



Life is Fabulous

In a blog post titled “For Charles Sanchez’s Cabaret Show, Life Is Fabulous at Long, Long Last,” POZ contributing writer Mark S. King shares in the commemoration of Sanchez’s 20th HIV anniversary. Below is an edited excerpt.

January 8, 2024 By [Mark S. King](#)

Charles Sanchez is one busy New Yorker. There’s the writing he does for nearly all the major HIV outlets. Then there’s his regular Instagram show featuring community notables, and then there are his dashes to the gym to contend with the five pounds, give or take, that continue to mock him despite his high level of fitness. And, oh yes, on this day there is the proper costume to select.

“I’ve picked out a feather boa,” he told me in advance of his one-man cabaret act with the breathlessness of Diana Nyad at the halfway point of the English Channel, “and now I’m looking at women’s glasses. I might wear a pair for one of my characters.”

Those characters populated, through an evening of song, his show Life Is Fabulous! on Saturday, November 4, at the Laurie Beechman Theatre in New York City.

We attempted to begin the interview, but the subjects of theater and BROADWAY! popped up for no particular reason. That’s a lie, there’s always a reason—usually for Charles to dish about the shows he has seen, wants to see, has heard rumors about or cannot forget.

“Did you know I saw Starlight Express with the original Broadway cast, including Jane Krakowski and Andrea McArdle?” he asked, rhetorically, about the disastrous Andrew Lloyd Webber musical of the 1980s. “Everyone was on roller skates.

It was ridiculous! It is unrevivable. They had so many injuries!”

Though his own show was not as physically treacherous, it did require stamina. Charles performed a formidable assortment of songs written especially for him over the years by his friend and collaborator Joel B. New, the award-winning composer who wrote music for one of Charles’s first forays into video production many years ago, Manhattan Man Travels.

Since then, Joel has featured Charles in many of his own original musical projects, while Charles called upon Joel to write the song “The More You Can Ho” for a video project that featured Merce, the character Charles created for his remarkable musical comedy web series of the same name about a gay New Yorker living with HIV.

So Life Is Fabulous! was an encore of all that music, a celebration of a productive musical partnership and something else as well.

“I’m not dead. That’s what we’re celebrating,” Charles said. “That’s basically it. Twenty years ago, who would have known I’d be doing a cabaret show with music written for me? Unbelievable!”

Indeed. It is particularly astonishing because 20 years ago, Charles awoke from a lengthy coma after being found unconscious in his apartment. One of the first things he was told after waking up was the reason for his serious medical emergency: He had AIDS.

Since then, anniversaries of his diagnosis have come and gone, but this year, at the 20-year mark, Charles knew the time was right to put on a show, a dream he has had since he was 19 years old. Even so, he refused to allow the topic of HIV to upstage him. Only one song, “The More You Can Ho,” dealt directly with the virus.

“We had AI write the press release for Life Is Fabulous! just to see what it would say,” Charles offered with typical transparency, “and it came back with all these over-the-top superlatives. And we just made it even more ridiculous. Why not? I mean, the thing says I’m ‘a beacon to many.’ A beacon of what? That’s the question.”

On November 4, the stars aligned around Charles and the show he once thought unimaginable became a reality complete with a musical director with a Broadway pedigree, a small live band and a glamorous venue. “Not only will I do this concert,” Charles said mischievously, “I’m wearing sequins.”