

Local News

'Hello, Dolly!' back in Garrison

Weekend celebration marks 50th anniversary of filming of classic

Peter D. Kramer
 Rockland/Westchester Journal News
 USA TODAY NETWORK

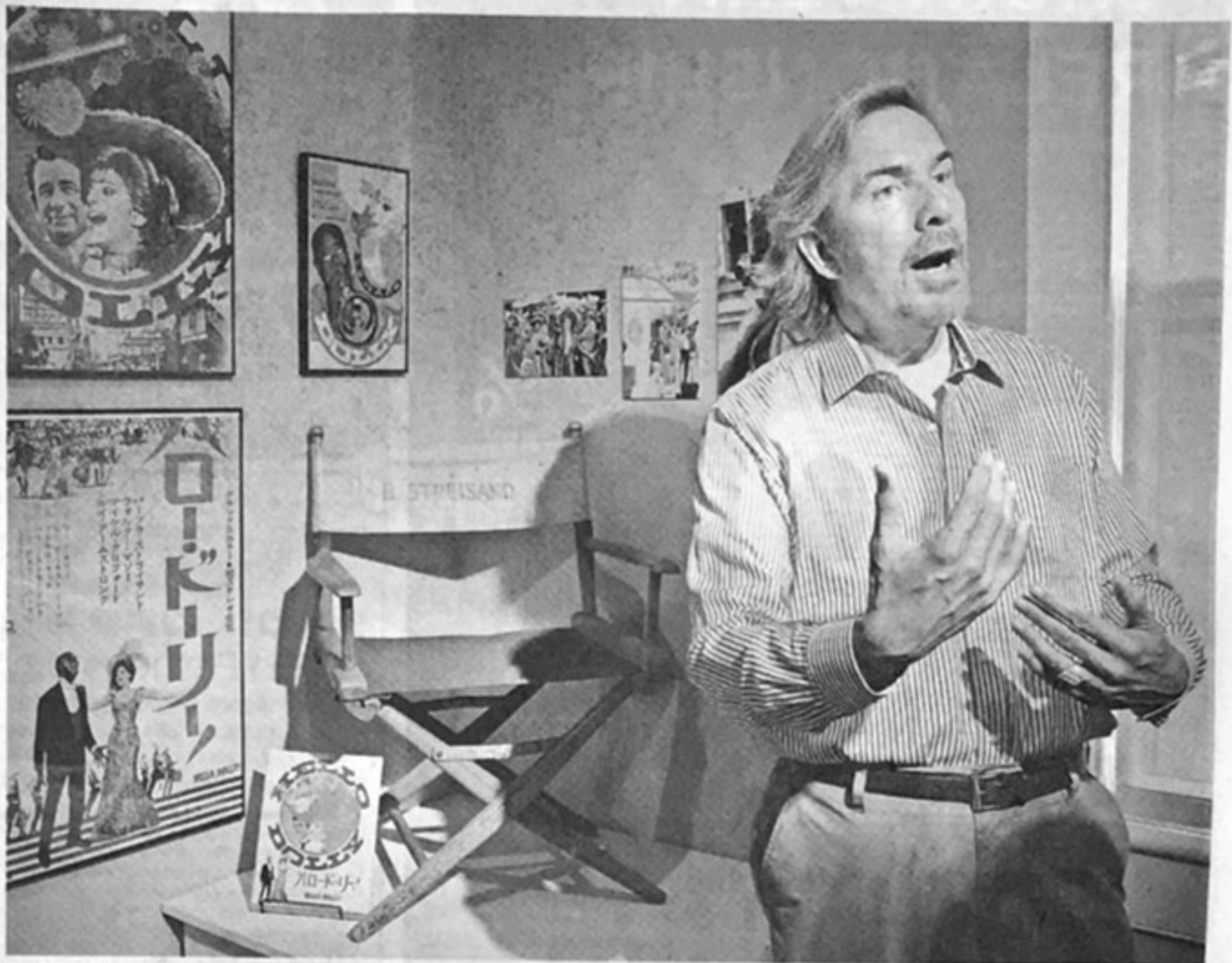
Fifty years ago, Hollywood came to Garrison Landing to film "Hello, Dolly!" — and Christopher Radko is not about to let a major milestone pass by his adopted village.

Directed by Gene Kelly and starring Barbra Streisand and Walter Matthau, "Hello, Dolly!" made Garrison look like Yonkers circa 1890. It's where Vanderghelder's Hay and Feed Store was, where the "Put On Your Sunday Clothes" dance number was filmed.

Radko — who made his name designing high-end Christmas ornaments — originally planned a five-minute parade at the Garrison train station to mark the 50th anniversary.

It has morphed into the "Hello Again, Dolly! Festival," more than 20 events that will stretch over six months. There's an impressive collection of "Dollyphernalia" on display at the Putnam History Museum in Cold Spring through October.

The exhibition includes Kelly's script, dozens of photos from the set, blueprints and set renderings, and the long-lost gown Streisand wore in her Garrison scenes. The indefatigable Radko tracked it down in Barcelona.



Christopher Radko talks about the 1968 filming of "Hello Dolly" in Garrison Landing, while standing in front of a display of Barbara Streisand memorabilia in the Putnam History Museum in Cold Spring on June 5. Radko is the Festival Organizer for the upcoming "Hello Again Dolly!" Festival. FRANK BECERRA JR./THE JOURNAL NEWS

Tommy Tune returns

Many of the festival's major events are Father's Day Weekend, when festivalgoers can reenact the musical number "Put On Your Sunday Clothes" in a costume parade alongside Tommy Tune, the 10-time Tony-winner who played Ambrose Kemper in the film. (There's a pre-parade choreography session at 2 p.m., before the 4 p.m. parade. Check out the instructional video at <https://www.garrisonartcenter.org/hello-dolly-dance-instruction>.)

That will be followed by Radko's Q&A session with Tune and an ice cream social in Garrison's riverside park that 20th Century Fox created for the film.

After that, there's a two-hour paddleboat cruise on the Hudson (to benefit Garrison Art Center), followed by a 9 p.m. screening of "Hello, Dolly!" at Garrison Landing Park, on the site where much of it was filmed.

Garrison was where director Gene Kelly and 500 actors and crew members spent four months in the spring and summer of 1968 to create a film that Radko considers "the last of the great MGM-style movie musicals."

This was where Horace Vanderghelder (Matthau), had his hay and feed store, where his clerks, Cornelius and Barnaby (Michael Crawford and Danny Lockin), decided to take a day off and go to the city and not come back until they kissed a girl.

This, too, was where Ambrose Kemper (the towering Tune) declared his love for Ermengarde (the diminutive Joyce Ames).

And this is where matchmaker Dolly Gallagher Levi (Streisand) set her sights on Vanderghelder, the first citizen of Yonkers.

"Hello, Dolly!" was nominated for seven Oscars, including best picture, and won three: for art direction, sound and best score of a musical. (The year's best picture was "Midnight Cowboy.")

'Where is this Yonkers?'

Radko's obsession with "Hello, Dolly!" goes back to the film's premiere. On Dec. 16, 1969, 9-year-old Christopher was at the film's opening at the Rivoli Theatre on Broadway.

But the Yonkers depicted on the screen was nothing like the Yonkers where his father once had a medical office. "Where is this Yonkers?" he wondered.

It would take him 45 years to find it, in Garrison.

When he did, he soon decided to make it his home. For two years, Radko has been buried in Dollyphernalia, poring over interviews and photos and private collections, amassing quite a collection of his own.

He has compiled it all on the website www.HelloAgainDolly.com and in a "luxury compendium Hello Again, Dolly! Book."

"It's like a dissertation, honoring the



More "Dolly" fun

June 23: Radko will be at the Putnam History Museum for a talk about the movie's impact on Garrison and all things "Dolly."

The festival stretches well into the summer and fall.

Aug. 8: The Shakespeare Festival gets in on the act, presenting Thornton Wilder's "The Matchmaker," upon which "Dolly" is based, at the Depot Theater on Garrison Landing.

Aug. 11: The West Point Band pays tribute to Broadway with a special focus on "Hello, Dolly!" at a concert under the stars at Trophy Point at West Point. The film's final scene was filmed at West Point.

Sept. 29: There will be a Jerry Herman Tribute — celebrating the man who created the music and lyrics to "Hello, Dolly!," "Mame" and "La Cage Aux Folles" — at the Depot Theater.

For a complete listing of events, go to www.HelloAgainDolly.com, the festival's official website.

movie and the people who took part in the film," Radko says. "I interviewed more than 40 people who were involved with the movie and shared stories and photographs. It's about the impact of a major studio on a small community."

(The 270-page book is available for a suggested donation at the Putnam History Museum.)

Radko estimates he has spent "well over \$100,000" on the festival, and he continues to raise money for the non-profit effort. Donations, through the Putnam History Museum, are tax-deductible.

"It's a real community event, bringing together so many non-profits to mark Garrison's moment," Radko says. The Putnam History Museum's exec-

More in SUNDAY LIFE

"Hello, Dolly" star Tommy Tune will be returning to Garrison for the festivities. Read the details on 5C

utive director Rachel Ornstein says the exhibition has drawn its shares of fans in the short time it has been open.

"We had a family come in the other day and the parents, their first date was seeing 'Hello, Dolly!,'" Ornstein says. "Now their kids are all obsessed with the movie. They walked out of here singing the soundtrack. It was so cute."

"It's something different from anything we've ever done before," Ornstein says. "And people who grew up here came to the opening and saw photos of people they knew back when the movie was filmed."

Director's legacy

On July 1, Gene Kelly's widow, Patricia Ward Kelly, comes to Paramour Hudson Valley with her one-woman show, "Gene Kelly: The Legacy." (www.paramourhudsonvalley.com)

With film clips and movie-used props, the show is chock full of memories from the career of the dancer-director-producer who died in 1996.

Patricia Kelly — who met the director when they were working on a documentary, she was 26 and he was 73 — says she greets theatergoers before each show and they routinely are surprised to learn that Kelly directed "Hello, Dolly!"

That likely will not be the case in Peekskill, so close to Garrison.

Kelly's widow says the director's genius was in stretching the two-dimensional movie and making dancers seem to leap from the screen.

"Gene had the camera move with the dancers," she said in an interview.

Kelly said her husband had initially wanted "Dolly!" to be a small, intimate



LEFT AND ABOVE: Photographs from the filming of "Hello Dolly!" hang on the museum wall as part of the "Hello Again Dolly!"

movie, but the studio — eager to cater to a younger audience — had bigger ideas. It was shot in the widescreen Todd-AO format, and cast 25-year-old Streisand in the lead, bypassing Broadway's Carol Channing, in her signature role.

"I think Gene's regret was that it was so big, but I think he'd be happy with the way it has aged," Kelly said.

The director had to battle the elements.

"It rained the entire time they were there," Kelly said, "which made it very difficult."

Take the 'Hello, Dolly' train

Radko says parking for the festival is on the east side of the Metro-North tracks, at the Desmond Fish Library and at Garrison Union Free School. It's walkable and pedestrian friendly, but a trolley will shuttle festivalgoers to and from the landing.

Better still, Radko suggests, you can arrive as Dolly did — by train. It's one hour from Grand Central on Metro-North's Hudson Line.

"It's so easy for New Yorkers to come up and I call it the 'Hello, Dolly!' train, because you're taking the same tracks they used 50 years ago in that opening sequence, with that beautiful view of the Palisades and the highlands."

For complete details on the "Hello Again, Dolly Festival," go to www.HelloAgainDolly.com.