ages will find something magical about the show. The story is a classic and Paul Williams' music is simply incredible. His score ranges from Country, to Bluegrass, to Rock, to Vaudeville, even Gospel, and every single song stays with you long after the curtain has dropped. Add to that the Henson magic, the incredible design our team is creating, and we hope to have a show Goodspeed and its audiences will be proud of for years to come.

In terms of the performers, the audiences can expect to see some of the most richly talented and diverse actors New York has to offer, as well as some of the finest puppeteers, working together on one stage to help us tell this story. The casting process with the show has been fascinating. Normally you hold months of auditions hoping to find the perfect people for parts, but with this show, absolute dream performers began contacting us, telling us that no matter how big or small the role, they just wanted to be involved. I had no idea when I began my involvement with the show that it was a favorite to so many. And *Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas* will be all the more special because of all the love, respect and history that will be in our rehearsal room and on the stage.