



### **Spotlight: Mindy Cooper**

Mindy Cooper, Director and Choreographer of *The Musical of Musicals: The Musical!*, has worked with some of the best. Having performed and choreographed on Broadway, the 29-year veteran got her start at 18 when she joined her first ballet company. This Baltimore native splits her time between New York and Sacramento, due to her husband's faculty position at UC Davis. Settled on the West Coast this spring, she makes her debut with Center REP in one of the season's most successful musicals. REP asked her to reflect on her career and her experience with the company.

#### **When did you know this was what you wanted to do?**

At 14, I saw the national tour of *A Chorus Line* in my home town of Baltimore. I wouldn't get out of my seat when it was over because I was crying too hard. I was crying because I knew that was what I was going to do with my life, and I knew it was going to be hard.

#### **What is your proudest moment as a performer?**

I think as a performer, my proudest moment was a Saturday matinee of *Titanic* on Broadway. It was during horrifying previews and we were getting booed by the audience almost every night. We figured out the ending of the show, did 2 hours of rehearsal just before curtain, and it finally worked! The entire cast and crew cried backstage. It is truly something to see an IATSE [union] crew cry for joy!

#### **Who is someone you have worked with that you admire and why?**

Two that scream out to me right now: Ann Reinking--*Chicago* on Broadway was a stellar experience for the original cast because Annie is a goddess of the theater. She is an amazingly smart choreographer, even though she called her work "in the style of Fosse." That was an homage to one of her mentors. She also has the largest heart, will give you the bowler off her head if you need it, and always makes the human choice. She considers the person inside the performer. She taught me a lot.

The other person would be my husband. He danced his career in the modern dance world for Paul Taylor, and now directs his own dance/theater company. He has the most honesty, integrity and honor of anyone I know--in work and in life.

**What sets Center REP apart from other companies?**

I would have to say that Michael Butler is the difference. He is a consummate professional, loves the theater, is a perfectionist, and brings all of these qualities to Center REP. He is also a humanitarian. He runs a very great ship. I have worked for and with people you'd have mixed feelings throwing a life jacket to from a sinking ship. Michael makes doing your best work a pleasure and an honor.

**What was your favorite part about working on this project?**

We laughed all day long in rehearsals. This was a dream cast and also a wonderful team of collaborators. I couldn't wait to get to work to see what we would come up with, and then couldn't wait to show it to the team.

**Why should people come to see *The Musical of Musicals: The Musical!*?**

It's very funny! The cast is captivating and amazing. I think it's a great evening of theater.