

# A CHORUS LINE

STUDY GUIDE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CONTEXT

Creating *A Chorus Line*, p. 4-5

Meet the Stars, p. 6-7

An Interview with Baayork Lee, p. 8-9

One Singular Piece of Theater History, p. 10-12

Glossary, p. 13

## RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

Before the Show, p. 15

Intermission Activity, p. 16-17

After the Show, p. 18

Sources p. 19

Up Next for City Center Education p. 20-21

**CONTEXT**

# CREATING A CHORUS LINE

By Morganne Evans

“I really want to talk about us. I think we’re all pretty interesting...and I think maybe there is a show in there somewhere, which would be called *A Chorus Line*.”

In January of 1974, Michael Bennett said these words to a group of Broadway chorus dancers gathered around a tape recorder at Nickolaus Exercise Center in Manhattan. The prompt was simple: Say your name, where you were born, and why you started dancing. One by one, the dancers began to share their accounts, the stories brimming with emotion. Many of the dancers knew each other, but by the end of the night they knew more about each other’s personal stories than they could have ever imagined. Little did they know, their stories would plant the seeds that would grow into one of the longest-running musicals on Broadway.

Like his interviewees, Michael Bennett was well versed in the lifestyle of a Broadway dancer. At sixteen years old, he dropped out of school to join an international touring company of *West Side Story*. Upon returning to New York, his resume grew longer with credits as a performer, choreographer, and director. He began forming connections with fellow dancers such as Baayork Lee, Donna McKechnie, and Bob Avian, all of whom would go on to work on *A Chorus Line*. Through his experience, Bennett became increasingly aware of the raw talent that existed within the chorus. He wanted to create a project that would break that barrier and allow chorus dancers a chance to find their light and to share their stories and talents with the world.

After compiling about twenty-four hours of taped interviews, Bennett was convinced that he could conceive a show out of the stories the dancers told. He took the tapes and met with Joe Papp, who had recently founded The Public Theater. After listening to the first 45 minutes of the tapes, Papp agreed to let Bennett workshop *A Chorus Line* at The Public Theater.

Bennett paid the dancers \$1 each in exchange for their interviews and promised to not use anyone’s real name in the production. The group of dancers whose lives were shaping the show were asked to come in to audition; with some of them reading for parts based on their own stories. Among those who were cast in roles based on their individual interviews were Priscilla Lopez as Diana Morales, Baayork Lee as Connie Wong, and Kelly Bishop as Sheila Bryant. The character Zach mirrored Michael Bennett, with his lines in the production often mimicking the same questions that Bennett originally posed to the dancers in January of 1974.



Michael Bennett and Joe Papp then got to work assembling the creative team. Bennett would direct and choreograph, with Bob Avian assisting him. Nicholas Dante, another attendee of the group interview sessions, was brought on to co-write the book with James Kirkwood, Jr. His experiences as a drag queen in his teen years inspired the emotionally captivating monologue that won Sammy Williams a Tony Award as the character Paul.

In the very first read-through, the show ran for almost four hours without any music. With Joe Papp on board as a producer, they were ready to translate the stories to music. Marvin Hamlisch had just won an Academy Award for his composition work in Hollywood when Papp reached out to him about working on a new musical. Against the advice of his Hollywood peers, he accepted the task of composing the music for *A Chorus Line*, with Edward Kleban penning the lyrics.

The show underwent quite a few structural changes during the collaborative workshop process. Bennett's original concept was to forgo a set, using a straight white line across a bare stage instead. Once the show transferred to Broadway, the set became mirrored walls that would be brought in every night via a fly system. He claimed that it was the simplest set he has ever worked with. In the beginning phase, Bennett wanted a new set of dancers selected at the end of each show to provoke genuine reactions from the cast, but it was too difficult to manage costume wise. The decision was made for the same eight characters to be cast in Zach's production every night. With constant improvements being made to the innovative material, the show quickly became the talk of the town.

*A Chorus Line* transferred from The Public Theater to The Shubert Theater in July of 1975. The unapologetic simplicity and honesty of the show resonated with audiences all over the world, sparking a variety of international tours and productions. *A Chorus Line* saved the Shubert Organization from going under, and proved to be an early success for The Public Theater, making Michael Bennett the highest-paid director in musical theatre history. It went on to run for 6,137 performances, making it the longest running Broadway musical in history until 1997.

# MEET THE CREATORS

**Marvin Hamlisch** (Music) started as a rehearsal pianist and grew up to be one of two people ever to receive the five highest awards for a dramatist. He won the 1976 Tony Award for Best Musical Score and the Pulitzer Prize for *A Chorus Line*. In 1973 and 1974, Mr. Hamlisch's work was honored with three Academy Awards and four Grammy Awards, most of which related to his work on the 1973 film *The Way We Were*, starring Barbra Streisand. For his work on television, Mr. Hamlisch also won four Emmy Awards.



**Edward Kleban** (Lyrics) shared the 1976 Tony Award for Best Original Score (as well as the Pulitzer Prize for Drama) with Mr. Hamlisch for *A Chorus Line*. After Mr. Kleban's early death from throat cancer, he left behind a legacy of supporting the arts through the Kleban Foundation, which has awarded millions of dollars to promising young librettists and lyricists in musical theater, including Jason Robert Brown (*Songs for a New World*, *Bridges of Madison County*) and Robert Lopez (*Frozen*, *Book of Mormon*).

Collaborators in theater frequently work together multiple times, but **James Kirkwood Jr. and Nicholas Dante** (Book) teamed up just for *A Chorus Line*. Mr. Kirkwood had been a novelist, actor, and screenwriter, while Mr. Dante had been a chorus line dancer himself. Mr. Dante's story is represented in the story of the Puerto Rican dancer Paul in *A Chorus Line*. The two won the 1976 Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical and the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Book of a Musical. They shared the Pulitzer Prize for Drama with Mr. Kleban and Mr. Hamlisch.



**Michael Bennett** (Original Concept, Direction, and Choreography) led a diverse career on Broadway that spanned over twenty-five years. He began to dance professionally at the age of 16, and went on to perform in productions such as *Subways are for Sleeping*, *Here's Love*, and *Bajour*. Mr. Bennett directed and choreographed numerous productions on Broadway including *Follies*, *Seesaw*, *A Chorus Line*, *Ballroom*, and *Dreamgirls*. He was honored with a total of seven Tony Awards for his work on those productions.

# MEET THE ARTISTS

**Bob Avian** (Director), a choreographer, director, and producer, who met Michael Bennett in 1962, and went on to collaborate with him for twenty years. He co-choreographed the original Broadway production of *A Chorus Line* in 1975, and directed the 2006 revival. He has worked extensively on Broadway and London's West End on such well known titles as *Company*, *Follies*, *Promises, Promises*, *Dreamgirls*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Sunset Boulevard*.



**Baayork Lee** (Choreographer) has led a long career as a dancer, choreographer, and director. She made her Broadway debut in the original 1951 production of *The King and I*. She was only five years old at the time. She met Michael Bennett in high school and participated in the original workshops to develop *A Chorus Line*. Her story has been immortalized in the character of Connie Wong in the show. She founded the National Asian Artists Project in 2004, and has since received numerous Lifetime Achievement awards for her support of Asian American artistry. In 2017, she won the Isabelle Stevenson Tony Award for her charitable work.

**Tony Yazbeck** (Zach) is a Broadway and Encores! veteran. Most recently seen in Manhattan Theatre Club's *Prince of Broadway*, Mr. Yazbeck was seen on the City Center stage in the 2007 Encores! production of *On The Town*. Playing Gabey, Mr. Yazbeck would reprise the role in 2014 when the revival of *On The Town* came to Broadway. For his performance, he won the Astaire Award for Best Male Dancer and was nominated for a Tony Award. He has also performed as Al in the 2006 production of *A Chorus Line* and as Tulsa in the 2008 Broadway transfer of *Gypsy*, which originated as part of the Encores! series at City Center.



**Robyn Hurder** (Cassie) returns to the City Center stage. Previously, she was seen in the Encores! productions of *Paint Your Wagon* and *The New Yorkers*. Ms. Hurder has appeared in a multitude of Broadway productions including, *Chicago*, *The Wedding Singer*, *Grease*, and *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. She starred as Cassie in the National Tour of *A Chorus Line* following its Broadway revival. Most recently, Ms. Hurder originated the role of Nini in the World Premiere of *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* in Boston. In 2016, she received the Helen Hayes Award for Best Supporting Actress for her work as Lois Lane/ Bianca in The Shakespeare Theatre Company's production of *Kiss Me, Kate*.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH BAAYORK LEE

**Baayork Lee**, the actress who originated the role of Connie Wong in *A Chorus Line*, returns to City Center as a part of the creative team for City Center’s 75th Anniversary Gala production. Sharon Counts, City Center’s Director of Education and Community Engagement, spoke with Ms. Lee about her history with the production and how she continues to introduce it to new audiences.

**Sharon Counts: Where did you grow up? When did you first start performing?**

**Baayork Lee:** I grew up in Chinatown in New York City. I had my first performing experience in *The King and I* at the age of 5 on Broadway.

**SC: How did you get involved with the devising process for *A Chorus Line*?**

**BL:** I had been Michael Bennett’s assistant and dance captain in previous shows, so I was invited to be a part of the first and second workshop down at The Public Theater. Also, Michael thought my life story would be interesting for the show.

**SC: You’ve continued to work on *A Chorus Line* throughout your career, how do you approach each production? How many productions have you worked on?**

**BL:** I have directed and choreographed more than 40 productions. I approach each production as if it were a new piece of work. That is because with each show, whether it is in English or a foreign language, the actors are experiencing something they have never gone through before. In 1975, we first had the term “triple threat” to describe someone who could sing, dance and act. 19 actors are responsible for the success of each performance, bringing their own personal stamp to the parts. They must give 200% at all times in order to compete for the job. The audition process for the show is very intense as we want each actor to bring something of himself into the role.

**SC: Shortly after the Broadway opening, several companies of *A Chorus Line* rehearsed here at City Center. How does it feel to be back at City Center with the show?**

**BL:** I am very excited to come back to City Center. Back then, we rehearsed in the basement. We had 3 companies rehearsing at the same time. It was wild and crazy. Only Michael Bennett could get it done. You had 3 companies of *A Chorus Line* and all their covers. As a kid, I rehearsed New York City Ballet’s *Nutcracker* at City Center. I was also a member of the *Milliken Breakfast Show*, which always rehearsed at City Center. So I am very happy to be back.



**Baayork Lee and Executive Producer John Breglio at the meet and greet for City Center’s Gala production of *A Chorus Line*.**



# AN INTERVIEW WITH BAAYORK LEE

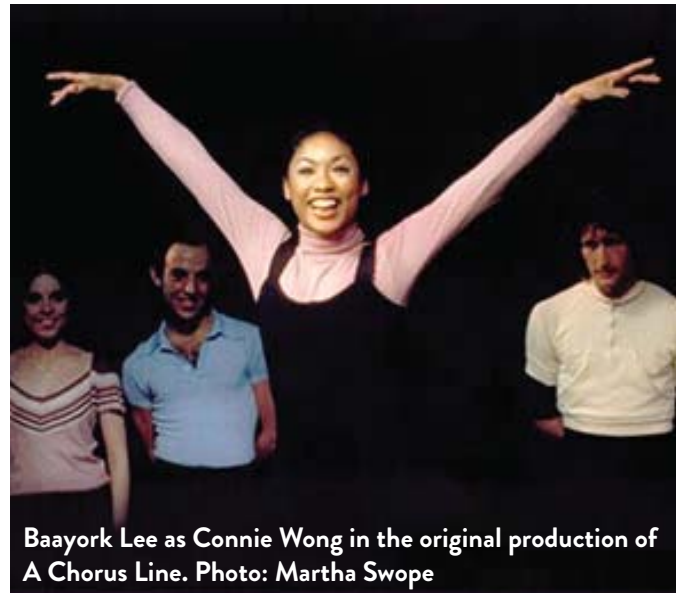
**SC:** Last year you received the Isabelle Stevenson Tony Award to honor your work in theater education. Can you tell us about your commitment to arts education and the National Asian Artists Project?

**BL:** It was quite a humbling experience to receive the award. I went back to my hometown of Chinatown, New York, and started a program called Theater Club at PS 124, Yung Wing Elementary School. I have taken them to the Junior Theater Festival in Atlanta, where they have performed excerpts from *Guys and Dolls*, *Beauty and The Beast*, *Little Mermaid*, *Mulan*, *The Music Man*, *Annie*, *Madagascar* and *Aladdin* in front of 5,000 students from all over the United States. For 9 years, the Club has been an award-winning group, receiving awards in Acting, Dance and Ensemble. Taking these kids, ages 9 to 11, out of the neighborhood and introducing them to Musical Theater is most rewarding. When I hear them discussing *Phantom of the Opera*'s sets and costumes, or when they graduate and return to tell me they just appeared in an Off-Off Broadway musical, or that they just got into LaGuardia High School, I am truly a proud parent. But I am most proud when a first year Theater Club student shows me, with pride, the tote bag she got seeing *The Lion King* on Broadway.

My company, the National Asian Artists Project (NAAP), produces musicals for professional Asian artists. This October we are doing *Into The Woods*. With every production, whether it be *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, *Hello, Dolly!* or *Oliver!*, we use our PS 124 kids and alumni, as well as our NAAP Broadway Community Chorus. For me, it is more than a commitment to arts education. It is a commitment to educating an underserved community, where theater is not part of its culture. But I know, little by little, my students will make arts education a permanent part of Chinatown's Education System, as they will become parents who know how much they have benefited from their experience.

**SC:** Our audience ranges from life-long fans of the production to first-time theatergoers. What do you hope audience members will take away from this revival?

**BL:** Hopefully audiences will have a sneak peek into a Broadway audition and see how hard the actor/singer/dancer must work, competing with every ounce of sweat. Marvin Hamlisch's music and Michael Bennett's direction and choreography are iconic, they will enjoy it. They will hopefully start to identify and recognize the characters in themselves or someone they know and get wrapped up in the stories we tell.



Baayork Lee as Connie Wong in the original production of *A Chorus Line*. Photo: Martha Swope

**SC:** Why does *A Chorus Line* continue to resonate with audiences today?

**BL:** It has been 44 years and the show still continues to resonate with audiences, here and around the world. We have just returned from Tokyo, Japan, where all the laughs and tears were in the same places that they are in New York. The storytelling, truth and honesty speaks to everyone. I believe the message that *A Chorus Line* leaves us with is love.

# ONE SINGULAR PIECE OF THEATER HISTORY

By Robert Viagas



NYSF/Photofest

New York City Center is unveiling a new staging of *A Chorus Line* as part of the celebration of its 75th Anniversary Season. A home for artists from the worlds of dance, theater, music, and opera since 1943, the institution has a special connection to the musical: Michael Bennett rehearsed three early companies – a national tour, an international tour, and the first replacement Broadway cast – in its studios in spring 1976.

The production is also being mounted in the midst of one of the great boom periods in Broadway history. The Great White Way recently concluded another successful season, accompanied by record attendance

and over a billion in sales, with nearly all houses booked and a parade of new productions grabbing theaters within days of their becoming vacant.

It's easy to forget that in 1975, when this musical story of artists fighting for “the chance to dance for you” premiered, Broadway wasn't just sick—the Fabulous Invalid was in serious trouble. Attendance was down, receipts were down, and more and more theater marquees were sporting the sign “See a Broadway Show for the Fun of It!” which some owners used to keep their dark houses from looking empty.

#ChorusLineNYCC @NYCityCenter



Director/choreographer Michael Bennett in rehearsal.  
Photo courtesy of Photofest

“Broadway was in a very bad place,” said Bob Avian, original co-choreographer of *A Chorus Line* with Michael Bennett. Avian is directing the City Center revival with original cast member Baayork Lee, winner of the 2017 Isabelle Stevenson Award, recreating the original choreography. They both remember what it was like when the neighborhood was a real-life version of the HBO series *The Deuce*, overrun with porn, drugs, and other crime.

The ethos of that era pervades the script of *A Chorus Line*; “I don’t want to hear Broadway is dying because I just got here.” That line of dialogue may confuse today’s theatergoers who see shows that run not just for years, but for decades (*The Phantom of the Opera*, *Chicago*), and who see the West 40s thronged with theater fans of all ages waiting to get into *Hamilton*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and other hits.

So, what happened in between? What brought Broadway back to life?

*A Chorus Line* was born in the darkest days of that period and proved instrumental in waking up Times Square. A group of dancers led by Tony Stevens and Michon Peacock, later joined by Bennett, had gotten sick of watching the employment pool dry up. They got together in January 1974 with a group of their friends and colleagues – professional dancers like themselves – to try to initiate their own project and get work for themselves. That urge – “Oh God, I need this job” – became the engine of the dancer project that became *A Chorus Line*.

The details of what came next are now Broadway legend. *A Chorus Line* opened at the Public Theater in April 1975 and transferred to Broadway’s Shubert Theatre in July 1975, won the following year’s Best Musical Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize and ran 16 years, becoming, for a time, Broadway’s longest running show. In addition to being a white-hot ticket, the show became a cultural phenomenon of a kind not seen again until the age of *Hamilton*. Images of the show penetrated mass culture via magazine covers, TV appearances, and newspaper stories.

It would certainly be an exaggeration to say that *A Chorus Line* single-handedly kicked the hookers and pushers off Eighth Avenue. But its success did start people in power thinking that maybe it was *worthwhile* to chase the hookers and pushers off Eighth Avenue and create conditions for a Times Square renaissance. That there was something on Broadway with a spirit, with a life, that was going to survive and prevail and possibly even at some point prosper.

“*A Chorus Line* at that time was so groundbreaking,” Avian said. “Nobody had seen anything like it. It hit people in their heart and their brain like no other show had done.”

#ChorusLineNYCC @NYCityCenter

Avian said the positive effect of the show extended far beyond Shubert Theatre box office. “People who couldn’t get tickets would try going to the theater down the block. ‘Oh, let’s go see another show, and hope it’s as good.’ That kind of energy propels other shows to do better. It brought people back into the whole theater district. And when they finally did see our show they were so turned on by the energy and the emotion.”

Lee said, “With the success of the show we knew that there was hope and Broadway was on its way up again. We changed the tide and everyone in the industry was going to work hard to bring back Broadway.”

There were a lot of reasons why *A Chorus Line* had this effect. First of all, it was a really good show, with compelling dramatic engine, attention-grabbing characters, a completely original story, and a grand sense of size. While the characters are not kids, they projected a youthful energy that especially appealed to Baby Boomers, most of whom were in their twenties at that point. Here was a show that was sexy, dramatic, diverse, and plainspoken to the point of being R-rated.

These were also contemporary American characters, and their story was not set in Edwardian London or Bangkok or Anatevka. As the original Playbill said: “Time: Now. Place: Here.” The subliminal message: Broadway was still alive, it was still about youth, and it could still make magic.

In addition to supplying thrills for the audience, and making megabucks for producers, *A Chorus Line* fulfilled its original impetus, to provide work for dancers. It has continued to do so, not just for the original cast, but for thousands of dancers over the years in its many productions—dancers who have gone on to make their energy and talent available to countless other shows.

Above all, the show captures the essence of what is thrilling about its own art form. “The show itself, in many respects, is such a valentine to the existence of the Broadway musical,” said Encores! Artistic Director Jack Viertel. “It’s about how we make *that thing* that makes audiences go crazy. City Center’s Encores! series itself was conceived out of the same impulse that Michael felt. Even cruel and unusual people like David Merrick felt it. We love that thing that makes us feel the way *A Chorus Line* make us feel – that love sustains us all. It’s ‘What I Did for Love.’ That’s the key song.”

*Robert Viagas is the founding editor of Playbill.com and author of 19 books on theater including On the Line: The Creation of “A Chorus Line” with Baayork Lee and Thommie Walsh.*



Photo courtesy of Photofest

#ChorusLineNYCC @NYCityCenter



# GLOSSARY

**Count of Eight:** A rhythmic grouping of 8 beats used to teach and learn dance.

*Zach counts the dancers in each time they begin the combination.*

**Pivot:** When a dancer's body turns in place vertically without traveling.

*The dancers pivot in the choreography given to them by Zach.*

**Upstage:** The area on stage farthest from the audience, toward the backstage wall.

*Zach asks Sheila to move upstage in the opening number.*

**Downstage:** The area of the stage closest to the audience.

*Zach asks Val to move downstage in the opening number.*

**Touring Company:** A group of performers that provide entertainment in various venues other than where the company is originally based.

*Tricia mentions that she has performed in a Touring company when Zach asks if she has been in any Broadway shows.*

**The Red Shoes:** A 1948 British film about a ballerina who joins an established ballet company and becomes the lead dancer in a new ballet called *The Red Shoes*, itself based on the fairy tale "The Red Shoes" by Hans Christian Andersen.

*Sheila references The Red Shoes when describing how she her initial interest in ballet.*

**Extension:** A dancer's ability to raise and hold a leg extended in the air.

*Paul talks about his "fabulous extension" which he developed while pretending to be Cyd Charisse, a famous actress and dancer.*

**Ball Change:** A quick transfer of weight from one foot to another.

*Zach instructs the dancers to do a ball change in the choreography he teaches them.*

**Grapevine:** A weaving movement; a dancer steps out to the side, crosses the other foot in front, steps out to side again, and crosses the other foot behind.

*Mark asks Zach a question regarding the grapevine step in the combination.*

**Plié:** A bending of the knees with hips, legs, and feet turned outward.

*Zach instructs the dancers to plié in the choreography he teaches them.*

# RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES



# BEFORE THE SHOW

*A Chorus Line* was devised from the personal accounts of Broadway dancers. In this activity, students will experiment with creating original work from personal stories and developing fictional characters.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will gain an understanding of how *A Chorus Line* was created.
- Students will collaborate with their peers to develop an original character based on personal stories.

## BLUEPRINT BENCHMARKS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THEATER, GRADES PREK-12

- Students will be able to create/write original work in a variety of theatrical styles and forms through a process of inventing, analyzing, and revising.

**GET FAMILIAR** Introduce *A Chorus Line* to students. It may be helpful for them to know:

- Music by Marvin Hamlisch, Lyrics by Edward Kleban, Book by James Kirkwood Jr. & Nicholas Dante.
- Premiered Off-Broadway in 1975 at The Public Theater. It moved to Broadway that same year.
- Had 6,137 performances. It continues to be the 7th longest running show in history.
- Won Tonys for Best Musical, Best Book, Best Score, Best Direction.
- Conceived and directed by Michael Bennett, and devised from interviews with real life dancers.

**WRITE** Seated in a circle, students should write their answers to the following prompts:

**My first name is:**

**I was born in:**

**My favorite thing to do in the world is:**

**I'm scared of:**

Once finished, students should pass their paper to the person on their right. Go around the circle and have each student read their new text aloud.

**COLLABORATE** Mention that even though *A Chorus Line* is based on true stories, it is a work of fiction and many of the characters featured in the show are a combination of many people's stories. Ask students to find a partner. With their partner, students should create a new character by blending their two sets of answers, alternating one from each page. Together, the pairs should come up with an answer to the following questions:

**If I couldn't do what I love most anymore I would:**

Challenge students to come up with a creative answer based on what they already know from their character's previous answers. Ask pairs to reflect on what kind of traits their character possesses. What do they sound like? How do they stand?

**SHARE** Go around the circle and invite one student from each pair to share their story. Encourage students to incorporate some of the vocal and physical traits they discussed with their partner.

**REFLECT** As a class, reflect on the following questions:

- What was it like for you to take real stories from your classmates and turn them into fictional characters?
- What kind of play or musical do you imagine your character being a part of?

# THEATER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

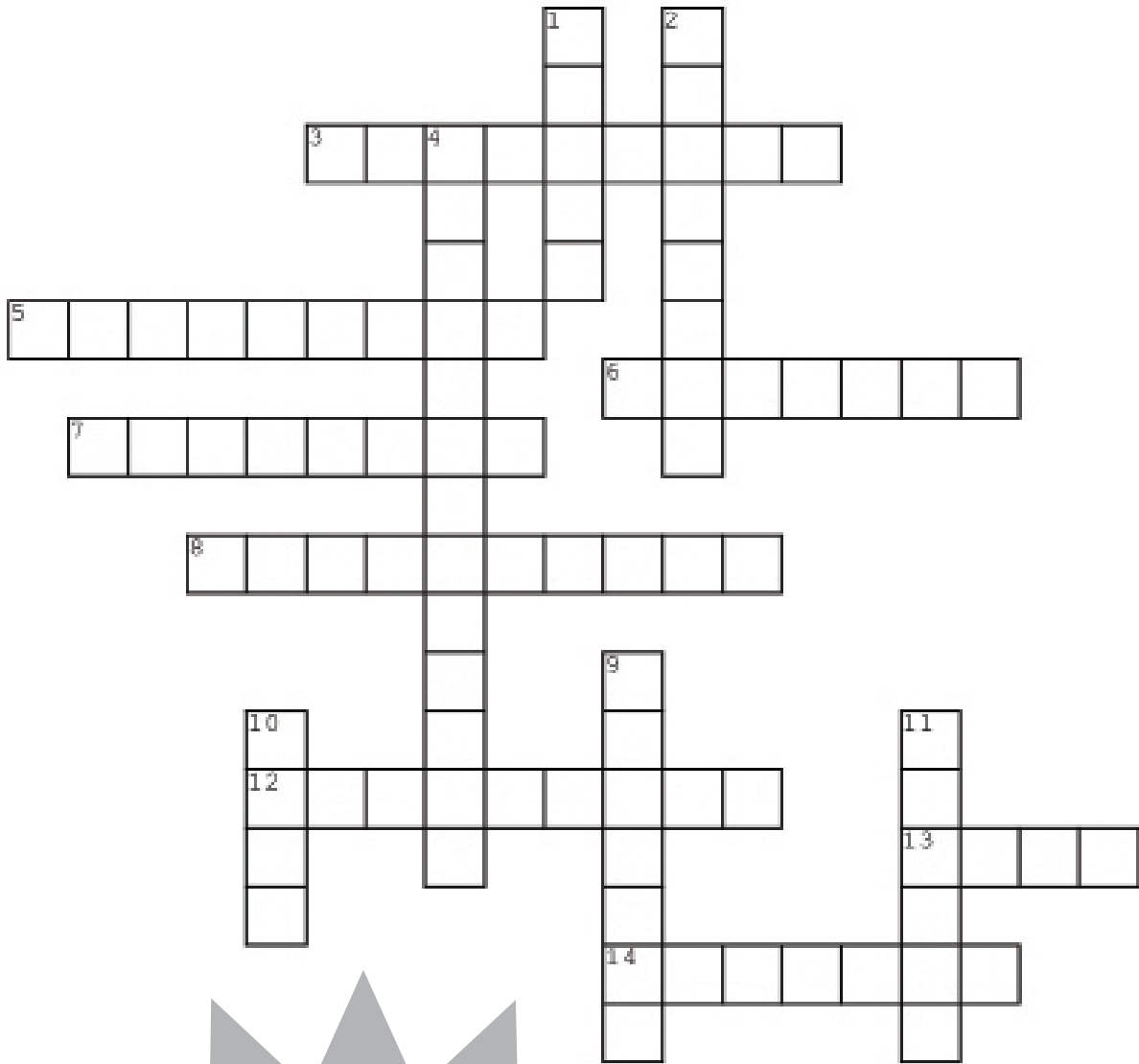
## ACROSS

3. A part of the theater that is not seen by the audience, including the dressing rooms, wings, and green room
5. A group of musicians who play the music during a performance
6. Large piece of material suspended above the stage that can rise and fall
7. An individual who oversees the mounting of a theatrical production
8. An individual who has learned another role in the show in order to take over for him/her in the event of illness
12. A period of time before performances begin where the actors and directors work on the development of the show
13. The people who perform in a show
14. An afternoon performance of a show

## DOWN

1. A passage that separates two areas of seating
2. The words that are spoken during a play
4. Individual who devises and rehearses the dance routines
9. Clothing worn by a performer to portray a specific character in a show
10. All the people who work on a show, excluding the cast
11. Piece of paper that grants an individual admission to a show

ANSWER KEY  
ACROSS: 3. BACKSTAGE 5. ORCHESTRA 6. CURTAIN 7. DIRECTOR 8. UNDERSTUDY 12. REHEARSAL 13. CAST 14. MATINEE  
DOWN: 1. AISLE 2. DIALOGUE 4. CHOREOGRAPHER 9. COSTUME 10. CREW 11. TICKET



Celebrated artists that have performed at City Center:  
Sara Bareilles, Lin-Manuel Miranda,  
Kristin Chenoweth, Jonathan Groff,  
Jake Gyllenhaal, Anne Hathaway,  
Patti LuPone, Randy Newman,  
Bernadette Peters, Diana Ross,  
Vanessa Williams, and more.

# AFTER THE SHOW

The dancers of *A Chorus Line* all hope that their individual talents will earn them a coveted spot in the upcoming show's ensemble. In this activity, students will discuss the importance of an individual's contribution to the ensemble and experiment with moving as one.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand the importance of being an ensemble member.
- Students will get a better understanding of counts in dance.

## BLUEPRINT BENCHMARKS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THEATER, GRADES PREK-12

- Students will be able to contribute positively and responsibly to ensemble efforts and demonstrate an emergent ability to collaborate with others.

**WARM UP** Lead students in a brief physical warm up. Afterwards, ask students to stand in a circle for the number game. Without communicating an order, students must count to 15 as a group, starting over every time multiple students say a number at the same time. As an added element, ask students to close their eyes or look down at the floor.

**BRAINSTORM** Explain to students that much like the dancers in *A Chorus Line*, their class is also an ensemble. Together brainstorm some qualities of good ensemble members. Building an ensemble takes a lot of hard work, especially when they are expected to move as one, like the dancers do in the production.

**MOVE** Ask students to form a circle and take a few breaths as a group. On an exhale, instruct students to move to the center of the space and form a tight clump, with everyone standing shoulder to shoulder. Encourage students to pay attention to when other ensemble members move and try to move as a group. Repeat exercise a few times with students being instructed when to move into the center of the space. Now invite students to initiate the movement into the center of the space themselves when they have the impulse. Once a student initiates movement, all other ensemble members must agree and move into the center of the space. Repeat exercise a few times.

**BUILD** Introduce the concept of flocking, a type of group movement improvisation where participants mirror each other's movements. Encourage students to experiment with flocking, moving as one without specifying a leader. After a few minutes of flocking, begin calling out counts of eight as the student continue moving. Then count together as a group. As students continue counting, call out actions for them to do together on a specific count. For example, call out, "Jump on 5, clap on 3, get on one knee on 8" and other variations. Continue for several counts.

**REFLECT** As a class, reflect on the following questions:

- What were the challenges of moving as one? What made it easier?
- How did you know when it was successful? What did it feel like?
- After this exercise, are there any other qualities of a good ensemble member that you would add to the list we created earlier?

# SOURCES

Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Choreographer Michael Bennett directs Donna McKechnie and others in rehearsal for the gala performance number 3,389 of the stage production A Chorus Line" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1983. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9ee73d60-58e9-0134-32b4-00505686a51c>

"Dance and Movement Vocabulary". American Dance/Drill Team. <http://www.danceadts.com/edsupport/fallseason/vocabulary.htm>

"Edward Kleban." The Official Masterworks Broadway Site, Sony Music Entertainment, [masterworksbroadway.com/artist/edward-kleban/](http://masterworksbroadway.com/artist/edward-kleban/).

Dowd, Vincent. "How A Chorus Line creator Michael Bennett breathed life back into Broadway". BBC News, BBC, 28 March 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-39405660>.

Gelb, Barbara. "Producing- and re-producing- A Chorus Line". The New York Times, The New York Times, 2 May 1976, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/05/02/archives/producing-and-reproducing-a-chorus-line.html>.

Gussow, Mel. "Director Who Listened to Chorus Line". The New York Times, The New York Times, 23 May, 1975. <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/05/23/archives/director-who-listened-to-chorus-line.html>.

Reidel, Michael. "Why the Dancers Who Inspired A Chorus Line Sold their Stories for \$1". New York Post, New York Post, 3 October 2015, <https://nypost.com/2015/10/03/why-the-dancers-who-inspired-a-chorus-line-sold-their-stories-for-1/>.

"Robyn Hurder Theatre Profile." Theatre Credits and Profile, [www.abouttheartists.com/artists/294307-robyn-hurder](http://www.abouttheartists.com/artists/294307-robyn-hurder).

# UP NEXT FOR CITY CENTER EDUCATION

## ENCORES! MUSICAL THEATER

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP, *A CHORUS LINE*

Tuesday, November 13th, 2018

The day includes a master class with Allison Weller and the renowned investigative theater troupe, The Civilians, and a musical theater workshop led by City Center teaching artists. Educators will contextualize themes from *A Chorus Line* and gain a few tools to begin introducing the material to their students.



## FRONT & CENTER WITH STEPHANIE J. BLOCK

Monday, February 4th, 2019 6:30pm

Stephanie J. Block's (*Brigadoon*, *Falsettos*) master class, *Be True to What you Do*, illuminates the techniques of a Broadway performer and offers the audience the opportunity to hear reflections and stories from her personal experience. Block encourages participants to find the right song for them and to let their performance reveal their true selves.



## FLAMENCO FESTIVAL

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Friday, February 8th, 2018

This workshop is intended to provide educators an opportunity to gain an understanding of the show, with a chance to learn from master flamenco teaching artists. Participants will be able to develop an understanding of the historical context of flamenco dance and gain a few tools to begin introducing the material to their students. The workshop is engaging and energizing as you begin to explore new material with your students! This experience is highly recommended for all teachers participating in City Center Education's workshops and performance for this event.



## FRONT & CENTER WITH LEA SALONGA

Monday, May 6th, 2019 6:30pm

Lea Salonga's (*Miss Saigon*, *Once on this Island*) master class, *Finding a Way In*, helps students get to the heart of their performance. Focusing on song interpretation, Ms. Salonga's approach zeros in on the acting behind the singing and the story behind the lyric.





# CITY CENTER ON THE MOVE

Expanding on our mission to make the best in the performing arts accessible to all, we're launching a new program designed to bring the extraordinary artists from our stages directly to New Yorkers in their neighborhoods. The inaugural tour of City Center On The Move will immerse communities in world-class dance through a series of free performances and interactive classes featuring Bronx-born choreographer, teacher, and tap dance artist Ayodele Casel. A frequent City Center collaborator, (Adelante Cuba! Festival, *Really Rosie*, Fall for Dance Festival) and a 2017 recipient of the "Hooper Award," Casel will be joined by two dancers and two musicians for an exciting presentation.

In order to share Casel's singular style with the broadest possible cross-section of New Yorkers, City Center has partnered with NYC Parks to select five tour stops (one in each borough) from among their 36 recreation centers. Join us for one or all five!

## **BROOKLYN**

Wed Apr 3, 2019 11:30am  
Brownsville Recreation Center

## **QUEENS**

Fri Apr 5, 2019 11am  
Lost Battalion Hall Recreation Center

## **MANHATTAN**

Fri Apr 12, 2019 6:30pm  
Pelham Fritz Recreation Center

## **STATEN ISLAND**

Sat Apr 13, 2019 1pm  
Faber Park Recreation Center

## **BRONX**

Thu Apr 4, 2019 6:30pm  
St. Mary's Recreation Center



For more information on any of these programs, please go to [www.nycitycenter.org/education/](http://www.nycitycenter.org/education/).

# NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION VISION STATEMENT

The mission of New York City Center Education is to ignite an appreciation of the performing arts, cultivate the creative mind and create a culture of inquiry and exploration. Committed to drawing inspiration from works on the mainstage, New York City Center Education strives to provide innovative, accessible arts education to schools and communities across New York City.

## ABOUT NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION

Each year City Center reaches over 9,000 students from NYC public and private schools, kindergarten to grade 12, through dance and musical theater performances and in-school workshops. In-depth residencies engage young people in building technical and expressive skills, personal voice, and collaborative spirit. Innovative workshops are crafted for families, seniors, and other special groups that express an interest in collaborating with City Center.

Through the Introduction to Performing Arts program, students have the opportunity to view live performing arts at City Center. At the Workshop level, students receive two in-school workshops in addition to attending a live performance. Residencies provide in-depth multi-week study around one of the productions presented during the season. During the 2018-2019 Season, City Center Education offers students the opportunity to study dance and musical theater productions from City Center's mainstage.

