

SPOTLIGHT

WHO'S HOT AND WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE REGIONAL CENTER



At Diablo Light Opera, singing is such a drag! *La Cage Aux Folles* is back, starring Mark Kramer, David Woods, and Peter Del Fiorentino.

Who Let the Birds Out?

TWENTY-ONE YEARS AGO, before homosexuality was a common theatrical theme, a little sparkplug called *La Cage Aux Folles* revolutionized Broadway. Based on the 1978 French film of the same name, the Jerry Herman-Harvey Fierstein musical opened in 1983 with much fanfare. It accumulated 1,761 Broadway performances, three Tony Awards (for best musical, original score, and book), and was later adapted into another movie: 1996's *The Birdcage*, starring Robin Williams, Gene Hackman, and Nathan Lane.

Now, in a time when gay marriages are flooding the media and gay pride parades annually consume the streets of San Francisco, *La Cage* is back and more relevant than ever.

Diablo Light Opera Company (DLOC), the oldest continuing producer of Broadway plays in the greater Walnut Creek area, revisits *La Cage* just weeks before the Broadway revival opus in December. See it at the Regional Center first, from October 8-November 6.

"With all the things happening in the news, it's a timely piece to put back on stage," says producer Alice Gracer. "It reminds people

that we should not discriminate and love should triumph."

The story about a homosexual couple, Georges and Albin, who must hide their true identity to impress Georges' future daughter-in-law and her family, promises to be dynamic and entertaining. To set the mood on opening weekend, DLOC asks members of the audience to wear their most elegant attire for an onstage, pre-curtain contest to let the most colorful bird show off his or her feathers.

The 28-person cast and 18-piece orchestra will be lead by Sue Ellen Nelsen, a Shellie Award-winning director. Combined with historically rich successes and a colorful script, *La Cage Aux Folles*, promises Diablo Regional Arts Association board member Robert Rezak, will "blow the lid off Walnut Creek."

Info: La Cage Aux Folles, Oct. 8-Nov. 6, Hofmann Theatre, tickets \$24-\$32, (925) 943-SHOW (7469), www.dloc.org.

—Claire Fisher

The Classic and the Cool

SMUIN BALLETS REFUSES TO LET A GOOD THING GO STALE. That's why it's pulling out all the stops for the 10th anniversary production of *The Christmas Ballet*, rearranging the two-part piece for, well, the 10th time.

For Smuin's second-year holiday performance at the Regional Center, the company brings some technical highlights of its Yerba Buena Gardens show to the East Bay. That means baroque illustrations and art by East Bay kids will be projected onto the stage, accompanied by the famed recording of Louis Armstrong singing *Night Before Christmas*, plus something that doesn't come naturally to Walnut Creek — snow. Divided into two parts, *The Christmas Ballet, 2004 Edition*, will cover the classic and the cool, with music by Mozart, Handel, Duke Ellington, and Irving Berlin.

It's a white Christmas when Smuin Ballet comes to town.

