

THEATER

Oh Là Là!

An inside look at Berkeley Rep's world-premiere musical adaptation of *Amélie*.

BY LEEANNE JONES

Berkeley Rep is a new venue for Tony Award-winning director Pam MacKinnon, who helms this month's world-premiere musical adaptation of the 2001 film *Amélie*. But the theater company's reputation preceded it.

"The theater has cultivated a really sophisticated audience," she says. "They are excited to go on a ride without knowing the destination."

That great unknown is definitely the case with *Amélie*, which, as of press time, was still being polished by a small creative team with serious Broadway cred. The quirky French-language film stars Audrey Tautou as an imaginative but lonely young woman who prefers matchmaking and sleuthing to pursuing her own happiness. It earned five Oscar nominations, but fans of the hypervisual and mostly narrated film may have a hard time imagining it as a stage musical.

In Berkeley Rep's production, which will be in English, the setting and time frame remain the same (late '90s France), but the score has been fully replaced and the cast of characters slightly streamlined. And of course, there will now be singing.

"Amélie is a shy young woman learning to take the risk of opening herself up to love. In the movie, she doesn't speak much. The songs are an opportunity for the audience to be privy to her thoughts," says MacKinnon. "We have no desire to re-create the movie onstage. We are telling this woman's story in our own way." August 28–October 4. For tickets, visit berkeleyrep.org.

Amélie's East Bay Re-create the whimsy of her Paris neighborhood.

1 2 3 4

Play matchmaker at a French café.

Orchestrate a date between two of your single friends—a casual meeting over warm chocolate croissants at Livermore's Casse-Croûte or an evening over sweetbreads in puff pastry at Lafayette's Chevalier. cbakery.com, chevalierrestaurant.com.

Take a mysterious photo booth picture.

Buy a mask at Encore Theatrical Supply Co., and then snap a strip at a photo booth. Find one at the Alameda County Fairgrounds, Walnut Creek's Spoo tonic Lounge, Blackhawk Plaza, and most Regal Cinemas. encoreonstage.com.

Motor around town on a scooter.

You'll feel Euro-cool and enjoy the summer sun on a Vespa scooter. Get your own at dealerships in Livermore and Walnut Creek—handsome and charming Nino Quincampoix not included. vespalivermore.com, vespawalnutcreek.com.

Travel with a garden gnome.

Buy—don't steal!—a gnome from Alden Lane Nursery in Livermore or Orchard Nursery in Lafayette. Make sure to share Instagram photos of him sightseeing on all your local and global adventures. aldenlane.com, orchardnursery.com.

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