

A SHOW OF EQUALITY

Dustin Lance Black brings his Proposition 8 play to the Valley

WHAT A FEELING!

Dancer relates to *Flashdance* story

ARIZONA PROGRESS

Survey shows growing support for marriage rights



A ROLE IN REVERSAL

Local production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie* features actor in drag as musical's villainess

By Richard Schultz

The person playing the villainess in a local production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie* has to undergo two hours of preparation before going on stage.

That's because underneath all the makeup, Mrs. Meers is being played by a man in the Scottsdale Musical Theatre Company production.

The show will be on stage May 9-12 in Paradise Valley.

Actor Hector Coris is playing a female in a featured role for the first time in his career. And Coris said it's believed to be the first time that a man has played the role of Mrs. Meers in an Arizona production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.

David Hock, the company's director and executive producer, said the idea for the casting came up when Coris jokingly suggested that he should play Mrs. Meers.

Hock said he saw potential in the idea, but remained open to casting a woman.

"I told Hector let's see who comes out for open auditions," Hock remembered. Yet, he felt that no one brought the same comic sensibility and timing to the role as Coris.

Originally from New York, Coris has been in the Valley for three years with his partner of 17 years. He has appeared in other Scottsdale Musical Theatre Company shows, as well as productions at Hale Centre Theatre and the Mesa Arts Center.

One of Broadway's most frothy musicals when it opened in 2002, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* is a sweet, kick-up-your-heels show filled with goofy humor that spoofs the 1920s. It's pure amusement and oh-so gay, but in the "Roaring 1920s" sense of "oh-so fun."

Millie Dillmount, a girl from Kansas, moves to New York City to marry a rich man. She samples the "thoroughly modern" flapper life, makes friends, finds unexpected romance and nearly gets caught up in a white slavery ring in the stage version of the 1967 film musical, which starred Julie Andrews, Mary Tyler Moore and Carol Channing.



Photos by Richard Schultz

Hector Coris undergoes a transformation to play Mrs. Meers in the Scottsdale Musical Theatre Company production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.



ing made *Millie* the perfect choice.”

Hock provides the staging and tap choreography, while local choreographer Janelle Paris adds her talents to the mix. The show features original costumes by the Scottsdale-based shop Mardi Gras.

Now in its third year, Scottsdale Musical Theatre Company presents of

well-known Broadway shows in their original Broadway versions. **-E**

The subplot whirls around the hotel proprietress, the mysterious and sinister Mrs. Meers, an Oriental dragon lady originally played on Broadway in a Tony-winning turn by Harriet Harris (known for her portrayal of the manipulative agent Bebe Glazer in the sitcom *Frasier*).

Coris said he is basing his characterization of Mrs. Meers on “Rosalind Russell meets Delta Burke.” He sees the character as a disgruntled chorus girl who longed to be an actress.

He said his favorite number in the show is “Muqin,” an Al Jolson/Mammy type song that allows Meers to show her showbiz roots.

But before Coris can go on stage, make-up designer Matthew Harris has some work to do.

“He has a two-hour transformation ahead of him for each performance,” said Harris, who also plays *Millie*’s romantic interest Trevor Graydon.

“Hector’s Mrs. Meers will be fierce,” Harris said. “She is a such a great character and Hector will definitely bring a new dimension to her evil wickedness.”

Coris is part of a 35-member cast in a musical that features a 21-piece orchestra.

After presenting more serious fare, like *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Man of La Mancha*, Hock said *Millie* is the right show at the right time for his company.

“I wanted something light, fun and nostalgic,” he said. “*Millie*’s storyline and focus on all things female certainly compliments the celebration of Mother’s Day weekend. And there aren’t a lot of tap shows done here in Phoenix. Being a tapper myself, the idea of having all that tap and flapper jazz danc-



FREE ROOF CHECK-UP
Finance Options Available!

Residential Roofing Commercial Roofing Roofing 101

visit kykoroofting.com
for more information

1912 West Parkside Lane
Phoenix, AZ 85027

ph. 602-944-4600
fax 602-944-5931

RESIDENTIAL LICENSE ROC #145748
COMMERCIAL LICENSE ROC #145747

VITAL STATISTICS

Thoroughly Modern *Millie*

Scottsdale Musical Theatre Company

May 9-12

Dorrance Auditorium at Phoenix Country Day School

3901 E. Stanford Drive, Paradise Valley

Tickets: \$18-\$26

602-909-4215; www.scottsdalemusicaltheater.com

Go jewel hunting in the desert.



Terrific weeks often come in small packages. Take any of the several little gems out our way. Unique LGBT resorts in a myriad of colors. Wonderful little bases from which to explore our vibrant village filled with boutiques, galleries and alfresco restaurants. It’s all here. And it’s all dazzling.

Visit GayPalmSprings.com

Palm Springs
CALIFORNIA

Like no place else.™