NEW YORK CITY CENTER
ANNUAL GALA PRESENTATION

Pal JOEY

MUSIC BY
RICHARD RODGERS

LYRICS BY
LORENZ HART

NEW BOOK BY
RICHARD LAGRAVENSE & DANIEL “KOA” BEATY

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL BOOK BY
JOHN O’HARA

BROOKS ASHMANSKAS  JEB BROWN  LORETTA DEVINE
AISHA JACKSON  KRISTINA MARIE BURTON  TAYLOR MARIE DANIEL
MARY ANTONINI  LEANDRA ELLIS-GASTON  MARY-MITCHELL CAMPBELL
MARSHALL L. DAVIS JR.  SAVION GLOVER  JARVIS B. MANNING JR.
DORMESHA  JODECI MILHOUSE  NATONIA MONÉT
LEIGH ANN RUDOLPH  BRITTANY NICOLE PARKS
RORY SHIRLEY  ALLYSA SHORTE  DARIUS WRIGHT

SCENIC & PROJECTION DESIGN
DEREK MCLANE

HAIR, WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER
J. JARED JANAS

MUSIC COORDINATOR
KIMBERLEE WERTZ

LIGHTING DESIGNER
JON GOLDMAN

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
BEVERLY JENKINS

CO-SOUND DESIGNERS
PETER FITZGERALD & ALEX NEUMANN

CASTING BY
TARA RUBIN CASTING
PETER VAN DAM, CSA

MUSIC DIRECTOR
ALVIN HOUGH JR.

MUSIC SUPERVISION, ARRANGEMENTS & ORCHESTRATIONS
DARYL WATERS

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
SAVION GLOVER

CO-DIRECTORS
TONY GOLDWYN & SAVION GLOVER

Produced by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals and The Estate of John O’Hara

Major Support for Pal Joey
Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust

We acknowledge that the land on which New York City Center and its theaters stand was forcefully taken from the Munsee Lenape tribe. We respectfully honor and acknowledge all Indigenous communities—past, present, and future—for their essential and ongoing connections to this land.
PAL JOEY

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Joey Evans...................................................................................................................... EPHRAIM SYKES
Lucille Wallace............................................................................................................. LORETTA DEVINE
Tony ......................................................................................................................................... JEB BROWN
Vera Simpson ........................................................................................................ ELIZABETH STANLEY
Linda English ......................................................................................................... AISHA JACKSON
Melvin Snyder ..................................................................................................... BROOKS ASHMANSKAS

Ensemble

KRYSTINA MARIE BURTON  TAYLOR MARIE DANIEL  MARSHALL L. DAVIS JR.
DORMESHA  LEANDRA ELLIS-GASTON  SAVION GLOVER
JARVIS B. MANNING JR.  JODECI MILHOUSE  NATONIA MONÉT
BRITTANY NICOLE PARKS  ALYSHA SHORTE

Covers

MARY ANTONINI (Swing), JARVIS B. MANNING JR. (for Joey Evans),
RORY SHIRLEY (Swing), DARIUS WRIGHT (for Joey Evans)

This production is being presented as a concert performance in which the actors may be performing with their scripts in hand.
PAL JOEY
MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act One

You Mustn’t Kick It Around ................................................................. Joey
That Terrific Rainbow........................................................................... The Ambrosials
Where or When ................................................................................. Linda
I Could Write a Book........................................................................... Joey, Linda
Sing for Your Supper........................................................................... Lucille, Ambrosials
This Can’t Be Love............................................................................. Joey, Linda
My Funny Valentine............................................................................ Linda
The Lady Is a Tramp........................................................................... Joey, Ambrosials
Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered................................................ Vera
Pal Joey (What Do I Care for A Dame?).......................................... Joey, Ensemble

Act Two

Do It the Hard Way............................................................................. Joey, Ensemble
Where’s That Rainbow? .................................................................... Linda
Do It the Hard Way (Reprise)............................................................. Joey, Ambrosials
I Didn’t Know What Time It Was....................................................... Vera
Falling In Love With Love................................................................. Linda
Ev’rything I’ve Got............................................................................ Tony, Lucille
Zip...................................................................................................... Melvin
I Wish I Were in Love Again/My Heart Stood Still............................... Lucille
Blue Moon......................................................................................... Joey
Lover................................................................................................. Joey, Linda
Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered (Reprise)................................... Vera
It Never Entered My Mind................................................................ Linda
This Funny World............................................................................. Full Company
THE ORCHESTRA

MUSIC SUPERVISION, ARRANGEMENTS & ORCHESTRATIONS
DARYL WATERS

ADDITIONAL ARRANGED ORCHESTROLOGY
SAVION GLOVER

MUSIC DIRECTOR
ALVIN HOUGH JR.

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC ADMINISTRATION & SCORE RESTORATION
JOSH CLAYTON

LUCILLE’S ARTISTHECATS
PIANO
LAFAYETTE HARRIS

BASS
CAYLEN BRYANT

DRUMS
ALVESTER GARNETT

TRUMPET
ALPHONSO HORNE

PIANO/CONDUCTOR
ALVIN HOUGH JR.

GUITARS
BRIAN KOOKIN

REEDS
TOM MURRAY
JAY BRANDFORD

CELLO
MELISSA WESTGATE

MUSIC COORDINATOR
KIMBERLEE WERTZ

MUSIC COPYING
EMILY GRISHMAN
MUSIC PREPARATION/
ADRIANA GRACE

SCORE COORDINATOR
JASON LIEBSON
NEW YORK CITY CENTER
80 YEARS AT THE CENTER OF THE ARTS

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#PalJoeyNYCC

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BROOKS ASHMANSKAS (Melvin Snyder). Encores!: Dear World, Sunday in the Park With George, On a Clear Day.... New York: The Prom; Sunday; Shuffle Along; Something Rotten!; Bullets Over Broadway; Promises, Promises; Present Laughter; The Ritz; Martin Short: Fame Becomes Me; The Producers; Gypsy; Little Me; Dream; How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying; Wise Guys; Joseph; Candide; London Suite; Labor Day; Clive; Songs for a New World; It Changes Every Year. Film: A Family Affair; Atrabilious; Better Nate Than Ever; Julie and Julia. TV: “UnCoupled,” “The Last Movie Stars,” “The Good Lord Bird,” “Tales of the City,” “I Love You More,” “The Good Wife,” “The Good Fight,” “All My Children.”

JEB BROWN (Tony). Broadway: Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark, High Fidelity, Ring of Fire, Time Stands Still, I’m Not Rappaport, Aida, Bring Back Birdie, Grease, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Off-Broadway: Becomes a Woman; Whisper House; Scotland, PA; The Undeniable Sound of Right Now; Romantic Poetry; Terms of Endearment. Lots of TV and film including the upcoming indie award-winning musical film Beau. Home is Brooklyn with Elyse, Eleanor and Nicky.

LORETTA DEVINE (Lucille Wallace) originated the role of Lorell in Dreamgirls, followed up by Bob Fosse’s Big Deal and George C. Wolfe’s The Colored Museum. Known in television for her Emmy-winning role in “Grey’s Anatomy,” as well as starring in series “Boston Public,” “Eli Stone,” “The Carmichael Show,” “Family Reunion” and recurring roles in “P-Valley” and “Kingdom Business.” In movies she is well-loved from Waiting to Exhale, The Preacher’s Wife, Urban Legend and Crash. She has won ten NAACP Image Awards for film and television.

AISHA JACKSON (Linda English). Broadway credits include Once Upon a One More Time, Paradise Square, Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, Waitress and Frozen, where she made history as the first Black woman to portray Anna on Broadway. She desires to continue creating roles for Black women to lead and shine bright on Broadway because representation matters! Voiceover: “Central Park” (Apple TV), “Melon’s House Party” (Wondery Kids). For Grandpa Johnny, Vaughn, and Amy. Luke 1:37

ELIZABETH STANLEY (Vera Simpson) was nominated for Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle awards and received a Grammy Award for her performance as Mary Jane Healy in the musical Jagged Little Pill, inspired by the music of Alanis Morissette, book by Diablo Cody and directed by Diane Paulus. Stanley has dazzled Broadway audiences as Claire De Loone in the revival of On the Town (Drama Desk nomination), Dyanne in Million Dollar Quartet, Allison in Cry-Baby and April in the Tony Award-winning revival of Company. She appeared as Gussie in James Lapine’s production of Merrily We Roll Along (City Center Encores!) and in Of Thee I Sing (MasterVoices, Carnegie Hall). She starred as Francesca in the first national tour of Jason Robert Brown’s The Bridges of Madison County and as Kira in the first national tour of Xanadu. She recently appeared opposite Vanessa Williams and Santino Fontana in Sondheim’s Anyone Can Whistle in Concert at Carnegie Hall with MasterVoices.

EPHRAIM SYKES (Joey Evans), from St. Petersburg, Florida, was last seen on Broadway starring as David Ruffin in Ain’t Too Proud: The Life and Times of The Temptations, for which he earned a Tony nomination. Additional Broadway credits: Hamilton (original Broadway cast), Memphis (OBC), Newsies (OBC), Motown (OBC) and The Little Mermaid. Off-Broadway: Black No More (AUDELCO Award). TV/film credits: “Russian Doll,” Seaweed J. Stubbs in NBC’s “Hairspray Live!,” “Vinyl,” “Luke Cage,” “30 Rock” and Detroit. Sykes graduated from the Alvin Ailey/Fordham University BFA program and toured with the Ailey II Company.

MARY ANTONINI (Swing) is thrilled to be making her New York City Center debut, especially with this incredible creative team! Broadway credits include Aladdin, Jesus Christ Superstar and The Prom. She’s performed all over North America including at Canada’s Stratford and Shaw festivals. Jeff
MEET THE ARTISTS

Award winner (Best Supporting Actor in a Musical). Special thanks to Buchwald, Tara Rubin Casting, Betty and Mum.

KRISTY MARIE BURTON (Griot, Ensemble). BFA jazz dance performance, The University of the Arts. International: Disney’s Aladdin (Germany), The WOW Show (Israel), Hairspray (Oasis of the Seas). Regional: West Side Story (Riverside Theatre), Disney’s The Little Mermaid (Alabama Shakespeare Festival). Film/television: The Lives of Hamilton Fish and “6 ABC Thanksgiving Day Parade” (Robbie Mackey). Many thanks to God, my family, friends, GTA and the entire Pal Joey team. All my love to Gabe. Muah!

TAYLOR MARIE DANIEL (Betty, Ensemble) is a graduate from the musical theatre program at The University of Michigan (Class of ’22). Her credits include Bulda in Frozen (national tour), Chiffon in Little Shop of Horrors, understudy Pilar in Legally Blonde and ensemble in Mary Poppins (The Muny) and Deena Jones in Dreamgirls (Paramount Theatre Chicago). Daniel wants to thank her friends and family for their constant support of her career. Exist Loudly @taylor.marie.daniel656

MARTY MARSHALL L. DAVIS JR. (Griot, Ensemble) is the protégé of the late great Steve Condos. His credits include Broadway: Shuffle Along (associate choreographer); Bring In ‘da Noise, Bring In ‘da Funk (The Kid, assistant dance captain). Film: Happy Feet Two. Original work: Revelations In Rhythm (choreographer, writer, executive producer). Tap choreography: Every Tub, Simply Sammy, Through Sound and Movement. Davis serves on the faculty at Queens College and Manhattan School of Music.

DORMESHIA (Griot, Ensemble) is an award-winning tap dancer and choreographer. Her first full-length choreographic work, And Still You Must Swing, was recognized by The New York Times as the “Best of Dance” in 2016 and again in 2019. Broadway credits include Black and Blue; Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk; and After Midnight (Astaire Award for best female performer).

LEANDRA ELLIS-GASTON (Gladys, Ensemble), who is thrilled to make her City Center debut, is currently captivating audiences as Anne Boleyn in the hit Broadway musical Six. However, her artistic endeavors go beyond the stage, as she is deeply dedicated to her personal mission of being a joy creator. Select credits: Tina—The Tina Turner Musical (Broadway), Beautiful: The Carole King Musical (national tour) and Hair (international tour). Thanks to my team, my little family & God for everything. @leandraellisgaston on all platforms.

JAVA B. MANNING JR. (Griot, Ensemble, Joey Evans Understudy) is a native of Houston, Texas. Graduate of HSPVA and AMDA. Manning is a co-founder of Staged Master-classes, an organization created to bridge the gap between underserved communities and quality lessons in the arts. This show is dedicated to 8227, Niece C, Journey Journ and his angels. Broadway: Motown, Ain’t Too Proud and Some Like It Hot. TV/film: “Law & Order” episode: “Wicked Game,” The Purgatory of Ghosts and Grief. Thank you God! @brainart

JODECI MILHOUSE (Pearl, Ensemble). New York: New York City Center: The Tap Dance Kid (Mona/Ensemble), Lincoln Center Clark Theater: Sole Defined’s Zaz: The Big Easy (Lynette). DC area: Baltimore Center Stage: ArtsCentric: Dreamgirls (Deena Jones). Regional: Signature Theatre: After Midnight (Dancing Doll). Television: “Saturday Night Live” (dancer in “Workout Class” with Megan Thee Stallion). Sending enormous love and gratitude to all my friends, family, CTG and the entire Pal Joey team for this incredible opportunity. @jodecimillhouse on all platforms

NATONIA MONET (Tilda, Ensemble) hails from Richmond, Virginia, and is a proud graduate of The Florida State University with her BFA in dance. She has toured internationally (West Side Story and Dreamgirls) and can be seen in TV/film as well. Favorite credits include Broadway’s Tina—The Tina Turner Musical, Sweet Charity and Dreamgirls. TV: “The Last O.G.” “The Other Two” and “Survival of The Thickest.” She is the 2021 Austin Comedy Film Festival winner. Thanks to family & creatives! IG: @NaToniaMonet
A Lonely Romeo. Their breakthrough came with the score for a 1925 charity show, *The Garrick Gaieties*, which introduced the classic valentine to their hometown, “Manhattan.” From 1920 to 1930, Rodgers and Hart wrote an astonishing array of musical comedies for Broadway and London’s West End. At their pinnacle the team was writing an average of four new shows a year. In 1930, the team relocated to Hollywood, where they contributed songs and wrote the scores for several movie musicals including the landmark *Love Me Tonight* starring Maurice Chevalier; *The Phantom President* starring George M. Cohan; *Hallelujah, I’m A Bum* starring Al Jolson; and *Mississippi* starring Bing Crosby and W.C. Fields. They were lured back to New York by legendary Broadway producer Billy Rose in 1935 to write the songs for his circus musical spectacular, *Jumbo*. Their score introduced “The Most Beautiful Girl in the World,” “My Romance” and “Little Girl Blue,” and Rodgers and Hart were back on Broadway. From 1936 to 1943 Rodgers and Hart wrote a series of Broadway musical comedies, each of which seemed to top the one before in terms of innovation and box office success: *On Your Toes* (1936), *Babes in Arms* (1937), *I’d Rather Be Right* (1937), *I Married an Angel* (1938), *The Boys From Syracuse* (1938), *Too Many Girls* (1939), *Higher and Higher* (1940), *Pal Joey* (1940) and *By Jupiter* (1942).

**JOHN O’HARA** 1905–1970 (*Original Book*) is an American novelist and short story writer who began to write fiction in 1927. His first novel, *Appointment in Samarra* (1934), won popular acclaim and established O’Hara as a craftsman of prose. Over the following years O’Hara explored his interest in the effects of money, class and social norms on individual freedom in many widely praised works including *Butterfield 8* (1935) and *From the Terrace* (1958). In 1956 he received the National Book Award for *Ten North Frederick* (1955). O’Hara’s works also include many short stories, most published by *The New Yorker*, including those that served as the basis for *Pal Joey*.

**DANIEL “KOÁ” BEATY** (*New Book*). An award-winning actor, singer and writer,
Daniel “Koa” Beaty’s critically acclaimed plays Through the Night, Emergency, Mr. Joy, Breath & Imagination and The Tallest Tree in the Forest—Paul Robeson, have been performed at venues ranging from the Public and Lincoln Center to the White House and maximum-security prisons. He has garnered numerous awards including an Obie Award for writing and performance and five NAACP Theater Awards. For television, Beaty has written for network and premium cable including “The Good Fight,” “Your Honor,” “Law & Order,” “Supergirl” and “Monarch.” A graduate of Yale University (BA) & American Conservatory Theater (MFA), Beaty has developed original scripted television shows with Imagine/Fox, Fox/Showtime, UCP/USA, CBS & WB Studios. @danielkoabeaty DanielKoaBeaty.com


TONY GOLDWYN (Co-Director). As an actor, Goldwyn has appeared on Broadway in The Inheritance; Network; Promises, Promises; and Holiday. Off-Broadway: The Water’s Edge, Spike Heels (Second Stage); The Dying Gaul (Vineyard); Lady in the Dark (Encores!); The Sum of Us (Cherry Lane; Obie); and Digby (MTC). His many film acting credits include Oppenheimer, Plane, King Richard, Divergent, The Last Samurai, Disney’s Tarzan, Kiss the Girls, Nixon, The Pelican Brief and Ghost. Television acting credits include “The Hot Zone,” “Lovecraft Country,” “Chambers,” “Scandal,” “Dexter,” “The L Word,” “Frazier,” “From Earth to the Moon,” “Murphy Brown” and “Designing Women.” Goldwyn has directed the feature films Ezra (2024), Conviction, The Last Kiss, Someone Like You and A Walk on the Moon. His numerous TV directing credits include “Chambers,” “Scandal,” “The Divide” (also executive producer), “Justified,” “Dexter,” “Damages,” “Law & Order,” “Grey’s Anatomy” and “The L Word.”

SAVION GLOVER (Co-Director, Choreographer, Griot, Ensemble). Tap dancer, choreographer and actor Savion Glover is the epitome of a living legend. Before he was a teenager, Glover made his mark starring in the Broadway musical The Tap Dance Kid. The Tony Award-winning dancer eventually worked with dancing greats Gregory Hines and Sammy Davis, Jr. Among his credits are a starring role in Jelly’s Last Jam, a role for which he made history as the youngest ever recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant. As a choreographer, Glover’s work has helped maintain tap dancing as an art form in the modern dance world. He starred in the musical Bring in ’da Noise, Bring in ’da Funk, which he also choreographed, debuted on Broadway in 1996. The musical chronicles events in African American history and brought him a Tony Award for Best Choreographer.

DARYL WATERS (Music Supervisor, Arrangements & Orchestrations). Broadway credits include music supervision/orchestrations/arrangements for The Cher Show (Drama Desk nomination for Best Orchestrations); Shuffle Along (Tony nomination for Best Orchestrations); Holler If Ya Hear Me; Bring in ’da Noise, Bring in ’da Funk; Street Corner Symphony; and orchestrations for New York, New York (Tony nomination). He was the music supervisor and conductor for After Midnight and dance music arranger for The Color Purple and Jelly’s Last Jam. He received the Tony and Drama Desk Orchestraination awards for Memphis. His composing credits include Bring in ’da Noise, Bring in ’da Funk (Tony nomination for Best Original Score) and Drowning Crow. Waters is a graduate of Livingstone College, a Historically Black College in Salisbury, NC, and a founding member of MUSE (Musicians United for Social Equity), an organization that
promotes diversity in the music departments of theatrical productions.

**ALVIN HOUGH JR.** (Music Director). New York City Center: Working (MD, Off-Center 2019), Big River (assistant MD, Encores! 2017), Cabin in the Sky (featured pianist, Encores! 2016). Broadway: New York, New York (MD); Merrily We Roll Along (associate music supervisor); Tina (MD); Once on This Island (MD); The Piano Lesson (original music and music direction); The Color Purple (associate MD); Motown (assistant MD). TV/film: “Annie Live!” (NBC); Spirited; Lyle, Lyle Crocodile; “South Park” 25th Anniversary commercial series; Dear Evan Hansen; “Schmigadoon” season 2; Vivo. Classically trained by a private teacher from the age of 5, Hough has had the privilege of performing at the Kennedy Center, Capitol and White House while growing up in Washington, DC. He also has two degrees in meteorology, from Harvard and Georgia Tech. He sends lots of love to his wife, Rebecca, and their two amazing children, Samuel (6) and Camille (4). alvinhoughjr.com

**KIMBERLEE WERTZ** (Music Coordinator). Delighted to work with Daryl Waters, Alvin Hough and our wonderful Pal Joey musicians, cast and creatives. TV: TheTony Awards, The Kennedy Center Honors, The Emmy Awards, A Capitol Fourth, “The Obama Inaugural,” “Mozart in the Jungle,” “Celebrating America: The Biden Inaugural” and five Democratic National Conventions. Broadway: A Year With Frog and Toad; Hello, Dolly!; Carousel; King Lear; West Side Story; The Lehman Trilogy; The Music Man; Funny Girl; Into the Woods; Almost Famous; KPOP; Parade; Bob Fosse’s Dancin’. This season: Here We Are, The Gardens of Anuncia and City Center Encores! Dedicated to the memory of beloved music coordinator and friend, Red Press, who is greatly missed.


**EMILIO SOSA** (Costume Designer). Chair, American Theatre Wing. Broadway credits include Purlie Victorious; Good Night, Oscar (Tony nomination); Sweeney Todd; A Beautiful Noise; 1776; Ain’t No Mo (Tony nomination); Trouble in Mind (Tony nomination); Skeleton Crew; On Your Feet!; Motown the Musical; Lady Day; Porgy and Bess (Tony nomination); and Topdog/Underdog. TV & film: “Annie Live!” (NBC); “Descendants: Rise of Red” (Disney*). Recipient of Drama Desk, NAACP Theatre and Lucille Lortel awards. @esosafashion

ALEX NEUMANN (Co-Sound Designer). Video systems for the entertainment industry. Fitzgerald is president of Sound Carousel and Lincoln Center productions of the acclaimed NY Philharmonic Live From Lincoln Center; Purlie Victorious; and The Great Gatsby Immersive, American Son and Great Murders; & Juliet; Kimberly Akimbo; Topdog/Underdog; How I Learned to Drive; American Buffalo; Jagged Little Pill; Frankie and Johnny in Claire de Lune; Gettin’ the Band Back Together; Bandstand; Indecent; Sunset Boulevard; The Visit; The Real Thing; Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar & Grill; Motown; Peter and the Starcatcher; The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess; All About Me. Recent Off-Broadway: I Can Get It for You Wholesale, Sabbath’s Theater, The Refuge Plays, My Broken Language, Between the Lines, Prayer for the French Republic, The Tap Dance Kid. Recent TV: “And Just Like That,” and “The Gilded Age.”


BEVERLY JENKINS (Production Stage Manager). 2020 recipient, Tony Honors for Excellence in the Theatre. NYCC debut! Broadway: the recent revivals of Bob Fosse’s Dancin’ and The Piano Lesson, Hadestown, A Bronx Tale, Fully Committed, Avenue Q, Aida and many more. Board member, BC/EFA; Beyond the Stage Door. Co-founder, Broadway & Beyond: Access for Stage Managers of Color. Mom to many. Wife to one. Howard University alumna and mom. Life is good. AVID!

MARK DOBROW (Stage Manager). Round-about Theatre Company; The Wanderers, Merrily We Roll Along, The Robber Bridegroom, Into the Woods, Fiddler on the Roof, The Firebird (Ratmansky). With gratitude to Natasha Katz for being a mentor, an inspiration and friend.
MEET THE ARTISTS


JOHNNY MILANI (Assistant Stage Manager). Broadway: New York, New York; POTUS; Harry Potter and the Cursed Child; Kinky Boots; Shuffle Along; Gigi; Holler If Ya Hear Me; Bring It On; Harvey; Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo; Hair. Off-Broadway: Atlantic, The Public, MTC, Second Stage. Regional: Williamstown, Bay Street, Jacob’s Pillow and the Kennedy Center. BFA from UNCSA. SM faculty at SUNY Purchase. Thanks to Beverly, Mark and Amanda. Love to Colyn.

JENNY GERSTEN (VP & Producer, Musical Theater) also serves as line producer for the Beetlejuice national tour and is the interim artistic director of the Williamstown Theatre Festival. She sometimes produces commercially, including Just for Us, the award-winning Off-Broadway “pie shop” production of Sweeney Todd and Gavin Creel’s upcoming Walk on Through. She works with Jessica Hecht on The Campfire Project, an arts program that serves Syrian and Ukrainian refugees overseas. Previously, she was executive director, Friends of the High Line and associate producer of The Public Theater. At sea, she is the creative producer of Virgin Voyages.

MICHAEL S. ROSENBERG (President & CEO) has had a long and distinguished career leading performing arts institutions to successfully expand audiences and engage communities by supporting artists to create their best work. He has spent his career championing artists, beginning with Drama Dept.—the Greenwich Village artists collective he co-founded with Douglas Carter Beane and Cynthia Nixon. As managing director of La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, Rosenberg worked with artistic director Christopher Ashley to oversee the development and production of the smash hit Come From Away along with a host of other acclaimed productions, many of which transferred to Broadway, Off-Broadway and the West End. During his tenure, the Playhouse was awarded multi-million-dollar grants to support the development of multiethnic projects, expand opportunities for family engagement and build community arts programs. More recently, as managing director of McCarter Theatre Center, Rosenberg was part of the evolution of the historic theatre—building diversity, equity and inclusion among artists, audiences and administrators alike. At each of the companies he has run, Rosenberg created unique business models, partnerships and funding initiatives to sustainably support the work that artists want to create.

NEW YORK CITY CENTER has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. The distinctive Neo-Moorish building was founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia as Manhattan’s first performing arts center with the mission of making the best in theatre, dance and music accessible to all audiences. This commitment continues today through celebrated dance and musical theatre series like the Fall for Dance Festival and the Tony-honored Encores! series; the annual season by Principal Dance Company Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; and new series Artists at the Center and the City Center Dance Festival. City Center welcomes audiences to experience internationally acclaimed artists including Kyle Abraham, Matthew Bourne, Ayodele Casel, Manhattan Theatre Club, Nederlands Dans Theater and Twyla Tharp, on the same stage where legends made their mark. Dedicated to a culture built on the values of curiosity, collaboration, accessibility and inclusivity, City Center’s dynamic programming, art exhibitions and studio events are complemented by education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to thousands of New York City students, teachers and families every year, in all five boroughs.

NEW YORK CITY CENTER
80 YEARS AT THE CENTER OF THE ARTS

PAL JOEY
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NEW YORK CITY CENTER
80 YEARS AT THE CENTER OF THE ARTS

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Encore! The Tap Dancer Kid; photo by Joan Marcus
TAKING A BEAT WITH TONY GOLDWYN AND SAVION GLOVER

by Brittani Samuel
Pal Joey literally has a storied past. The charming but morally questionable nightclub singer Joey Evans first appeared in American writer John O’Hara’s seminal short fiction entries for The New Yorker. By 1939, those stories evolved into a book and garnered enough acclaim that when O’Hara pitched his series to songwriting duo Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, their answer was a swift and resounding, “Yes.”

Building a show around Joey was a novel challenge for the pair. The character was a fast-talking cynic, lecherous with women, and perpetually down on his luck. When the show premiered on Broadway in 1940, it was a notable departure from the cheery musical comedies fronted by wide-smiled charmers audiences had grown accustomed to. Critical opinions fell on both sides of the aisle and the songs, while considered standards today, only blipped national airwaves. It begs the query: If Joey Evans was already difficult to root for in 1940, what hope is there for him in 2023? But it’s this very question that fuels the vision of co-directors Savion Glover and Tony Goldwyn.

Goldwyn, a celebrated actor and director, was one of the first to recognize the challenges presented by the character of Joey (played here by Ephraim Sykes). When he and long-time collaborator Richard LaGravenese (co-writer of this revival alongside Daniel “Koa” Beaty) embarked on this undertaking seven years ago, their initial step was to redefine Joey’s motivations.

“At first, we wanted to make it about a guy who was genuinely an artist and who was fighting to find his voice as a jazz singer. That was compelling to us, but it still didn’t feel like enough.”

In O’Hara’s original story, Joey’s ambition to own a nightclub drives his seduction and greed. Goldwyn and his collaborators thought it wise to keep this passion but re-architect the socio-political contexts surrounding it. The idea was proposed to make Joey a talented but overlooked Black jazz singer in 1940s Chicago, thereby casting a new perspective on the work.

“Daniel [“Koa”] Beaty is an incredible artist who helped Richard dig deeper, flesh
it out more from the original book, and focus on this idea,” says Goldwyn. “The notion of feeling invisible in the world when you have a gift and a voice and something to say is really powerful. It’s relevant for everyone regardless of the color of your skin, but particularly for a Black artist today—let alone 85 years ago. We have a lens into this story that is extremely alive.”

The concept stuck and, with approval from the Rodgers and Hart estate, the decision was made to expand this resurrection of *Pal Joey* beyond the original score. So while was able to find just that in Savion Glover. A Tony-winning doyen of tap and dance performance, Glover joined as co-director and choreographer, and he also joins the company of incredible dancers. Glover infuses this revival of *Pal Joey* with the signature syncopations of Chicago jazz that underscore the very themes in the show’s revival—expression, resilience, and the right to creative freedom. He is less concerned about perfecting shuffles, hops, and flaps, but instead wants the movement in this production—the dance, foot stomps, and shouts—to access a sound only the imagination can hear, and

“Creation is key. We were looking for people willing to try things they’d never done before.”

*Savion Glover*

original gems like “Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered” and “I Could Write a Book” remain in this iteration, prepare to be delighted by other selections from the duo’s esteemed songbook.

Even with a new voice, new songs, and a new vision, the project was still missing a crucial element: a new rhythm. Fortunately, the creative team tap into the cultural legacy of the music.

“Jazz came about because a bunch of cats playing music became interested in how the mistakes sounded,” Glover says. “And so, with Ephraim [Sykes], his imperfections are what make him perfect. He’s a cat! And he’s telling an honest story.”
For both directors, architecting *Pal Joey’s* cast was a labor of love and even rebellion. “We were interested in people who were willing to give their input,” Glover divulges about his and Goldwyn’s process. “Creation is key. We were looking for people willing to try things they’d never done before. Everyone here has skills that are outrageously divine, but it’s not about that. It’s about a willingness to disrupt what’s been done before and participate in this vision.”

“I want people to leave here with something that feels emotionally honest. So they see themselves in this man,” Goldwyn insists. “Joey is not a perfect individual; he hurts people, he hurts himself, choices blow up in his face, and yet his drive is always in service to something bigger. Ego and uncertainty lead him to some poor choices, but at his root, there is a transcendent force. This spirit in him, this movement in him, this song in him. It’s the artist in him.”

“That vision also presented the chance to advance the women of *Pal Joey*. Vera Simpson (Elizabeth Stanley), Linda English (Aisha Jackson), and the newly scripted Lucille Wallace (Loretta Divine) don’t just share a man in this story, they share a relentless ambition. Each one of these characters is given compelling, new motivations as they strive to succeed in a world that perpetuates inequality.

Brittani Samuel (she/her) is a Caribbean-American arts journalist, theater critic, and the co-editor of 3Views on Theater.
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NOV 29 – DEC 31, 2023

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