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# Laura Benanti and Cheyenne Jackson Join Shuler Hensley in

The New York City Center *Encores!* production of

Frank Loesser's Musical

## *The Most Happy Fella*



**Directed and Choreographed by Casey Nicholaw**

**Music Direction by Rob Berman**

New York, NY, August 21, 2013 – **Laura Benanti** and **Cheyenne Jackson** will join the previously announced **Shuler Hensley** in the New York City Center *Encores!* production of Frank Loesser's Musical ***The Most Happy Fella***, running for seven performances April 2 – 6, 2014. *The Most Happy Fella* will be directed and choreographed by **Casey Nicholaw**, with music direction by **Rob Berman**

***The Most Happy Fella***, Frank Loesser's most ambitious and romantic musical, tells the heart-stopping story of a love triangle between an aging Napa Valley farmer (Shuler Hensley), a young waitress (Laura Benanti) and a handsome, restless ranch hand (Cheyenne Jackson).

*The Most Happy Fella* is based on the play *They Knew What They Wanted* by Sidney Howard. It has a book, music and lyrics by **Frank Loesser**. Loesser's score displays an astonishing range – ardent operatic numbers stand side by side with Broadway show-stoppers – and includes "Somebody Somewhere," "My Heart Is So Full of You," "Big D" and "Standing on the Corner." It opened at the Imperial Theatre on May 3, 1956 and ran for 676 performances.

**(HISTORICAL NOTE:** *The Most Happy Fella* was revived by the New York City Center Light Opera at City Center for a limited run of 16 performances from February 10 – 22, 1959.)

**Laura Benanti** (Rosabella) won the Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards for her acclaimed performance as Gypsy Rose Lee in the Broadway revival of *Gypsy*, after playing the role in the *Encores! SummerStars* production. She garnered Tony nominations for her work in *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Awards), *Into the Woods*, and *Swing*, and also appeared on Broadway in *In The Next Room, or The Vibrator Play*; *The Wedding Singer*; *Nine*, and *The Sound Of Music*. She recently starred in NBC's comedy series *Go On* as well as *The Playboy Club*. She has also appeared on *The Big C* and continues to be seen on *Law and Order: SVU*. Her previous *Encores!* credits also include the role of Eileen in *Wonderful Town*.

**Shuler Hensley** (Tony) will be seen in the upcoming Broadway productions of *No Man's Land/Waiting For Godot* at the Cort Theater. His additional Broadway credits include *The Monster in Young Frankenstein*, *Jud in Oklahoma!* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics, Olivier Awards), *Inspector Javert in Les Misérables* and *Tarzan*. His Off-Broadway credits include in the title role in *The Whale* (Lortel, Obie Awards), and *Hannibal Lecter in Silence! The Musical* and *The Apple Plays* (Drama Desk Award). His opera and concert credits include *Carousel* (New York Philharmonic and PBS), *Wozzeck* (Curtis Institute of Music), *Regina* (Kennedy Center), and performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony and Detroit Symphony. His film credits include *Van Helsing* and *The Legend of Zorro*. Mr. Hensley starred as Ben Marino in the *Encores!* production of *Fiorello*.

**Cheyenne Jackson** (Joey) previously starred in the *Encores!* productions of *Finian's Rainbow* and *Damn Yankees*. His Broadway credits include *The Performers*, *Finian's Rainbow* (Drama Desk nomination), *Xanadu* (Drama Desk nomination), *All Shook Up* (Theatre World Award, Outer Critics Circle nomination), *Aida* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. Off-Broadway, he has been seen in *The Agony & The Agony*, *Altar Boyz*, *8*, *The 24 Hour Plays* and *On the Twentieth Century*. Mr. Jackson's notable television credits include "Onion News Empire," "30 Rock," "Mockingbird Lane," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Glee," and the upcoming "Full Circle." His film credits include *Behind the Candelabra*, *Lola Versus*, *Price Check*, *The Green*, *Hysteria*, *United 93*, and the upcoming *Love is Strange*, *Beautiful Now*, *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks*, *Opening Night*, *Lucky Stiff* and *Mutual Friends*. His solo album, *I'm Blue, Skies*, has just been released by SONY/ATV.

**Casey Nicholaw** (Director and Choreographer) won the 2011 Tony Award for his work as co-director of *The Book of Mormon*. He directed and choreographed the Broadway productions of *Elf: The Musical* and *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Tony nomination) and choreographed *Monty Python's Spamalot*, (Tony nominations). His *Encores!* credits include *Anyone Can Whistle*, *Follies* and *Bye Bye Birdie*.

Support for *The Most Happy Fella* is generously provided by Roz and Jerry Meyer.

The 2014 *Encores!* season is made possible, in part, by the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for *Encores!*, Stacey and Eric Mindich, Newman's Own Foundation, Nathalie and Pablo Salame and The Shubert Foundation.

**New York City Center** (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO), now in its 70<sup>th</sup> year, has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. It was Manhattan's first performing arts center, dedicated by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with a mission to make the best in music, theater and dance accessible to all audiences. Today, City Center is home to many distinguished companies, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, City Center's Principal Dance Company, as well as Manhattan Theatre Club and New York City Opera; a roster of renowned national and international visiting artists; and its own critically acclaimed and popular programs. The Tony-honored *Encores!* musical theater series has been hailed as "one of the very best reasons to be alive in New York." This summer City Center launched *Encores! Off-Center*, a new series featuring seminal Off-Broadway musicals filtered through the lens of today's most innovative artists. Dance has been integral to the theater's mission from the start, and dance programs, including the annual *Fall for Dance* Festival, remain central to City Center's identity. Vital partnerships with arts organizations including Jazz at Lincoln Center and London's Sadler's Wells Theatre enhance City Center's programmatic offerings. City Center is dedicated to providing educational opportunities to New York City students and teachers with programs such as *Encores! In Schools* and the Young People's Dance Series. Special workshops cater to families, seniors and other groups, while events such as the *Fall for Dance* DanceTalk series offer learning opportunities to the general public. In October 2011, City Center completed an extensive renovation project to revitalize and modernize its historic theater.

Tickets to *The Most Happy Fella* start at \$30 and will be on sale starting October 7. Tickets can be purchased online and at the New York City Center Box Office beginning September 3 (West 55th Street between 6th and 7th Avenues), through CityTix® at 212-581-1212, or online at [www.NYCityCenter.org](http://www.NYCityCenter.org).

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# NEW YORK CITY CENTER

## ***2014 ENCORES! SEASON***

### ***Little Me*** (February 5 – 9, 2014)

Based on the novel *Little Me: The Intimate Memoirs of that Great Star of Stage, Screen and Television/Belle Poitrine*, by Patrick Dennis

Music by Cy Coleman

Lyrics by Carolyn Leigh

Book by Neil Simon

Directed by John Rando

Starring Christian Borle

### ***The Most Happy Fella*** (April 2 – 6, 2014)

Based on the play *They Knew What They Wanted* by Sidney Howard

Music, Book and Lyrics by Frank Loesser

Directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw

Starring Laura Benanti, Shuler Hensley, Cheyenne Jackson

### ***Irma La Douce*** (May 7 – 11, 2014)

Music by Marguerite Monnot

Original Book and Lyrics by Alexandre Breffort

English Book and Lyrics by Julian More, David Heneker and Monty Norman

Directed by John Doyle