

Thoroughly Modern Millie inspires me to think about my own relationship with New York City. In the opening lyrics of the show, our heroine, Millie Dillmount, arriving from Kansas, says, "I've studied all the pictures in magazines and books. I memorized the subway map, too." Growing up in California, I studied up before my arrival in so many ways, as well. The Tony Awards. The Macy's Parade. The "I Love New York" commercials (remember those?). I always knew I wanted to be a part the great American experiment; an island that embodies the idea of the melting pot, where, as another character expresses in a lyric, "each day it's free admission for those who dream."

The 1920s were a time of enormous economic prosperity and change in our country when women shed Victorian values by not only loosening their corsets and cutting their hair, but also by starting to chart their own life courses. This is the movement *Millie* wants to be a part of, and New York embodied the spirit of that movement. But life is complicated. New York is an experiment that continues to find its way, and its beating heart continues to call out to Millies everywhere.

Bringing the big city to the tiny Opera House stage is an exciting challenge. I've assembled a fantastic group of designers to create the Art Deco majesty of 1920s New York, and each of them has a keen understanding of how to embrace the theatre's unique spatial considerations. The set will be elaborate and every inch of space on the stage and wings will be used to contain the intricate puzzle of all its pieces. I also consider the intimacy of the space particularly exciting, given the fantastic acting company I've enlisted for the show. I know these are going to be performances that will spill out over the footlights and fill the house with vibrancy and joy!



Director Denis Jones at the first day of rehearsal for Thoroughly Modern Millie. ©Diane Sobolewski

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