FOR NEARLY A QUARTER of a century, producers Stewart F. Lane and Bonnie Comley have been the toast of Broadway, winning nine Tony Awards between them, including this year’s honor for Best Musical for A Gentleman’s Guide to Love & Murder. They’ve also been generous supporters of Boston University’s College of Fine Arts. Lane (CFA’73) cochairs the CFA Campaign and the Dean’s Advisory Board. The couple recently joined the ranks of $1 million–plus lifetime donors with the endowment of the Stewart F. Lane and Bonnie Comley Musical Theatre Fund to launch a new musical theater concentration within the School of Theatre. With the eventual development of the new curriculum, BU will be poised to become the “preeminent musical theater school in the country,” says Lane.

The Stewart F. Lane and Bonnie Comley Musical Theatre Fund gives CFA the ability to produce a large-scale musical as part of the school’s annual programming, and allows CFA to hire an additional adjunct faculty member and create courses designed to prepare students for musical theater roles. The school hopes to begin offering the new concentration to students in fall 2015.

“We are so proud of Stewart and Bonnie’s many accomplishments in the Broadway arena,” says Jim Petosa, director of the School of Theatre and artistic director of the New Repertory Theatre in Watertown, Mass. “Their lifelong commitment to the musical theater form is now extended to the training of future generations of theater artists through their legacy gift to the Boston University School of Theatre. Our ability to educate has been exponentially enhanced by this generous gift.” Lane is a lifelong theater lover who landed his first Tony Award in 1984 for the box office smash musical La Cage aux Folles. He says the new curriculum, to be endowed in perpetuity, dovetails nicely with Petosa’s role at the New Rep. “One sure way of turning out Broadway-worthy performers is working with a professional theater company, and Jim is now able to use students in musical productions at New Rep,” he says. “We have the arts department to design scenery, the music department” for orchestration, “why not put this all together?”

CFA is celebrating the gift and honoring Lane and Comley with a series of events throughout the current academic year. The celebration concludes in March 2015, when BU School of Theatre seniors will travel to New York City for the Theatre Showcase. This annual event invites members of the professional theater community to experience the work of the School of Theatre’s graduating MFA and BFA students and is funded in part by the previously announced Stewart F. Lane and Bonnie Comley Fund for Theatre Artist Development.

“Bonnie and I have been championing the musical theater concentration for five years, but it’s like turning around the Queen Elizabeth—it takes time,” says Lane, who believes the new program will open up many job possibilities for students trained to sing and dance as well as act—the proverbial triple threat that, when accompanied by stamina, allows performers to successfully do eight shows a week. Six-time Tony winner Lane and three-time Tony winner Comley have collectively produced more than 40 Broadway productions, including War Horse and Romeo and Juliet. Lane is the president of Theatre Venture, Inc., and president and founder of BroadwayHD. Lane and Comley received the 2013 Olivier Award (London’s version of a Tony) for Best Musical for Irving Berlin’s Top Hat. Lane is also the owner and operator of the Palace Theatre in New York City. In 2002 he was a recipient of the University’s Distinguished Alumni Award.

Veteran Broadway Team Endows Musical Theater Concentration

Lane, Comley envision versatile crop of triple-threat CFA grads

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