Dust off your dancing shoes, because you are cordially invited to *Head Over Heels*, a deliciously inventive musical-literary mash-up in the Allen Elizabethan Theatre in summer 2015. *Head Over Heels* is the unlikely pairing of Sir Philip Sidney’s 16th-century tragicomedy *Arcadia* (freely adapted by playwright Jeff Whitty with a decided emphasis on the comedy) with the music of 1980s pop icons the Go-Go’s, creators of such hits as “Our Lips Are Sealed,” “Vacation” and “We Got the Beat.”

If a mash-up is defined as “a mixture or fusion of disparate elements,” then the marriage of Sidney’s Renaissance prose to the soundtrack of an all-female band that rose out of the 1970s Los Angeles punk scene to become a chart-topping pop band might be considered a mash-up on steroids. What makes it work is Oregon native Whitty’s intense love of both halves of the artistic equation.

“I remember reading *Arcadia* in grad school at the University of Oregon and thinking this would be a wonderful story to put onstage,” Whitty, the Tony Award–winning author of *Avenue Q* and *The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler* (OSF, 2008), said in an OSF interview. “I kept waiting for someone to do an adaptation of it, and no one did.”

Meanwhile, Whitty’s agent told him the Go-Go’s catalog had become available and would be an ideal vehicle for a Broadway jukebox musical—and that Whitty should write the book. In a light-bulb moment that perhaps could only occur in Whitty’s irreverent and creative mind, *Head Over Heels* was born.

“One day, I put together a three-page document saying this is what the show could be,” Whitty said. “Use the Go-Go’s catalog, but set it to my version of *Arcadia*. People got excited, I got committed, and a 15-page treatment became a 55-page treatment because I got so into writing the dialogue in meter and mashing it up with the songs.”

For Shakespeare lovers, the plot of *Arcadia* will feel familiar. A visit to an oracle results in dire predictions, a worried duke fears he will be cuckolded and his throne usurped, young lovers resort to disguises to win those they love, and—just maybe—everything will work out fine in the end.

A party aesthetic

Whitty wrote the piece with only one director in mind—Ed Sylvanus Iskandar. An OSF directing fellow for two seasons, Iskandar is a fast-rising New York–based director making a name for himself with what he terms “inclusive” productions. His latest triumph is *The Mysteries*, a five-and-a-half-hour dramatization of the Bible featuring a cast of 54 and written by a cadre of 48 playwrights, including Whitty. *TheaterMania* praised The Flea Theater production as “breathtaking in its scope . . . a radical reclamation that can be appreciated by believers and nonbelievers alike.”

Food, drink and a convivial party atmosphere are part of any Iskandar production—what he has called his “socially inclusive party aesthetic.” In his New York shows, the actors and crew greet you at the door, tear your ticket and serve you a cocktail before transforming seamlessly into their roles, only to return again at intermission with your dinner. “I create theatre from the fundamental belief that the story is rendered more profoundly by the recognition and empathy for the human effort behind the piece of art,” says the director.

How Iskandar’s aesthetic will translate to the 1,200-seat Allen Elizabethan Theatre is an exciting challenge involving OSF departments from Artistic to House Management to the Green Show. Audiences may come from a themed Green Show performance and be welcomed by an actor who escorts them to hear the pre-show concert being performed by the house band. A longer-than-usual intermission may feature a bit of disco dancing in the Bill Patton Garden, or karaoke singing in the balcony or maybe just conversations with actors and crew who are strolling through the theatre.

Iskandar’s foremost goal is for everyone to have a delightful, engaged, utterly unique experience in the theatre. “What I imagine is that you are walking into a party that’s in full swing, and you get to choose your own adventure over the course of the entire night.”