From Dolly! to WALL-E

On his 77th birthday, Broadway legend and former POZ cover star Jerry Herman—who created La Cage aux Folles, Hello, Dolly! and whose songs can now be heard in WALL-E—gives his regards to fellow HIV survivors everywhere.

July 10, 2008 By Dennis Daniel

July 10 marks the 77th birthday of HIV-positive Broadway music man extraordinaire— and former *POZ* February 1997 cover boy—Jerry Herman. Having lived openly with HIV since 1992, Herman has inspired us all with his music and lyrics for such classic American shows as *Hello, Dolly!*, *Mame* and *La Cage Aux Folles*. He is the only composer/lyricist to have created three Broadway musicals that ran for more than 1,500 consecutive performances each. One of his particular talents is putting words of hope and encouragement into the mouths of incredible and indomitable women. When I'm feeling down there's no pick-me-up quite like Dolly Levi's "Before the Parade Passes By," from *Hello, Dolly!*; Mame Dennis's "Open a New Window," from *Mame*; and, of course, drag diva Zaza's "A Little More Mascara," from *La Cage Aux Folles*.

And now, a whole new generation of Herman fans can enjoy two of his signature songs from *Hello, Dolly!* ("Put On Your Sunday Clothes" and "It Only Takes a Moment") in the new Pixar smash *WALL-E*.

Jerry agreed to give *POZ* a birthday present and, in an exclusive interview, answer a few of our most burning questions:

In previous interviews with *POZ*, you were very forthcoming about your health and your treatment. How are you are faring these days?

My good health never ceases to amaze me. I've been on my regimen for 8+ years.

You're now considered a long-term survivor. How does that feel? How does it affect your life and your work?

My favorite word is *UNDETECTABLE*, which is always stamped on the latest copy of my blood work!

How do you perceive that people's attitudes have changed about HIV/AIDS in the past 25 years?

I've seen people's attitudes go from fear to acceptance, and I only hope that it doesn't turn into complacency.

What are you working on now?

An August 23rd concert at the Old Globe in San Diego with ASCAP, and a symphony concert of all my work at the Kennedy Center [for] three nights beginning March 12, 2009.

How does it feel to have your work introduced to a whole new generation of people by being included in the film *WALL-E*?

Young.

And, of course, what everyone wants to know…are you going to write a new musical?

I'm so happily busy looking after my existing children (all the shows are constantly being produced somewhere in the world) that I've had little time to think of anything new.

And lastly, how do you think some of your major heroines would respond to the HIV/AIDS issue?

Mame would be hosting a fund-raiser, Zaza would be performing in it, and Dolly would be distributing condoms.

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