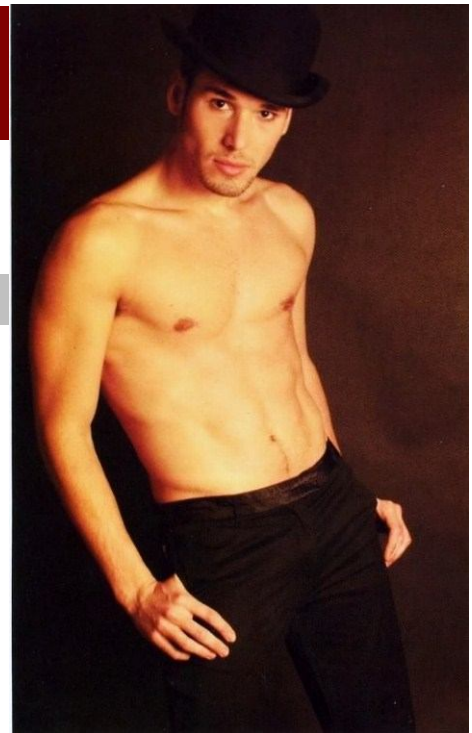


FROM CHICAGO WITH LOVE

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHIMI GOODMAN

Anat Koren

A year ago Ziva Levi interviewed an unknown Israeli actor in London by the name of Shimi Goodman, who was appearing in a West End show. This is what we wrote:



“Remember the name Shimi Goodman. A young talented Israeli actor who is destined to take over the West End stage. He has all you need: he is handsome, he sings and he is covering the lead part in the musical Bombay Dreams. The musical is due to close soon but he already has his eyes on a lead part in Chicago.”!

Less than a year has passed and although he is not playing the male lead (the lawyer Billy Flynn, played by Richard Gere in the film version) he is a swing and a walk on cover for the part of Mary Sunshine - the scoop hungry news reporter. The part in the stage version is played by a man, whose gender is revealed at the end of the play by Billy Flynn in order to prove to the jury that not everything in life is what it seems. The play deals with corruption, greed and murder. The sexy musical, a 1997 Tony Award winner, is about two women who would do anything to become and stay famous. Goodman is joining the cast in February until December this year.

Are there many other differences between the film and the show?

The film is more plotted, whereas the stage version is slightly more surreal and more Vaudeville. In the film the story is clearer. The show is based a lot more on the choreography, which brings the story across.

What are you first and foremost - a singer, an actor or a dancer?

I trained in musical theatre which includes all three. I've always been a good dancer which helped me a lot in getting into musicals. As a teenager and during my Army service I went to dance classes in Studio B in Tel Aviv. I was also a member of “Chich's Neighbours” youth musical theatre group where I was known for being 'the best dancer'. However, I don't see myself as a dancer per se as that is not my main field. I am more of an actor who sings and dances.

It took you one year to make a dream come true?

After Bombay Dreams I was offered the UK tour of Chicago but I couldn't take it because I just moved to a new flat and didn't want to start touring. I took the risk turning down such a good offer but I knew that a few months later they were auditioning for the West End production of Chicago, so I decided to wait. Some of the people on the panel in

town are the same as on tour, such as the choreographer, the musical director and the director from the American team who made the final decision.

The show has been running for seven years with a cast change every ten months. The lead roles are sometimes played by celebrities for a shorter period. Jill Halfpenny(*Strictly Come Dancing*) is Roxie and Michael French(*Eastenders*) plays Billy Flynn.

Does the fact you are an Israeli get in your way?

Just like in *Bombay Dreams*, *Chicago* has a multinational cast. Apart from me there are Swedish, Danish, Australian people and more...

But do Israelis face a different attitude?

The cast members don't get involved in politics. They show interest in my country. We have a very friendly cast and people have good relationships. The show is quite physically demanding, so we don't go out drinking every night. We need our rest.

What would you like to do when your contract is finished?

I am thinking of recording some music. Christopher Hamilton, a musical theatre writer and cruise ship head liner, is writing some songs for me. One of his musicals *Over The Threshold* is sure to be a hit.

Do Israelis come to see you?

Unlike in *Bombay Dreams* I still haven't seen any at the stage door, but if they happen to see the show I hope they just send nice wishes and feel some Israeli pride.

His banker parents always encouraged him to pursue a serious profession. He put his performing dreams on hold, while studying in a technical school. During his service in Israeli Army he received a special permission to develop his showbiz ambitions. After taking part in shows such as *Pinocchio* and *Carmen- a Rock Opera* with "Chich's Neighbours" he packed his bags and relocated to London. On graduating from GSA he appeared in several off West End musicals and also did some modelling. After six recalls he was offered the part in *Bombay Dreams*.

Apart from in *Chicago* you might have seen Goodman presenting and singing in Israel's Independence Day Ceremony last year in London alongside Becky Griffin(MTV presenter) and Michael Eithan who also studied in London and is now participating in the Israeli *Pop Idol*.

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