



Steve Kaplan has made his mark on business and has become a mentor and motivator for those who want to better their lives. Steve was one of the producers on Broadway's 'Leap of Faith' and is featured in an upcoming episode of ABC's Secret Millionaire. I had the great privilege to talk Steve about his experience producing a Broadway show as well as his thoughts on Secret Millionaire. For more information on this amazing man, including supporting his charities by attending the Secret Millionaire viewing party on July 1st please visit his website www.SteveKaplanLive.com.

Michael J. Roberts (MJR): How did you get involved in being one of the producers on Broadway's 'Leap of Faith'?

Steve Kaplan (SK): Well Michael, this is my time producing a show and it has been an interesting road trip in getting it to Broadway. Prior to investing in 'Leap of Faith' I had written several books. One was called, "[Bag The Elephant](#)" which became a New York Times Best Seller. What I initially wanted to do was convert "Bag The Elephant" into a Broadway show.

(MJR) What is "Bag The Elephant"?

(SK) Great question! Bag the Elephant is actually a concept of what everybody wants. It is the American Dream and represents whatever is important to you. I was thinking of doing it as a musical comedy. I had no clue about producing so I called some producers in Chicago who were kind enough to meet me. Doug Meyer was one, he produced 'Hairspray'. We sat down and I had a bunch of questions for him and about the industry. I have always loved Broadway and theater and I try to see as much as possible.

(MJR) What advice did Doug give you?

(SK): It was quite an education. He had another route for me to go so he introduced me to other producers he was involved with, including Richard Frankel and Tom Vitale. They started to tell me about new projects they were working on which was 'Leap of Faith'. Of course I knew of it from the Steve Martin film back in the 1980's and I instantly loved the idea.

(MJR): What about 'Leap of Faith' connected with you?

(SK) So much Michael. The underlying theme of salvation, about getting the best out of everybody, which is what I try to do everyday with my business. I just really seemed to resonate with it. I walked out of the meeting really pumped up about what they were hoping to put on Broadway and felt like the show contained all the right messages the world needed to hear right now.

(MJR) How long ago was your first meeting regarding 'Leap of Faith'?

(SK) It had to be three years ago now which makes me again reflect on all the work that went into mounting that show. All the work of such amazing, talented and dedicated people like Alan Menken, Glen Slater and the director Rob Ashford. So I that is the main reason why I got involved, is the message and to learn from the best of the best in how to put a show together before I started writing mine.

(MJR) When you first saw the workshop, what were your thoughts and were you able to give any input?

(SK) Absolutely. But there is a hierarchy that you respect as it is not a free for all of people throwing in opinions. But yes, I was able to give input. When I was sitting there at the table read, I was blown away by the talent. There were no acoustics, just in a plain room with tables and chairs a piano and not much else. To hear the voices, like Raul Espranza, I got chills. The music was so meaningful to me. Like I said before, I try to see everything I can theater-wise, but the talent that right in front of me just blew me away and I had never seen anything like it.

(MJR) So here is the question: What do you think happened that made it not connect with audiences?

(SK) You know it is one of the great mysteries. I have been involved with television shows and alot of different mediums, and usually you can put your finger on one or two things. This, I just don't know. Some people thought having "Faith" in the title was offputting, some other people thought it came out way too late in the season. It didn't receive the best reviews, but it did get recognized by the Drama Desk Awards and the Tony committee. It was just such an ambiguous thing for me that it just confirmed my belief going into this project that in theater there is such a dicotomy between creative brilliance and the business of Broadway.

(MJR) You are right Steve! It is in things you have no control over, no matter how good a show is, that could ultimately do a show in. Even to this day, a bad review in the New York Times spells doom.

(SK) And you know Michael, I was at that show when it got reviewed. People were standing and cheering and then you see the review, it just didn't make sense to me. But like you said, there are so many dynamics that you can't control The theater we were in were one of the biggest which added to what we had to bring in weekly. On and on with things like that. But I wouldn't trade the experience for anything.

(MJR) I still think there is a place for the show Steve and that it will do very well as a tour.

(SK) I'm glad you think so and I totally agree. Maybe getting it out of New York and around the country to different audiences is what that show needs.



(MJR) How was it being at the Tony Awards?

(SK) One of the best days of my life Michael. I got to fly out a bunch of friends and family and we had great time and made great memories. Just again seeing the talent in that room and everyone is so gracious and nice.

(MJR) So you agree that being in theater is like having an extended family?

(SK) It is so much more than that Michael. The passion each person shares no matter what their function, be it an actor, director or producer. They give 100% and being surrounded by that energy is unexplainable.

(MJR) That brings me to my next question actually and that is about what you think makes a person successful or not successful. Would you agree that passion is part of it?

(SK) Part of it, if not all of it. A lot of people confuse wealth and richness. In today's world we admire people with a lot of money and treat them like royalty. Well, let me tell you something my friend, I know a lot of wealthy people and I don't know that many of them that feel truly fulfilled. I look at my life for example and think, well yes the money is great and takes a lot of stress of everyday things, but what makes me rich is my family, my friends that I have had most of my life, my sisters, my girlfriend, being involved in the arts. These things complete me and fulfill me. It is not what you have but what you do. It is interesting because I have a different approach to it. People say to follow your passion, but pragmatically, sometimes you can't make money doing that. But the other part to that is that I believe you can make money doing anything. So if you love theater, get involved with theater or in that industry, because in that industry there are a myriad of things you can do.



(MJR) How did you get involved with ABC's Secret Millionaire?

(SK) I had a couple shows in mind about giving back and Zodiak, the producers, told me that they had this show they were developing that I would be perfect for and that was Secret Millionaire. They told me the concept of the show and I was all in. I put my t.v. projects on hold for that entire year because I believe so much in what Secret Millionaire does. So after what felt like 17 interviews, and the producers flying out to our house and all this kind of stuff, we locked in and we shot the episode.

(MJR) Where did you end up for the shoot?

(SK) It couldn't have been better. It was in the South Side of Chicago. It is the real deal. They don't put you up at the Hyatt. What they show on the program is real. You are there and you are alone. When you are done at 6 or 7pm they leave you and you have no communication with the outside world. There was a siren every three minutes.

(MJR) What did you take away from the experience of Secret Millionaire?

(SK) I think Michael, I may be different from some of the other millionaires who have been on the show because I have traveled all over the world and I have seen poverty up close. What was a slap in the face to me was that this goes on in America right under our noses. I'm not blind and I am pretty tuned into what is going on with our country here but that is what got to me. When you talk to the kids, they have just given up and they have such a lack of hope. They accept their situation and just go along in this crazy world of gunfire, drugs and gang life. All this craziness is just accepted. They all know someone who was shot.

(MJR) And what did you gain from it?

(SK) The one on one. It is going into the community, donating your time, talking and listening. It impacts you on a visceral level. I still work with two of the organizations that you will see in the episode. So I have been able to impact them further. Let me tell you one other thing, is that the people running these organizations are so immersed and care so much that it rubs off. They are such community leaders and do it for no other reason than to help make their area a better and safer place.

(MJR) So what is your next venture?

(SK) As far as producing, hopefully one of my own projects. Which is what I also wanted to say to your readers is that people like me with resources, I believe have an obligation to support the arts and it is my absolute honor to do so.

(MJR) And how can people get connected with you Steve as well as get your books and business help?

(SK) Thank you for asking. They can go to www.SteveKaplanLive.com

(MJR) Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me. I wish I knew more people like you and again thank you for all your support of the arts as well as being such a great humanitarian.

(SK) Thank you for the opportunity and I hope to see you and your readers at the charity viewing party for Secret Millionaire on July 1st!

Photo 1: Steve Kaplan

Photo 2: Steve Kaplan with Paul Rudd

Photo 3: Steve Kaplan & Jesse Tyler Ferguson