

# Anything Goes for Felicity aged 74

## Star to make musical debut but she admits: I can't sing!



Ready to dance: Felicity Kendal. Below: On Strictly in 2010 with Vincent Simone

Picture: KARAN KAPOOR/CAMERA PRESS



**EXCLUSIVE**  
By **Baz Bamigboye**

**SHE'S** been a sitcom favourite, an acclaimed stage actress and strutted her stuff on *Strictly Come Dancing*.

Now Felicity Kendal is to make her musical theatre debut at the age of 74 – even though, as she readily admits: 'I can't sing!'

The star has been chosen by celebrated Broadway director and choreographer Kathleen Marshall to join Megan Mullally and Robert Lindsay in *Anything Goes* at the Barbican this summer. The revival of Cole Porter's effervescent farce, set aboard an ocean liner, was a huge hit when it ran in New York ten years ago.

When producer Howard Panter asked Kendal if she'd been in a musical before, she emailed back to say: 'No, because I can't sing.'

Honesty was the best policy, though, because she still got the part of Manhattan blueblood Mrs Evan-

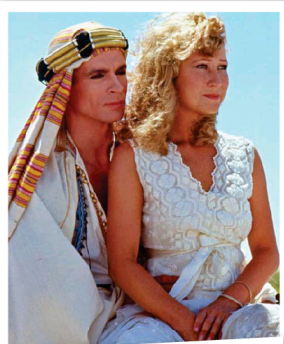
**'I can sort of hold a tune'**

geline Harcourt, who's sailing on the *SS American* to make sure her daughter marries a daffy English aristocrat. But she soon gets caught up in frolics instigated by nightclub beller Reno Sweeney (Mullally) and Moonface Martin, aka Public Enemy No 13 (Lindsay).

'This is not a singing part, so everybody can relax,' Kendal joked when we spoke on Wednesday. In fact, Mrs Harcourt does get to warble some numbers – but only as part of the ensemble. 'The show is safe from me,' she insisted, adding: 'I can sort of hold a tune!'

*Anything Goes* was due to open in May, but like everything else the date has shifted and the first performance is now set for June 5. From September 15 a tour will run at The Lowry in Salford; the Mayflower in Southampton (September 28) and Edinburgh's Festival Theatre (October 12).

While singing may not be her strong suit, she's pretty good on her pins and used to go to Pineapple Studios in Covent Garden. 'I've always done



**Top: With Nureyev in Valentino. Above: With partner Michael Rudman**

that kind of class where you do dancing,' she said. 'I used to love it.'

We chatted about the extravagant dance numbers Marshall conjured up when *Anything Goes* ran on Broadway. Kendal has viewed extensive clips on YouTube, and it was those breathtaking dance sequences that helped make her mind up. 'I wanted to work with Kathleen Marshall after watching what she created,' she said. 'She's phenomenal.' I won-

dered whether Kendal was up for the mass tap-dance moment. 'Oh yes!' she said. 'Kathleen's not under any illusion that I can tap dance with a cast of thousands. But don't say "can't" until I fall over.'

She has taken tap classes over the years – and can boast that she once danced with Rudolf Nureyev. The ballet legend starred in Ken Russell's 1977 film *Valentino*, about 1920s silent era movie god Rudolph Valentino. She played June Mathis, the star's 'mentor' ... until Valentino's wife broke up the friendship. She and Nureyev performed a tango. 'They more or less stuck me on to his front and he

did it for me,' she recalled. 'It was one of the highlights of my life.'

She was also a contestant on *Strictly* in 2010. I noted that one of the judges called her a 'sex kitten' after her cha-cha. 'Kitten is a little hopeful,' she shot back, drily. 'Sexy cat would have been all right.'

Kendal has not done any TV work during the pandemic. Her partner, the writer and director Michael Rudman, is 82, and she said: 'I wouldn't even consider going out on a TV job, however safe, and risk bringing something back to him.'

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