



Director's Vision

by Gordon Greenberg

What is your vision for *Holiday Inn*? What inspired you to adapt the film for the stage?

Like many families, mine delighted in watching the film *Holiday Inn* whenever it showed up on television. Whatever the time of year, it suddenly felt like a holiday. And there was nothing unusual about getting up and dancing along with Fred. We called him Fred because we thought of him as a pal. Indeed, the film itself was a loyal friend that had become not only a part of our traditions but an integral part of American culture. It explores quintessentially American ideas: ambition and its impact on friendship, reality versus its reflection on screen, and the value of personal gumption. Most important of all—at least to the ten year old me—it celebrates show business and the joys of live performance. In fact, Irving Berlin first conceived *Holiday Inn* as a live stage show and wrote many songs that were not ultimately used in the film. So the concept of adapting it as a musical for the stage seemed like a natural.

Of course, the theatrical version of *Holiday Inn* has to function as its own entity, while still entrancing those of us who love the film. Although many elements of the film remain, we've taken liberties to enhance the experience of watching the show live on stage. The basic idea was to amplify everything we loved about the movie, which meant more songs and more big production numbers. That's very good news for fans of big musical theatre! We also made narrative adjustments, looking at characters and their humanity through a contemporary lens, while keeping it all firmly rooted in the glorious period in which it was written. The look, feel, and energy of the show are all as fresh and vibrant as if we were stepping right into 1946. And we do, when the theatre itself becomes the Inn!

What makes Goodspeed the perfect fit for this production? Tell us about the challenges to staging in this unique venue.

Before we had even written a word of the adaptation, we identified Goodspeed as the perfect theatre to launch *Holiday Inn*. For starters, there's East Haddam itself; so beautiful it looks like a Hollywood back lot. It's the closest we could possibly come to the setting of the show—the fictional town of Midville, Connecticut. We could have done a site-specific production at the Gelston House, but the main reason we're at Goodspeed is the theatre itself; not just the celebrated Opera House but the human beings that fill it. The staff at Goodspeed knows musicals better than any other in the world. They live and breathe musicals and have a unique expertise in producing both classics and originals. *Holiday Inn* is simultaneously both. And, while the jewel box stage is not the same size or scale of a Broadway house, the talent level certainly is. On top of that, Goodspeed audiences are uniquely smart, seasoned, and supportive. There is nowhere better equipped or more beautiful to develop and stage a brand new musical, especially one with a vintage pedigree.

Tell us what the audience can expect to see.

Holiday Inn is a sparkly new musical with all the great Irving Berlin songs from the film - and many more that audiences will recognize and love. It has big dance numbers, big ideas, and, most of all, a big heart. It's all about the beauty of being true to yourself; living simply and honestly and finding rewards in doing what you love on your own terms. That's ultimately what I hope audiences take away. That, and, of course, all the joys of a big dance musical. The sets, the costumes, the cast, and the hullabaloo of high-stepping tap dancers flying through the air against a gorgeous Irving Berlin score will make *Holiday Inn* a great big party. And isn't that what holidays are all about?



Director Gordon Greenberg at the first read-thru of The Fabulous Lipitones, 2013