Director’s Notes

When I was asked to direct and choreograph SWEET CHARITY I immediately thought how fun it would be to delve into those Fan-dango dance numbers, all fishnets and high hairdos and shoes. This would be a walk in the park! As a little girl I had already spent hours and hours in my family’s rumpus room playing Charity, belting out I’m a Brass Band loudly and badly. My best friends Laura and Maureen were enlisted to play my sidekicks Nickie and Helene. But they drew the line at playing Oscar Lindquist, Charity’s boyfriend.

Then I watched Nights of Cabiria, the black and white 1957 Frederico Fellini film that the Broadway musical SWEET CHARITY was based on. The film centres on the romantic ups-and-downs of an ever-hopeful sex worker. I realized very quickly that while doing all that prancing around in my parent’s basement was a start, it might not qualify as research for pulling off this often dark and quirky musical.

I have always loved the underdogs of theatre. The flawed leading character, the broken hero, the hoofer with a heart of gold who never gets the guy. One need not look any further than Charity Hope Valdano dance numbers, all fishnets and high hairdos and shoes. This muck is unstoppable.

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I love Charity. Audiences love her, root for her and hope for her as her. And of course I don’t want it to go to their heads. I want Charity. I love Charity’s dressing room. I wanted to create a world where the girls who work with her at the Fan-dango Club could feel safe and be the funny broads they are, relaxed and at home as they sit between shows singing Herman their hapless stage manager’s rants. In contrast to that, onstage in BIG SPENDER, the girls play their parts, their mascara masks up, on the job, making ‘a living if you can call it that,’ not dancing with the men but rather, ‘defending themselves to music’.

Having a book by Neil Simon is a gift. How fun to encourage a louder, brasher take on spoken words and finding that ‘New York Minute’ with the cast throughout these last weeks of rehearsals. It is rare to have such a strong script combined with some of the most memorable tunes in musical theatre. Discovering the heart of the piece that is Charity herself and then smothering it with New York grit and grime was a task we have all undertaken to do.

SWEET CHARITY isn’t an easy show with a neat and tidy happy ending. Even poor Oscar, Charity’s ticket to supposed freedom, is looking for love and can’t see it tap dancing right in front of him. Of course truth be told, Charity could never ever find true happiness pumping gas in the burbs with him anyway. The old adage ‘be careful what you wish for’ comes to mind.

How could I ever talk enough about the talent I have been given to work with here at Sheridan College? The triple threat actors and all the technical crew and designers jumped on board with me from the very first day and helped bring the world around Charity to life. I have been spoiled forever with them. Being in the Studio Theatre presented a few challenges at first but I believe Charity’s story is better told in a small space. Audiences can be right up close and personal with her. And of course I couldn’t have done this show without Stephen Woodjetts tinkling the ivories and whispering little gems of wisdom into my ear.

Although I never got to actually play Charity myself except in the bowels of my parent’s house with no audience save for my sister Molly telling me to be quiet, I have played her here through these students. Just don’t tell them that. I don’t want it to go to their heads.

The services of Sheila McCarthy and Liz Campbell by special permission of the Canadian Actors’ Equity Association.

CAST

Ensemble.............................................Dean Deffett
Rosie, Ensemble....................................Fay Gamliel
Ensemble............................................Jonathan Gysbers
Ursula, Ensemble...................................Nicola Hadjis
Carmen, Ensemble................................Arinea Hermans
Vittorio Vidal......................................Tristan Hernandez
Oscar....................................................Jordan Kenny
Ensemble............................................Madelyn Kriese
Frenchie, Ensemble..............................Hailey Lewis
Helene....................................................Blaire Lorrison
Daddy Brubeck....................................Nestor Lozano Jr.
Betsy, Ensemble....................................Kate Madden
Herman................................................Elijah Manalo
Charlie, Ensemble................................Jean-Paul Parker
Elaine, Ensemble.................................Gillian Reed
Ensemble.............................................Ainsley Roy
Ensemble............................................Kirstyn Russell
Ensemble............................................Polly Summerhayes
Ensemble............................................Gavin Tessier
Charity................................................Amanda Trapp
Nickie..................................................Jessica Watters

Assistant Musical Director & Percussionist: Tristan Hernandez
Assistant Choreographer: Ainsley Roy

Still photos, videotaping or any other type of recording of this production is strictly prohibited.
TECHNICAL CREW
Assistant Stage Managers …… Carolyn Brennan, Kathryn Urbanek
Audio Crew …………………… Evelyn Pageau
Carpentry Crew ……………… Brayden Crawford, Nathan Finnimore, Nicole Fontes, Connor Haley, Gabriel Mazza, David Petrella, Grant Quinn, Jessy Stephens, Emma Westcott
Head Lighting Technician …… Emie Sabandal
Lighting Crew ………………… Evan Brown, David Draper, Kaitlynn Freeth, Staci Hanley, Jasper Jacobs, Emma Knapp, Emily Larose, Ryan Lepage, Alex Pickles, Emily Whalley
Scenic Paint Crew …………… Matthew Blackwood, Jennifer Johnston, Amanda Lee Juli, Leland Lamb, Laurel Lanaway, Tillie Morgan, Loralie Pollard, Emile Shanks
Wardrobe Crew ……………… Chase Benedict, Carlie Dugan, Kathleen Fitz-Gerald, Haley Helm, Thomas Hulker, Daniel Jakobi, Nicola Murch, Mason Soares, Tanya Ullyatt
Assistant Technical Directors … Kaitlyn MacKinnon, Janine Oblak, Robert Spithoff
Technical Assistants ………… Corey Cohen, Daniel Gignac, Callum Grant
Production Assistants ……… Matthew Couchman, Stephen Pike

Running Crew
Lighting Board Operator ………… Staci Hanley
Stage Hands …………………… Nicole Fontes, Laurel Lanaway, Stephen Pike
Audio Technician ……………… Evelyn Pageau
Wardrobe Dressers ……………… Nicola Murch, Tanya Ullyatt

Director & Choreographer: Sheila McCarthy
Musical Director: Stephen Woodjett
Set Designer: Denise Lisson
Costume Designer: David Juby
Lighting Designer: Magi Oman
Stage Manager: Liz Campbell

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