

A spotlight on creativity

Mike Ruffolo's journey to "Barcelona: The Musical"

By Sara James, Director of Marketing and Communications

Great creative projects often begin quietly, with a single idea, a blank page and the determination to see a story through. For long-time Pelican Bay resident Mike Ruffolo, that journey has unfolded over the past seven years as he worked to bring his original production, "Barcelona: The Musical," to life.

The show will make its world premiere at TheatreZone in Naples in February 2027, marking a major milestone for Mike and a remarkable creative accomplishment for a member of our community.

Mike's path to musical theatre may seem unexpected. For 35 years, he built a successful career in the technology industry, serving as CEO of two private companies

and one public technology firm and leading organizations through periods of strategic transformation and rapid growth.

"What energized me most was developing people and motivating teams to innovate and achieve ambitious goals," he says.

Alongside that demanding career, however, writing remained a lifelong passion.

"My original dream job was to become a sports journalist and biographer," he explains. "Writing has always been both fun and a welcome release from the day-to-day stresses of life."

A devoted fan of Broadway musicals, Mike eventually set an ambitious personal goal: to write one himself.



Mike Ruffolo

"When I began writing the play, my goal was to create an original musical that could earn the right to be mentioned in the same sentence as 'Miss Saigon' and 'Les Misérables,'" he says.

Choosing the right setting was key. He wanted a time and place rich in culture

and history but not widely explored on Broadway. Barcelona in 1939, just emerging from the Spanish Civil War and standing on the brink of World War II, provided the perfect backdrop.

"Spain was deeply divided, emotions were raw, and tensions were high," he says. "That moment in history provided a dramatic setting for a powerful story."

At its heart, "Barcelona: The Musical" is a love story set against the turmoil of war. Rather than focusing on military events, Mike

central, the impact of war is inescapable, and the choices people make are complex and sometimes tragic."

The process of bringing a new musical to life has been both demanding and rewarding.

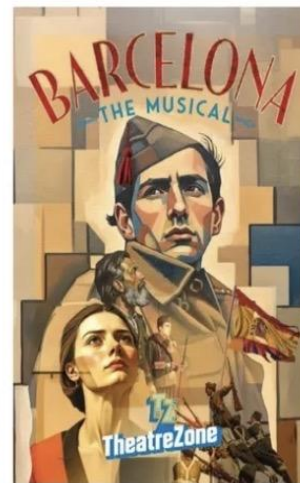
"The amount of research and character development required before writing the first draft surprised me," Mike notes. "And once the script is written, patience and persistence are essential. The feedback you receive ultimately makes the show stronger."

For Mike, seeing the musical move from imagination to a full theatrical production is deeply meaningful, especially close to home.

"Barcelona: The Musical" will premiere Feb. 4-14, 2027, with 11 live performances at TheatreZone in Naples, marking the culmination of a seven-year creative journey for one of Pelican Bay's own.

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"Barcelona: The Musical"

created characters forced to make morally complex decisions with life-changing consequences.

"It's a timeless story about difficult human choices," he says. "In 'Barcelona,' love is

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