

CENTER STAGE: I Am What I Am

Detailed Synopsis



Photo courtesy of Joan Marcus 2010.

ACT ONE

The master of ceremonies, Georges, welcomes the audience to his St. Tropez drag nightclub, La Cage Aux Folles. The Cagelles, his chorus line of drag performers, introduce themselves to the audience (*We Are What We Are*). Georges and his partner, Albin, have lived together for years in an apartment above La Cage with their butler Jacob. Albin is a drag queen and the star performer of La Cage aux Folles.

Albin prepares to perform while dramatically arguing that Georges is going to leave him after twenty years together (*Mascara*). Georges' son, Jean-Michel, the product of an experimental affair with a woman named Sybil, comes home with the news that he is engaged to Anne Dindon. Georges does not approve of the engagement right away, but Jean-Michel professes to his father that he is in love with Anne (*With Anne on My Arm*).

Anne's father, however, is the head of an organization, the "Tradition, Family and Morality Party," whose primary goal is closing the drag clubs in town. Anne's parents want to meet Jean-Michel's parents, but Jean-Michel has been lying to Anne about his parents. Jean-Michel begs Georges to redecorate the apartment and replace Albin with Sybil for the visit, even though Sybil has barely seen him since birth.



Photo courtesy of Joan Marcus 2010.

When Albin returns from performing, Georges suggests that they take a walk to discuss the matter. The pair almost run into Jean-Michel and Anne, but Jean-Michel hurries Anne away before she figures out what's going on. (*With Anne on My Arm Reprise*).

Georges attempts to soften the blow of Jean-Michel's requests to Albin (*Song on the Sand*), but Albin has to make it back to La Cage in time for the next show before Georges is able to break the bad news about not being invited to dinner.



Photo courtesy of Broadwayworld.com

Albin takes the stage once more as Zaza (*La Cage Aux Folles*) and while he is performing, Georges and Jean-Michel quickly redecorate the house. As Albin is changing for his next number, he notices the two carrying his gowns, and Georges is forced to finally tell Albin of Jean-Michel's dinner party plan.

Albin does not get mad but rather excuses himself to return to the stage. Half way through the song, he sends Les Cagelles away and sings alone to convey his distress and state that he refuses to change for anyone (*I Am What I Am*). At the end of the song, he throws his wig at Georges and storms off.

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ACT TWO

Georges finds Albin the next morning and apologizes (**Song on the Sand Reprise**). Georges suggests to Albin that he dress up for dinner as a macho “Uncle Al”.

Even though Albin is still upset, he reluctantly agrees to act like a heterosexual for Jean-Michel, and Georges attempts to teach him how to act more like a man (**Masculinity**).



Photo courtesy of Joan Marcus 2010.

Back at Georges’ redesigned apartment, “Uncle Albert” is revealed to Jean-Michel. He does not like the idea of “Uncle Al” or the fact that Albin is gay. Georges angrily reminds Jean-Michel of how good Albin has been to him over the years (**Look Over There**). They receive a telegram from Sybil saying that she is not coming, but before Albin and Georges can tell Jean-Michel, Anne’s parents arrive (**Dishes**).

Attempting to save the dinner, Albin comes out as Jean-Michel’s forty-year-old mother. Jacob burns the dinner, so a trip to the restaurant, Chez Jacqueline, which belongs to a friend of Albin and Georges, is arranged.

At the restaurant, Jacqueline does not realize who Albin is pretending to be, or what’s going on, so she asks Albin



Photo courtesy of nymag.com

to sing as Zaza.

After some hesitation, Albin agrees to sing (**The Best of Times**). The restaurant patrons, including Anne’s mother enthusiastically take part in the song. With his usual performance vigor, Albin tears off his wig at the song’s end, ruining his disguise and revealing his true identity.

Georges, Albin, Jean-Michel and their guests rush back to the apartment where the Dindons plead with Anne to abandon her fiancé because they are appalled by his homosexual parents. Anne states that she is in love with Jean-Michel and refuses to leave him. Jean-Michel, now ashamed of the way he treated Albin, apologizes to his parents (**Look Over There Reprise**).

Anne’s parents attempt to leave Georges and Albin’s apartment, which is located above the club, but are blocked by Jacqueline. Jacqueline has come with the press to photograph the anti-homosexual Dindons at La Cage and with Zaza. Mr. Dindon is furious, but Georges and Albin agree to help him avoid the press if he gives his blessing for Anne and Jean-Michel to marry. Georges helps the Dindons escape through La Cage Aux Folles dressed in drag and posing as members of the nightclub’s revue (**Finale**).



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