

TIME 100 ARTISTS

# Diane Paulus

By Audra McDonald

April 23, 2014

## The Broadway genius who reinvents the classics

When you talk to Diane Paulus, her bright, sparkly blue eyes always look like she has just discovered something, whether you're talking about No. 2 pencils or the cosmos. She is that

passionate about everything. That's why she has such good radar — she's open to the whole experience that is theater. She'll take a good idea from anyone, and she's willing to try anything. It can be as wild and imaginative as possible — as long as it's authentic.

When my husband Will Swenson and I were dating, he was working on Diane's revival of the musical *Hair*. He kept talking about her spirit and her wildly creative ideas. He was so fulfilled by Diane's process that I became curious about working with her and we got to know each other. On *Hair*'s opening night in London, she asked me, "What do you think about working with me on *Porgy and Bess*?" Obviously, I jumped at the opportunity.

Diane won a Tony Award for her revival of the musical *Pippin*. So many people think they know the piece, but she made it refreshingly new by staging it in a circus atmosphere. It comes from her sense of play — nothing is sacred and everything is sacred. I can't wait to see what she does next.

*McDonald, a five-time Tony Award winner, is starring in Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill on Broadway*



Jason Grow