

HELLO, AGAIN, DOLLY!



Garrison on Hudson in Putnam County. 20th Century Fox invested over \$10 million in today's dollars to dress up this hamlet.



Festival planner Christopher Radko on Garrison Landing. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER RADKO



Broadway veteran Tommy Tune, who appeared in the original movie, will be back in Garrison on June 16 to lead a costume parade. PHOTO COURTESY OF TOMMY TUNE

Festival celebrates 50th anniversary of movie's filming

The Hudson River locations where 'Hello, Dolly!' was filmed host a slew of events and celebrations

BY JESSICA JAFET
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It was December 1969 and Hollywood had just released its big-screen version of "Hello, Dolly!," the hugely successful Broadway musical.

The cast featured some big stars, including Barbra Streisand, Walter Matthau, Michael Crawford, Louis Armstrong and Tommy Tune, and was directed by the legendary performer and director Gene Kelly.

Now, 50 years later, the film and its history is being appreciated once again in "Hello Again, Dolly!," an extravagant festival taking place in the Philipstown area of Putnam County, where many of the scenes were filmed.

When Christopher Radko, who is the festival's director, was a 9-year-old boy, he saw the movie with his parents and immediately became enchanted by the scenery and the costumes; it sparked in him a fascination for the evocative atmosphere of the Victorian era.

"I was blown away, the movie was so colorful—it was the first musical I had seen and it was so uplifting," he said. "It took place in a different time—I kept asking my parents where is this Yonkers portrayed in the film?"

Of course, the Yonkers of 20th Century Fox's film "Hello, Dolly!" was not really Yonkers, NY at all, but a re-creation that was brought to life in the charming "Hudson Highlands" region. The famous scenes were shot in the picturesque village of Cold Spring, the hamlet of Garrison, West Point and other towns on the banks of the Hudson River like Ossining, Peek-

skill and Poughkeepsie.

It was more than 40 years later when Radko happened to visit Garrison for a sightseeing afternoon. He fell in love with the town and discovered its connection to "Hello, Dolly!," his sentimental favorite childhood film. He even made the move himself to live in Garrison over a year ago.

"To express my enthusiasm for the movie and also my gratitude for this wonderful place, I decided to launch this festival," he said.

The festival kicked off on May 12 with the opening of an exhibition of the movie's costumes and memorabilia at the Putnam History Museum in Cold Spring. Twenty different events, organized by a coalition of community-members and non-profits, will take place over six months and will highlight the beauty and history of the area and its connection to the film.

Radko says members of the community across many generations are coming together to enjoy this unique commemoration.

"The exhibit at the Putnam History Museum just knocks your socks off," he said. "We have the original costumes from the movie, which I had to scramble all over the world to get—including the one famous costume which Barbra Streisand wore in the movie when she filmed 'Put on Your Sunday Clothes' and 'Just Leave Everything to Me.'"

Fans young and old might agree that the festival's highlight would be the costume parade at Garrison Landing, happening on June 16, which will be led by Broadway veteran Tommy Tune, who appeared in the original movie.

"It is where Tommy Tune filmed the very same song and scene half a century ago, literally on June 16, 1968—so he is coming back exactly 50 years later, to the exact same place, singing the same exact song—with the whole community behind him," Radko said.

Tune, who played Ambrose Kemper in the film, fondly remembers coming up to Garrison 50 years ago to shoot the iconic scene.

"It is so beautiful up there—that grass where the gazebo was, right on the banks looking out is gorgeous," he said. He also remembered shooting the scene when he crawled up a ladder at Vandergelder's Hay and Feed store to elope with with Ermengarde.

"We played the scene in that room, we came through the house, out the door onto the balcony, came down the stairs and danced right down the street to the train station. It's like the set is still there after 50 years."

In addition to the parade, a hat-making seminar, a riverboat cruise, film-screenings and much more, there will be a presentation on July 1, given by Gene Kelly's widow, Patricia Ward Kelly, at the Paramount Hudson Valley Theater, where she will discuss Kelly's contribution to dance in film. Tommy Tune will do an "autobiographical stroll" there as well, on June 17.

The three-time Academy Award winning movie, considered the last of the lavish, Hollywood musical films, is full of feel-good messages that Radko—who exudes much positivity and enthusiasm himself—believes are the kinds of timeless and universal themes that need to be

elevated today.

"The willingness to take adventure into your life, to trust just enough to realize the world really is full of wonderful things; to trust that you'll have the skills and you'll meet people and together you'll accomplish something great," he said.

The film's story revolves around Dolly Gallagher Levi, a socialite turned matchmaker who travels to Yonkers to find a match for Horace Vandergelder, a "half-a-millionaire." Also seeking her assistance is a young artist named Ambrose, who is in love with Horace's niece, Ermengarde. Dolly schemes to make Horace her own husband and to spread his wealth to others.

Sharing one's wealth, a theme in the film, certainly resonated with Christopher Radko, who created and spearheaded the festival.

He is the well-known entrepreneur who built a hugely successful brand of high-end Christmas ornaments. He said that a sense of social responsibility was instilled in him by his parents—a sentiment that is reflected in a famous quote from Dolly Levi that Radko says still speaks to him today: "Money, pardon the expression, is like manure. It's not worth a thing unless it's spread around, encouraging young things to grow."

His generosity and joy for life is sincere. "I'm doing this for the fun of it, because I love where I live and I love this movie. It's my gift to the community."

For more information and a complete event schedule, visit helloagaindolly.com.