

Freaky Friday Director's Note

Freaky Friday is a wonderful family story. The musical is based on the novel of the same name, written by Mary Rodgers, daughter of famed composer Richard Rodgers and composer of the musical *Once Upon a Mattress*.

Ever since the novel came out in 1972, it captured the imagination of audiences. A fantastic exploration of empathy and walking a mile in someone else's shoes, this story took the well-established concept of the family tale and turned it on its head. Mother and daughter, once at odds, come to understand each other not through observation or time, but through a literal transformation of bodies and having to spend a day as the other person. It is a classic story re-conceptualized in a way that is family-friendly and allows for immediate growth and catharsis in our protagonists.

It also sets up a perfect situation for comedy. The popularity of this story led to its adaptation in TV and film, most famously in a 1976 movie starring Jodie Foster and Barbara Harris, and years later, for a new generation, in 2003 starring Jamie Lee Curtis and Lindsay Lohan. This stage musical is a newer iteration by Disney (producers of the earlier adaptations) and the first version made specifically for the stage. Foreseeing its popularity, they created a filmed version of this musical that streams on Disney+ starring the original mom from the first production of this musical, Heidi Blickenstaff.

While the story is a classic, this production is still fairly new. That is likely because the show has not premiered on Broadway (yet). However, this show is becoming more and more popular due to its fantastic music, timeless story and contemporaneous exploration of the struggles that accompany the coming of age.

In this version of the story, Katherine (mother) and Ellie (daughter) butt heads over the mom's upcoming wedding, the hobbies of Ellie's brother Fletcher and the classic disconnect between the struggles of adulthood and high school. Ellie thinks her mom doesn't understand her and Katherine thinks her daughter is rebelling. Unintentionally switching bodies forces the two to spend a day in the other's world, enabling them to better understand the experiences of their perceived foe and setting up a valuable lesson for their futures. The big focus is on switching back, which is much more complicated than expected.

This show features great music, fun dance numbers, zany characters and more. With Disney as the producer, you are assured a fun, family tale. But as fun as this story is, there is also a tremendous amount of heart in this script as each character faces some difficult realities about how their loved one must cope to get through their day. Inevitably, they understand each other better and learn a tremendous amount through this adventure. Will they be able to find their way back to their bodies and put things back to normal? I guess you will just have to stick around to find out.

I am honored to be back with the Festival for my fourth summer as the director of the summer musical. Working here each summer is truly a treat. There is not a more beautiful place to make theatre. The individuals who run this company continue their venerable mission to bring theatre to the people of the Seacoast without any cost barriers. Courtney, Jill, Ro, Brock, Alexa, Lee, Darcie and all the amazing people who work at the Prescott Park Arts Festival provide an incredible service to this community and I am honored to work with them.

My other favorite part about this summer work is getting meet and collaborate with an amazing new cast of people each year. A mix of local and non-local college students and Seacoast performers with an array of professional experience, this cast is a joy to work with. Their professionalism, dedication and artistry bring this show to life and helps make my job much easier. I am so thankful to get to create with them and so excited to share their work with audiences. And, as always, no production of this size is possible without a mammoth commitment from people working backstage, in the booth, in the pit, in the office and in the park. We are so lucky to have such an amazing team here that works tirelessly to put on this production.

Thank you all for your support of the arts and theatre. Special thank you to my girls, Cristina and Cece, for their love and support and to all the other amazing people who work so hard to make this show possible. I hope you enjoy this production of *Freaky Friday*!