



Diablo Light Opera Company
OVER 40 YEARS OF MUSICAL THEATRE

DLOC MARQUEE

SEPTEMBER 2004 VOLUME 22 ISSUE 2

Published by DLOC Written by Bob Rezak Edited by Deanna Anderson, Marketing Foresight



Peter Del Fiorentino of Vallejo stars as Albin in Diablo Light Opera Company's production of "La Cage Aux Folles."

Broadway Hit 'La Cage Aux Folles' Opens October 8

Tickets (\$24-\$32) are on sale at the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, (925) 943-7469 or at www.dlrca.org. For group sales, call Keith Barlow at (925) 944-1565.

Jumping the gun on a Broadway revival of "La Cage Aux Folles," the Diablo Light Opera Company (DLOC) will present the musical comedy, replete with a 28-member cast adorned in lavish costumes, in 18 performances, October 8 through November 6.

The show opened on Broadway 21 years ago, in a time when homosexuality had yet to become the basis of a big Broadway musical. With music by Jerry Herman and book by Harvey Fierstein, "La Cage" proved to be a raging success. It received Tony Awards for best musical, best book (Fierstein), best original score (Herman), best actor (George Hearn), best direction (Arthur Laurents) and best costume design (Theoni V. Aldredge).

The Broadway revival is scheduled to open at the Marquis Theatre in New York in December, with previews scheduled to begin November 7 - a day after the DLOC production closes in Walnut Creek.

"Given all the social changes since it first opened, the show is perhaps more relevant today," said DLOC producer Alice Gracer.

"It reminds people that we should not discriminate and love should triumph."

It is the second time DLOC has presented the musical, an adaptation of the classic French play and film about a middle-aged homosexual couple who are forced to hide their sexual orientation in order to meet the fiancée of one off the men's sons and her very straight family.

Sue Ellen Nelsen, winner of a 2003 Shellie Award for best direction of a musical for DLOC's "Ragtime," will direct "La Cage."

"Some of the fun of the show is the mixed gender chorus line: two of the 10 dancers are women. Trying to guess which are male and which are female will be frustratingly fun. And some of the men are new to cross dressing, while leading a distinctly heterosexual life off stage. How titillating!" says Nelsen.

Georges, one of the lead roles, will be played by Curt Denham of Tracy. He made his debut with DLOC as the king in the company's "The King and I" earlier this year. He also appeared in the Contra Costa Musical Theatre production of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum." He appeared in "Follies" with the Stockton Civic Theatre, "The Sound of Music" with the Modesto Performing Arts Association, and

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On Opening Weekend Compete for Title of "Ms. Cage Aux Folles"

In keeping with the frivolity and merriment of "La Cage Aux Folles," patrons attending opening weekend performances of the show on Oct. 8 and 9 are encouraged to dress in their most elegant, tasteful gowns and accessories.

Beginning at 7 p.m., patrons dressed in their finest and most glittering attire are invited to participate in a competition for "Ms. Cage Aux Folles." The audience will choose a winner and runner-up at 7:45 p.m. - just prior to the 8 p.m. curtain - each of the two nights.

Get details at www.dloc.org, or by phoning (925) 944-1565.

'La Cage Aux Folles'

(Continued from page 1)

"Romance/Romance," with the Stanislaus Arts Council's guest artist series.

Albin, another lead role, will be performed by Peter Del Fiorentino of Vallejo. He has won awards for performances with Alameda Civic Light Opera. He and his partner manage PM Productions, a theater company.

DLOC's 18-piece orchestra will be conducted by Cheryl Yee Glass.



Curt Denham of Tracy and Peter Del Fiorentino of Vallejo - "playing it straight" as the groom's parents - alongside Charles Evans of San Francisco and Judy Ryken of Walnut Creek - as the very "straight-laced" parents of the bride - in the upcoming production of "La Cage Aux Folles."

Getting to Know Him

Ryan Weible, the director of Stars 2000's hit "Into the Woods" this summer, was the subject of an extensive feature story in the San Francisco Chronicle in early August. The story traced his career from the time he entered the Stars 2000 program to his current activities on Broadway. He has a keen passion for teen theater and "Into the Woods" was tangible evidence. Weible starred as Horace Vandergelder in "Hello, Dolly," in 1997, his first experience with Stars 2000. He also directed other shows for the company.

DLOC Board Welcomes New Members

Two familiar faces - those of Marty Bach and Grete Egan - are back on the board of DLOC. Bach replaces Bill Tomlinson, who retired but will serve as chair of the finance committee. Egan is filling the unexpired term of Karen Dye, who resigned prior to a move to Arizona. The changes were approved by the general membership at the company's annual meeting.

The board elected officers on July 26. They are: President, JP McDermott; Vice President, Grete Egan; Treasurer, Roi Peers; Secretary, Claudia Nemir. Other members include Deanna Anderson, chair of the marketing committee and Bob Rezak, who sits on several committees.

Starstruck's Lindsay-Steiner To Be Honored By County Arts Commission



Barrett Lindsay-Steiner, who has written and directed shows for DLOC's successful Starstruck, is among four individuals and a community organization to receive recognition for work that has had significant impact on enhancing the arts in Contra Costa County.

Awards will be formally presented to the honorees by the Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County on October 17 at the Willows Theatre in Concord.

Lindsay-Steiner, described by colleagues as a "creative genius," is well known in the area as an actor, singer, producer, director, playwright, and teacher. For 15 years his focus has been on youth theater activities, including Starstruck, DLOC's young people's theater group. His work has influenced hundreds of children for whom he has written and produced more than 60 musicals.

In past years, the commission has honored other DLOC leaders, including the late artistic director Rhoda Klitsner, founder-veteran producer Grete Egan, and Diane Kamrin, founder of Stars 2000.

It's Farewell to 3 Key DLOC Stalwarts

With reluctance, DLOC is saying farewell to three of its guiding lights - Arvella Hefley, Mike Manley, and Barbara Gherzi.

Ms. Hefley, the company business manager for nearly six years, retired earlier this year. Her duties included maintaining the company's financial records and managing day-to-day, hour-by-hour activities. Colleagues agree that nary a decimal point was missed in her monthly reports. She was replaced by Anita Neeper, who has excellent accounting and office credentials.

Manley, a former board member and president of DLOC, led the effort to restructure the company several years ago to help position DLOC to meet the challenges of the future. He also performed in company productions, including "Sullivan and Gilbert" and "Ragtime" and directed several DLOC shows, including "Carousel" and "Die Fledermaus". He performed directorial duties for other groups including Masquers Playhouse in Richmond and Contra Costa Civic Theatre in El Cerrito. Manley and his wife are moving back to Sacramento, where he was active in theater, to be near their children and grandchildren.

Ms. Gherzi has overseen DLOC's costume department for many years, and has designed and sewn costumes for the company and other groups including Contra Costa Musical Theatre and Festival Opera. She taught in the Mt. Diablo School District for 30 years, 17 of which were as speech and drama instructor. She directed 34 plays during her career. The recipient of numerous Shellie Awards, she's been involved in community theater for 23 years. In October, she's heading to a new home in Boston to be near her children and grandchildren.

On behalf of the company, DLOC's board of directors express deep gratitude and appreciation to Hefley, Manley and Gherzi for their dedication and support.



Musical Theater Is The Top Attraction at Regional Center

A public opinion research study shows that musical theater

and drama are the two "most likely types of performances" favored by patrons at the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, DLOC's home-base.

"The target audience favors Walnut Creek over San Francisco by about a 2-to-1 ratio for these types of performances," the study found. It was conducted through a telephone survey of 300 people, representing the estimated 200,000 people within the center's target audience.

The study was part of an exhaustive review of arts programming in Walnut Creek conducted by the Arts Vision Task Force, a citizens' group, over a two-year period. The report was submitted earlier this year to the city's Arts Commission and City Council.

"If there is one over-arching finding," the task force concluded, "it is, not surprisingly, that the arts in Walnut Creek require additional and more stable funding in order to stabilize, build upon and maintain their considerable success and to advance significantly toward the desired state of continued regional leadership."



DLOC Receives \$40,000 Grant

DLOC has been awarded a \$40,000 grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in recognition of its past successes and vision for the future. The grant is the largest ever received by the company in its 44-year history and believed to be the first awarded by the foundation to a Contra Costa County company devoted exclusively to musical theater. The money will be used to engage the services of a development director to plan an ongoing fundraising campaign to ensure the continuing financial viability of DLOC.



★ STARSTRUCK ★

DLOC's Program for students ages 7 - 15 begins September 25

Rehearsals for the January 13 - 16 performance of "Johnny Rocket: Space Cadet," by Barrett Lindsay-Steiner are starting soon. Call producer Ellen Smith at 925-519-0346 for details or visit, www.dloc.org.

Director Named for 'West Side Story'

Grant Rosen, a performer and director from Long Beach, will

direct DLOC's production of "West Side Story," opening April 1 (no fooling!) in 2005 and continuing through May 8 at the Regional Center for the Arts. He appeared in several productions of the show as A-rab, including a European tour in the 1990s under the direction of Jerome Robbins. Rosen is no stranger to DLOC. He directed fight scenes for the company's production of "Scarlett Pimpernel." Producer Ellen Smith has scheduled auditions for "West Side Story" for January 8, 9, and 10, with callbacks on January 15, 16 and 17.



Producer Chosen for 'Miss Saigon'

Veteran DLOC producer Helene Harks has been selected to produce the company's production next year of "Miss Saigon," scheduled for 21 performances over a six-week period, beginning September 2 and ending October 8, 2005. Ms. Harks has produced more shows for DLOC than any other producer (47 in all), and is already at work on the production.

Earlier this year she traveled to Oregon to see a Broadway touring company of the show to get an idea on staging and logistics and began working on the design and construction of sets.

"We have been negotiating for over a year for the rights to produce this show," said Keith Barlow, DLOC's managing director. "We see it as yet another opportunity to produce major musical works that are challenging and, like our 2003 production of award-winning 'Ragtime' - shows that merit audience and critical acclaim and which raise the bar for local musicals."

Featuring a cast of 30 and an 18-piece orchestra, "Miss Saigon" is the sixth longest running show on Broadway, earning 29 awards, including three Tonys. Set in 1975 in the days leading to the American evacuation of Saigon, the story revolves around two young lovers torn apart by destiny but held together by their passion for the fate of a small child.

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Show Dates:

Friday, October 8th -
Saturday, November 6th, 2004
Dean Leshner Regional Center
For the Arts, Walnut Creek
For tickets (\$24-\$32),
call: (925) 943-7469
or visit: www.dlra.org.