



## *The Light in the Piazza*

Book by Craig Lucas  
Music & Lyrics by Adam Guettel

### REMINDER:

POST-SHOW  
DISCUSSION  
WEDNESDAYS

9/1, 9/8, 9/15

with cast and artistic staff

## Florence: A City of Statues and Stories

If you are fortunate enough to have seen Florence with your own eyes, you know why it is counted among the most beautiful cities in the world. Millions of tourists flock there each year, eager to experience the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. In *The Light in the Piazza*, Margaret and her daughter Clara are among those American tourists who find themselves wholly captivated by the city's charm. As audience members, we get to experience Florence vicariously.

The play begins in Piazza della Signoria, an L-shaped square outside the city's seat of civic government. The piazza was the original site of Michelangelo's iconic statue *David*, though a replica now stands in its place (see photo on page 2). It is a popular meeting place for both Florentines and tourists.

As mother and daughter make their way to the nearby Uffizi gallery in the next scene, another world renowned landmark is brought to life onstage. Florence is called the

art capital of Italy for good reason, and the Uffizi is one of the most significant art locales in the city. It houses a world-class collection of paintings and sculptures from artists such as da Vinci, Botticelli, Michelangelo, and Raphael, just to name a few.

No trip to Florence would be complete without a visit to the *Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore*, better known as the Florentine Cathedral or simply, the *Duomo*. Built between 1296 and 1436, the *Duomo* boasts the largest brick dome ever constructed. A marvel of architecture and engineering, it also houses many significant works of art, from mosaics and stained glass to paintings and sculptures.

The Uffizi and the *Duomo* are both visible from the *Piazzale Michelangelo*, another famous square that Margaret and Clara visit in the play. Built in 1869 on a hill south of the city center, its panoramic view of the city (pictured below) is simply breathtaking. ★

– Katie Dai





A replica of Michelangelo's *David* stands in the Piazza della Signoria.

## The Art of the Body

The first time you laid eyes on Michelangelo's *David*, whether it was the sculpture itself, a photograph, a replica, or one of those dress-up magnets they sell in novelty shops, your reaction was probably similar to Clara's in *The Light in the Piazza*: "That's a completely naked statue."

Her surprise is unsurprising; for an unmarried girl in the 1950s, and a particularly sheltered one at that, it is entirely possible that her encounter with *David* in a public square in the middle of Florence is the first good look she's ever had of the male genitalia.

But why do we, today, still have that same reaction? We as a society are markedly less buttoned-up than we were in the 1950s, but public displays of nudity still have the power to make many of us blush, giggle, or even look away in disgust. What is it, then, that makes nudity in art acceptable when the unclothed form is objectionable in other contexts?

First, consider the difference between a figure that is nude and a figure that is naked. While nakedness implies that clothes are missing, a nude figure is in its natural state, unclothed. Classical nudes are unashamed; they exude openness and are not necessarily tied to anything inherently sexual or embarrassing.

Nudity in art also has the benefit of tradition. The human form has been depicted in various states of undress for millennia; from ancient Greece to the Renaissance and beyond. While we won't go so far as to say that the works of the masters are accepted merely because they are old, it is difficult to object to a painting or sculpture that has been displayed publicly for hundreds of years.

Despite all this, there are always those who find fault with nudity, regardless of the context. Artistic freedom only extends so far as those in power allow, and with shifting social mores, what is "appropriate" is subject to change.

In the sixteenth century, Michelangelo was accused of intolerable obscenity for his depiction of *The Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. Following his death his critics embarked on a "Fig-Leaf Campaign," passing laws which required exposed genitals to be covered. Starting with Michelangelo's works, plaster fig leaves were placed over sculptures, and paintings were altered to hide the offending flesh. Similar campaigns have taken place throughout history, including Victorian England. It wasn't until the 1980s that many of the censored works were restored to their original state, and many still don their modest disguises.★

– Katie Dai

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## Italy in Film

After World War II ended, motion pictures segued from war films to more popular fare. By the 1950s, one of the most frequented film locales was Italy—a location still popular today for its history, romance, and art.

One of the earliest post-war American movies set in Italy was *September Affair* (1950), the story of concert pianist who falls in love with a man after their flight to Rome is diverted to Naples, starring Joan Fontaine and Joseph Cotton. In 1952 Broadway had its own Italian love story with Arthur Laurents' *The Time of the Cuckoo*, which depicts a romance between a single American secretary and a shopkeeper she meets while on a Venetian vacation. The play was adapted into the movie *Summertime* in 1955 starring Katharine Hepburn, and into a 1965 musical, *Do I Hear a Waltz?*, with book by Laurents, music by Richard Rodgers, and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim.

The 1950s also yielded *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954), about three women employed at the American embassy in Rome looking for love. Perhaps the most famous American movie filmed in Italy was *Roman Holiday* (1953), which featured a princess touring Rome incognito with an American journalist and starred Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck.

In 1962 a film was made of Elizabeth Spencer's 1960 romantic novella *The Light in the Piazza*. It was filmed on location in Florence and starred Olivia de Havilland as Margaret, Yvette Mimieux as Clara, and George Hamilton as Fabrizio.

The movies' romance with Italy continued unabated with *It Started in Naples* (1960) starring Clark Gable and Sophia Loren and *A Room with a View* (1986) with Helena Bonham Carter, Daniel Day Lewis, and Maggie Smith. Next came *Enchanted April* (1992), Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993) set in an Italian villa, *Stealing Beauty* (1996) starring Liv Tyler and Jeremy Irons, *Only You* (1994) starring Marisa Tomei and Robert Downey, Jr., and *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003) with Diane Lane. In 2003 *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* even saw Disney star Hilary Duff's title character in Rome masquerading as an Italian pop star.

Italian films also made an impact in the US including *Nights of Cabiria* (*Le notti di Cabiria*, 1957) about a prostitute who finds and must abandon love (the source for the musical *Sweet Charity*), *Il Postino* (1994), and *Life is Beautiful* (*La vita è bella*) by and starring Roberto Benigni, which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 1997. In addition, the title of Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), about a journalist looking for happiness in Rome, provided the catch phrase for Americans' view of the Italian lifestyle: "the sweet life" or "the good life." ★

— Vickie Rozell

## The Cast of *The Light in the Piazza*



Nicolas Aliaga



Caroline Altman



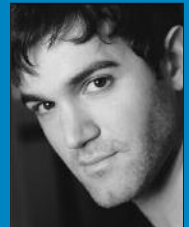
Whitney Bashor



Rebecca  
Eichenberger



Richard Frederick



Constantine  
Germanacos



Ariela  
Morgenstern



Chelsea Nenni



Colin Thomson



Martin Vidnovic



Noel Wood

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# An Interview with Costume Designer Fumiko Bielefeldt

Resident Dramaturg Vickie Rozell talked with The Light in the Piazza costume designer Fumiko Bielefeldt.

**Vickie Rozell:** How did you come to the United States?

**Fumiko Bielefeldt:** I met my husband Carl while he was studying at Waseda University [in Japan] where I studied. He came as an overseas student and studied the Japanese culture and language. We fell in love and decided to get married, but we didn't get married until I got here, I actually came on a student visa.

**VR:** How did you get into theatre?

**FB:** I got a BA in Economics, but I was always interested in art, I almost went to art school, but I never dreamt of being in theatre, I'd never heard of such a profession. My husband got a job at Stanford, and I was looking at the course catalogs since I could take classes for free. I saw something for costume design, so I went and met Doug Russell, who was on the faculty, and asked if I could sit in on a class and he said "Okay, but I won't let you just sit, you have to do the work." You have to read and understand the characters, so that was kind of a challenge, but still I didn't think about the profession. I just wanted to experiment for a while.

**VR:** What are some of your favorite TheatreWorks designs?

**FB:** *Pacific Overtures* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. I also liked *Triumph of Love*, it was fun design-wise; it was a challenge, very creative.

**VR:** Do you have a preference, period versus modern shows?

**FB:** I tend to like period pieces, I like the research part a lot. Before you actually put down the designs, one of the fun parts, I think, of this profession, is you can do lots of research. I do not do much modern stuff at TheatreWorks. I do more modern with other companies. It's a good balance, but I do like period stuff.

**VR:** What's special about *The Light in the Piazza* costume-wise?

**FB:** That very 1950's silhouette, it's crucial to understanding this period. It's not that everyone is a perfect 50's model shape, but I was reading a costume book and learned about why we had that shape. During the war, women went to work in factories, wearing overalls. When the war was over, it was thought woman should go back to the home, be good wives. So that kind of feminine silhouette comes in about 1947. Christian Dior introduced the style, busty, with a small waist, sort of an hourglass figure. In some ways, that's what Betty Friedan criticized in the '60's, that period being repressive for women. It's funny, the play is about a mother's journey from wife and mother to experiencing Italy and seeing something other than the Protestant, puritan, American culture, something more liberating.



Costume renderings by Fumiko Bielefeldt

## Plot Synopsis

In 1953, Margaret has brought her sensitive twenty-something daughter Clara to Italy to share the sights she remembers from her honeymoon, while her husband Roy stays at home in the US. In Florence, Clara meets a young and charismatic Italian named Fabrizio, and their attraction is instantaneous. Margaret does not want the immature Clara involved with this charming Italian, and tries to keep them apart. Complicating matters, Fabrizio's family first embraces then rejects Clara, who simply wants to be with the man she loves.

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The cast of TheatreWorks' Memphis PHOTO DAVID ALLEN

## TheatreWorks and the Tony™ Awards

June 13, 2010 will forever be an important date in TheatreWorks' history. That is the date that the first musical from the company's *New Works Initiative* won the Tony Award for Best Musical.

TheatreWorks' staff, friends, and family sat in front of their television sets that night in hopeful anticipation. *Memphis*, which got its start in TheatreWorks' New Works Festival in 2002 and had its world premiere on TheatreWorks' main stage in 2004, had been nominated for 8 Tony Awards. Its nominations included Best Book of a Musical (Joe DiPietro), Best Original Score (score: David Bryan and lyrics: Joe DiPietro and David Bryan), Best Costume Design of a Musical, and Best Orchestrations (Daryl Waters and David Bryan), as well as Best Direction of a Musical (Christopher Ashley), Best Actor (Chad Kimball as Huey Calhoon), Best Actress (Montego Glover as Felicia Farrell), and, most importantly, Best Musical.

Fans of the show did not have to wait long to see star Chad Kimball, who played DJ Huey Calhoon both at TheatreWorks and on Broadway; he was featured in the broadcast's opening number. Within the first hour there was another treat as the *Memphis* cast enthusiastically performed the closing number of the show, "Steal Your Rock and Roll," featuring several members of the TheatreWorks' cast, to a rousing ovation.

Unfortunately, many of the award presentations were not seen in their entirety on the telecast, but there was good news as Joe DiPietro won the award for Best Book of a

Musical and composer David Bryan won for both Best Orchestrations (with Daryl Waters) and Best Score (with DiPietro who collaborated on the lyrics). DiPietro said for TheatreWorks' 40th Anniversary Gala, "the fact that TheatreWorks not only has the talent and resources to develop new work, but also has an audience that loves it is really just about unique in the American theatre. So what TheatreWorks is doing for the American theatre is just really essential and phenomenal."

At the end of the show, Bernadette Peters came on stage to award Best Musical. When she announced *Memphis* had won, former TheatreWorks' managing director Randy Adams bounded up on stage and exclaimed,

Oh my God! What an incredible night this has been! What an amazing journey we have all been on! Back in 2002 George W. George hired Joe DiPietro and David Bryan to write a great show about the first white DJ in Memphis to put Black music in the middle of the radio, and look what has happened! We have so many people to thank...I want to thank those four regional theatres who made this possible, TheatreWorks in Palo Alto, California, North Shore Music Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, and the Fifth Avenue in Seattle, you allowed us to do our work, and we got it done!

TheatreWorks' staff and patrons have been basking in the glow of that night ever since. ★ – Vickie Rozell

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