

Director's Note

“Jews? In Russia? In 1905?” My principle was clearly confused about my proposal. “So...*different* from China!” From the moment Liz Korkosz and I considered *Fiddler on the Roof* for the first ever musical at Beijing National Day School, we knew we would be exploring completely foreign territory. Our students had *never* done a musical in their lives, and they certainly had never heard of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

I am neither Jewish, nor Russian, nor one-hundred-and-nine years old. Yet, when I performed in *Fiddler on the Roof* in tenth grade, I cheered for Tzeitel and Motel, laughed at Yente, and cried during *Home I Love*. I have since discovered the same reactions from my students, who relate to their characters, though coming from very different backgrounds. We find common ground because *Fiddler on the Roof* is about humanity—themes that transcend cultural barriers—from oppression to love, forgiveness to change. Our traditions might be different, but we have all experienced conflict with those different from us, the ache of moving, and the love of family.

As the students in the International Department prepare for the next step in their adventure, they will relive scenes from *Fiddler on the Roof*. They will say goodbye to their parents, evaluate which traditions to keep and which cultures to adopt, and beg for a matchmaker to either hurry up or go away. We can neither anticipate nor prepare them for all that is to come, but I hope they will always treasure the truths they learned and friends they made on this journey.

And now, at the resolution of such a big project, my heart is bursting with gratitude. Thank you, BNDS, for giving us the opportunity to explore new territory. Thank you, students, for giving your precious time and talent to try something new, grow as performers, and show BNDS what we are capable of when we work hard together. You are more than I could have hoped for, and I am so unbelievably proud of you. Thank you, teachers, for sacrificing your time and sanity to help me create a memory for these students that will last forever. I literally could not have done it without you, and I am so impressed by the variety of theatrical talent tucked away in the southwest corner of Beijing. Finally, thank you, dear audience, for supporting live theatre and the beauty and hard work it represents. Enjoy the show! *L'chaim!*

Stephanie Anderson
Director