

Director's Vision

by Graciela Daniele



Being a Latin woman, I grew up in the world of magical realism. When approached to direct the musical adaptation of *James and the Giant Peach*, I discovered that Roald Dahl's genius has the same dramatic ingredients that always fascinated me: heightened reality, unexpected plot, bizarre characters, humor, and home-made magic. And then, two extraordinary things happened: first I met with the three authors who so brilliantly adapted Dahl's book and I knew I wanted to be part of the development of this musical. Second, I was given the opportunity to collaborate with Pilobolus who will be performing all the fantastic creatures that inhabit our world.

And so hopefully we'll all journey together on James' magical giant peach and live happily ever after.

Notes From the Playwright

by Timothy Allen McDonald

I was an eight-year-old who hated reading. But I had a very clever, Miss Honey of a teacher who challenged me to read "just the first page" of a strange looking book titled *James and the Giant Peach* by a guy with the very weird name of Roald Dahl. Armed with the book, and totally peeved at having an assignment that nobody else in the class had to do, I started to read "just the first page" and didn't put the book down until I had read it cover to cover. Dahl's masterful storytelling not only introduced me to James' world, it introduced me to my own imagination. And you know what? That sneaky imagination of mine began dreaming up this musical during that very first read. I can legitimately claim I've been working on this musical for 39 years. That's gotta be a record of some sort, right?

Reading the story as an adult, I became very aware that at the core of this book is every parent's worst fear: the horror of dying and leaving your child alone in the world. Dahl places this horrific event on the very first page of the book just to make sure he's got everyone's attention. Not your average kiddie fodder this book. Oh, no!

Years later I found myself with the rights to adapt *James* for the stage, and the search to find the perfect collaborators began. I immediately reached out to my colleague and partner in crime, Steve Gabriel, and together we began to build our dream team. Describing to Steve the European tradition of physical theatre led us to Pilobolus. Our amazingly gifted music makers, Justin and Benj, seemed to appear out of thin air at exactly the right time and instantly feel like long-lost brothers. And we have Julie Andrews to thank in a roundabout way for bringing us our mother-defender-goddess-force-of-nature that is Graciela Daniele.

None of this would have mattered much if we didn't have the support and resources of Goodspeed. There's nothing like being sequestered in the woods of Connecticut to really focus everyone on creating the best musical possible or go mad trying. I'm pretty sure we've managed to accomplish a little of both.

This production is purposefully focused *exclusively* on getting the storytelling right—not on sets and costumes—those will come in future productions. And just as we have been slaves to the storytelling, we will require any future production values to serve this same master.

You're about to enter our collective imaginations and I warn you it's not always a pretty place. You are going to experience James' journey first hand, complete with the dreams that wake you in the middle of the night screaming in terror, and the ones that bring you home to the family that loves you, even if you're eight and you hate to read.



Playwright Timothy Allen McDonald