

Designing Dolly

DIABLO LIGHT OPERA COMPANY SETS THE STAGE FOR *HELLO, DOLLY!*

WITH HELP FROM A HOME-GROWN PRODIGY BY MIRIAM WILSON

Stars of the stage are always front and center, but Diablo Light Opera Company's set designer Mark Mendelson is proof that some stars of a show don't need to be on stage to shine. At 23, the young Danville native has already designed sets for 10 productions of DLOC's STARS 2000 youth theatre program shows, and is now making his DLOC debut with its production of *Hello Dolly!*

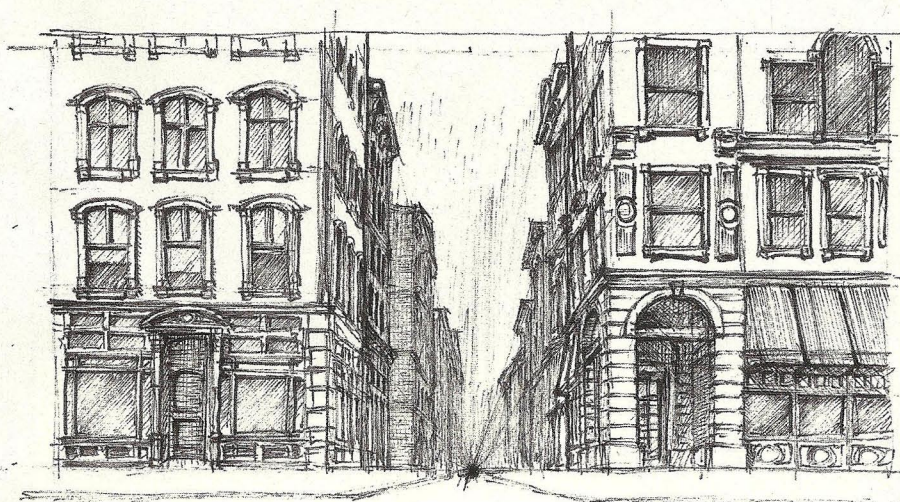
Square. He also notes that while the set design for *Hello, Dolly!* is traditionally done with backdrops, his sets will play with elements designed to immerse the audience in the opulence and elegance of the Gilded Age. From the simplicity of Dolly's hometown to the splendor of New York City's Harmonia Gardens, Mendelson promises audiences a fresh and imaginative atmosphere—and a few surprises as well.

Many things attracted Mendelson to set design, from his early talent for the visual arts to his passion for theatre, story-telling, and mechanical engineering—the latter of which he lightheartedly attributed to his time spent playing with the plastic building toy, K'Nex. He says, "I realized that through scenic design, I get to create something so much larger than myself. ... and if I do the sets, I get to be in every scene!"

The 1969 film version of *Hello, Dolly!*, starring Barbra Streisand, is enjoying a pop culture resurgence due its important role as a recurring motif in Disney/Pixar's sci-fi adventure *WALL-E*, which recently won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. In fact, director Andrew Stanton, in his Oscar acceptance speech, thanked his drama teacher for casting him in his high school's production of *Hello, Dolly!*

Still, even before *WALL-E* came out, DLOC fans voted *Hello, Dolly!*, which first premiered on Broadway in 1964, as their audience choice for the company's 2008-09 season lineup. Dolly is still goin' strong.

To see more of Mark Mendelson's work, check out his website, markmdesigns.com.



Set designer Mark Mendelson found inspiration for his set designs for *Hello Dolly!* from the architecture of 1890s New York.

When *Hello, Dolly!* comes to the Lesher stage in June, audience members can expect to be wowed by the visual atmosphere Mendelson has created for this tale of matchmaking, romance, and comedy, set in 1890s New York City. "Our performance will feature a visual world for *Hello, Dolly!* unlike any ever produced," says Artistic Director Daren A. C. Carrolo. "Mark is creating DLOC's *Hello, Dolly!* set using three-dimensional structures that fly, pivot, and spin in ways that audiences haven't seen before."

Mendelson found inspiration for his designs from architecture of 1890s New York, as well as site-specific New York City locations such as Delmonico's and Union

what: *Hello, Dolly!*
 when: June 5–June 28
 where: Hofmann Theatre
 tickets: \$35–\$41
 info: (925) 943-SHOW (7469) or visit
www.lesherartscenter.org.