

Hello Again, Dolly! Festival a Six-Month Celebration

By Anna Young

One man's passion for Barbra Streisand's "Hello, Dolly!" has turned into a six-month-long festival commemorating where the beloved classic was filmed in Garrison and Cold Spring 50 years ago.

Garrison resident Christopher Radko was just nine years old when he fell in love with the beauty and wonderment that "Hello, Dolly!" brought to the silver screen. His parents took him to the Rivoli theater in New York City for the films Hollywood-style premiere where the youngster was introduced to Streisand's on-screen persona for the first time.

"I loved seeing the movie," Radko said. "It was so upbeat and colorful and had wonderful ideas about picking an adventure in life and following your heart and believing you can make big things happen for yourself."

Radko, who grew up in Westchester, always questioned where the movie was filmed, hoping to one day find himself on

the same streets director Gene Kelly shot his most infamous scenes. It was until Radko stumbled upon a coffee shop in Garrison nearly 45 years later that all his childhood memories came rushing back to him.

He had asked the barista where to visit in the quiet town and eventually sputtered with excitement when she recommended a location where the movie was filmed.

"I just couldn't believe it," Radko said. "All my childhood memories came back, and all the buildings are still here. I talked to the people that were there and they confirmed it's where they made the movie."

After finding the place he had spent nearly a century dreaming about, Radko packed up his things and moved to the iconic location where he has spent two years planning the 50th anniversary celebration of the academy award winning film.



"Hello, Dolly!" was filmed locally 50 years ago.

"I started this festival as my civic contribution to the community because I love being here and it's a way for me to tip my hat to the whimsy and beauty and magic of the movie itself by honoring it and remembering it," Radko said. "We're putting on an amazing festival, so the community can share its own cultural history but seen through the lens of a Hollywood motion picture. It's cool that this movie can connect everyone."

The Hello Again, Dolly! festival is a six-month extravaganza compiled with educational events and celebrations throughout Putnam and Westchester counties. The festival kicked off last month with an exhibit at the Putnam History Museum featuring original costumes from the film, including the gown worn by Streisand, behind the scenes photos, rare foreign posters, original set design drawings, and Kelly's script.

The festival followed with the Garrison Union Free School's annual spring concert, a screening of *The Matchmaker*, a lecture with Preston Pittman on the historical antecedents of "Hello, Dolly!" and a Victorian hat making seminar.

On June 16, actor Tommy Tune will lead the "Put on Your Sunday Clothes" costume parade at Garrison Landing, where the original scene was filmed,

followed by an ice-cream social and a question and answer session with the Broadway veteran. A scenic evening riverboat cruise will follow, with an outdoor screening of the film at night on the Landing where it all happened.

"How rare is that for any performer to redo what he or she did in the same spot half a century later?" Radko said.

Later this month other events will include, an evening of songs and memories from the films, a behind the scenes seminar with Radko, and an evening with Jerry Zaks, the four-time Tony winning director of the Broadway adaptation of "Hello, Dolly!"

While many events are free to the public, others including a performance by Tune at the Paramount Hudson Valley in Peekskill and a special program with Kelly's wife Patricia Kelly at the same location will have a fee.

"This is my little gift to the community and my way of saying thank you for the creativity the move represents and the joy it brings to people," Radko said. "It's a local tribute to our local community's history and I'm glad to be part of it and share it with everyone."

For more information, visit www.helloagaindolly.com or email contact@helloagaindolly.com.