

# Welcome to My World

Welcome to *Welcome to My World*, our new one-girl musical. First, here's a little history of how the show came to be. I was working with a thirteen-year-old girl, creating what, at the time, was probably the first solo cabaret show for a person of that age (everyone's doing it now – it's all the rage). At some point, her mom called me and asked if I could help them find a comic monologue that would work for a thirteen-year-old – they were desperate, she had an audition coming up, and they were coming up totally empty-handed. So, I nosed around the Internet and I, too, came up empty-handed – there was just nothing that was really there at all, at least that I could find. So, I just sat down and wrote one. I sent it to her and they called me instantly and said it was just right and asked what play it was from because they thought it might be something she could do. I explained that I wrote it. And from what I understand, the monologue worked really well for her in her audition.

For a time, I thought about expanding it and perhaps making a show about a thirteen-year-old girl and her world. I'd named the character Molly and at that point I thought about calling it *The Molly Monologues*. Because this girl was a talented musical theater actress, I thought maybe we could open the show with a song, but just that one song, and I wrote the first part of the tune and about four lines of the lyric for the song I decided to call "Welcome to My World." Then time went on, we were all busy, and I just sort of put it away, although I would think about it from time to time.

I'd been working with a young girl named Sami Staitman since she was twelve. She'd done a bunch of our Kritzerland shows at The Federal nightclub and she'd really grown as a performer during that time. I'd created a role for her in a musical revue I directed and conceived based on the songs of Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse called *Pure Imagination*. She did a great job in that show. Then she was in my production of *Li'l Abner* in the first part of 2014. So, I began to think about *The Molly Monologues* again, but as a vehicle for her. I felt that she had a unique personality and look, and she'd done a great job on a song I'd written so I knew she'd sound

good on that one song. So, we all went out for a meal and I said that if she were very committed and understood the incredible amount of hard work it would entail, that I'd write the show and she could do it. She jumped at it and off we went.

I've written (at the time of these liner notes) fifteen books – twelve of those are novels and ten of the twelve have young protagonists, ranging in age from nine to sixteen. I love writing young people because I still feel like a kid. But I write a very specific kind of young person, because I believe in healthy role models and iconoclastic people who are unique and go their own way rather than run with the herd. Certainly I was exactly that child when I was growing up and certainly I encouraged my darling daughter Jennifer to be that way. It's hard for kids to be that today – there's just so much stuff coming at them so fast, but I've met a lot of kids who are extraordinarily special and singular.

So, first I made Molly Sami's age of fourteen. Then, over the course of three or four months, Sami, her mom, and I met for meals. I had ideas for most of the monologues, but I wanted to hear her speak, to hear the way she would talk about certain subjects and what she thought of them, to know what they taught in school these days (horrifying) – so we'd just yak and I'd make mental notes, then go home and write. But a funny thing happened on the way to the monologues: Every time I'd get to the end of one I'd think, "Gee, this would lead into a song really well," and I'd go write the song. In one instance, I knew I wanted the second song to be called "I Want" (musical theater aficionados will know why). So, I told Sami to make me a list of everything she wants. A few days later I got a really long list. I read it over, took out a few things, and then began to ponder how to actually make all that a song. Ultimately, I went to the piano and basically set the list to music – adding rhymes and smoothing it out, but somehow, magically, it just worked doing it that way. After writing three songs, it became clear this was morphing into a show with not only monologues but also an equal number of songs. And so out went *The Molly Monologues* and in came *Welcome to My World*.

Sami would come over, learn the songs, sing them, and read through whatever monologue I'd written. I finished the show in March of 2015 and we'd already debuted two of the songs in a Kritzerland show to excellent reaction. Then we had a private reading at my house, just Sami and a few friends, to hear what we had. That went very well, and I made a few adjustments based on what I heard. Then we did a one-performance staged workshop, where Sami actually had to commit the entire show and score to memory. I think she had no idea how daunting that was – to learn an eighty-five minute show (no intermission) where she was literally never off stage, and not only learn it but perform it. We had less than a week to put that together and it, too, went very well. Based on the workshop, I made further adjustments – some cuts, expanding some stuff and smoothing out the musical transitions into and out of songs, along with adding some underscore in just a couple of places. The most heartening thing at the workshop was that we had several young people there and they really liked it – one of them came up to me and said, "It's like seeing my life up there."

So, welcome to Molly's World, which we like to call Molly's World. She is definitely iconoclastic and unique and goes her own way. As she herself says, she talks a lot, is not afraid of any subject and says it as she sees it. The topics range from her relationship with her mother, to sex education, to dissecting frogs in school, to her nightmares about attending prom, to friends, to her memories of her grandpa, to how she deals with her insecurities, and, of course, occasionally boys. Over the course of the eighty-five minutes we learn a lot about Molly and her world, and we hope you'll find that world funny, quirky, and maybe even a little touching at times.

— Bruce Kimmel