

Fort Wayne Civic Theatre  
IN THE WINGS Arts-In-Education Program

Presents  
A study guide of

**CHICAGO**  
**THE MUSICAL**

Book by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse  
Music by John Kander  
Lyrics by Fred Ebb

*Based on the play "Chicago"  
by Maurine Dallas Watkins*

IN THE WINGS Performance  
Saturday, November 5, 2011 @ 2:00 p.m.

Written by Linda Freeman Doerr  
Additional Material & Editing by Eunice Wadewitz

FORT WAYNE CIVIC THEATRE

CAST OF CHICAGO  
OCTOBER 29 – NOVEMBER 13, 2011



JESSICA BUTLER  
AS ROXIE HART



KELSEY RODRIQUEZ  
AS VELMA KELLY



TODD FRYMIER  
AS BILLY FLYNN



JUSTIN HERBER  
AS AMOS HART



AIMEE LACKEY  
AS MATRON  
"MAMA" MORTON



ANNIE ROBINSON  
AS MARY SUNSHINE



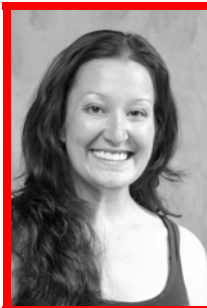
ALEXANDRA  
MAXWELL



KELLY PAUTLER



BRIDGET PEARSON



STEPHANIE  
VANDERWALL



LESLIE BEAUCHAMP



MADISON  
STOPPENHAGEN



DEREK GULLEY



CHRIS RASOR



EVAN HART



ENNIS BROWN



JAXSON BURKINS



KRISTOPHER  
ANDORFER

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

We asked Phillip Colglazier, director of the Civic Theatre's production of *Chicago The Musical*, why he chose to base his concept of the show on the revival rather than the first-run show. He shared some background:

"I chose to do the revival version because it focuses on the strength of the script/book and lyrics. Having a minimal set, minimal costumes and minimal props forces the importance to be on the words, songs, acting and choreography. The revival truly was in honor of Bob Fosse, the original creator. The revival is a contemporized treatment of the original in "how it is produced" without ever changing the original text.

The original script lent itself as a cabaret/night club feel so why not present it in that fashion?

[It is written so that] the orchestra is on stage the entire time with the "Band Leader" (conductor Eunice Wadewitz) having some lines. The actors enter and exit around the musicians and even cue the conductor at times.

The lighting will add to the mood, but also help to define scenic elements such as the jail bars and visitor boxes. It will help to establish the playing areas for the scene, for the actors to play in."

## FROM THE DESIGNER

Ashley "Screech" Owens is the Technical Director for the Civic Theatre's production of *Chicago The Musical*. She shared some information concerning the concept for the show:

"Phillip Colglazier (the director) saw the current tour in Chicago, and wanted to utilize parts of the revival into our show.

The basic concept is a bandstand. The orchestra in the revival is almost another character; the music is essential to the show.

With a box set, there is no set movement. (A box set is a set with three walls created using flats, to resemble the walls of a room, or a box. The audience views the play through the imaginary fourth wall.)

Surrounding the stage is a 1-foot wide dappled gold, angled wall (framing the set). The height ascends from 16" to 8". This metaphor carries on the theme that all the women say they are framed.

Lighting will be used to show mood, location. The lighting will create depth and shadow, for instance to represent the bars for the jail scenes. We're using ellipsoidals – they can sculpt the body, you can see all the movement, individual movements.

We are using all grey-scale costumes and set, to highlight what's really important, the music and dancing."

## Bob Fosse



Bob Fosse was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 23, 1927. The youngest of six children, he quickly began winning his family's attention with his dancing. He was recognized as a child prodigy, and his parents sent him to formal lessons; by the time he reached high school, he was dancing professionally in area nightclubs as part of vaudeville and burlesque shows.

After a stint in the Navy, Fosse moved to New York City to perform in variety shows on stage and on television. He had a few minor Broadway chorus parts, but his big break came with a brief appearance in a number he choreographed in MGM's 1953 movie musical *Kiss Me, Kate*, when he caught the

attention of George Abbott and Jerome Robbins, two of Broadway's masters.

Fosse's first fully choreographed show was *The Pajama Game* in 1954. This show, for which he won the Tony Award for Best Choreography, showcased Fosse's trademark choreographic style: sexually suggestive forward hip-thrusts, the vaudeville humor of hunched shoulders and turned-in feet, mime-like articulation of the hands. He often dressed his dancers in black with white gloves and derbies. He incorporated vaudeville tricks like pratfalls, sleight-of-hand, and double takes.

His second musical, *Damn Yankees*, brought him more awards and established a life-long collaboration with one of the stars, Gwen Verdon. Verdon, who became his wife, inspired Fosse to create a stream of classic dances. By 1960, he was a nationally known and respected choreographer.

Fosse struggled with many of his producers and directors, who requested that he tone down or remove "controversial" parts of his dances, and he realized he needed to become a director to have control over his dances. From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, he created many ground-breaking stage musicals and films. His works reflected the country's cries for sexual freedom. In his 1969 film version of *Sweet Charity* (of which Fosse's 1966 version was based on a Federico Fellini film), and later works, Fosse introduced unique perspective shots and jump cuts, film and editing techniques which would replace the until-then typical front-facing or overhead shots and become standard practice for future music video directors.

1972's film *Cabaret* garnered publicity and success, winning eight Academy Awards. *Pippin* in 1972 became the highest-earning Broadway show in history, and was the first Broadway show to advertise on national television. This show won five Tony Awards, including best direction and choreography for Fosse. When Fosse staged and choreographed a variety show special for Liza Minnelli, *Liza with a Z*, he won an Emmy Award and became the first person to ever win top awards in stage, film and television.

During rehearsals for *Chicago* in 1975, Fosse suffered a heart attack. He survived, and used that experience to inspire his semiautobiographical dance film *All That Jazz* in 1979. After suffering a massive heart attack after a rehearsal for the revival of *Sweet Charity*, Bob Fosse died on the way to the hospital on September 23, 1987.

Director-Choreographer Bob Fosse forever changed the way audiences viewed dance on the stage and in film. He was an intense, unbelievably driven visionary whose work was always provocative, entertaining, and unique. His dances were sexual, physically demanding, and addressed the full range of human emotions. He revolutionized the presentation of dance on screen, and foreshadowed the rise of music videos and dance.

## **BOB FOSSE WORKS**

(Does not include early acting credits)

### **STAGE PRODUCTIONS**

- *The Pajama Game*, 1951, choreographer
- *Damn Yankees*, 1955, choreographer
- *Bells Are Ringing*, 1956, co-staged
- *New Girl in Town*, 1958, choreographer
- *Redhead*, 1959, director & choreographer
- *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, 1961, musical staging
- *Little Me*, 1962, co-directed & co-co-choreographed
- *Pleasures and Palaces*, 1965, director & choreographer
- *Sweet Charity*, 1966, director & choreographer
- *Pippin*, 1972, uncredited book; director & choreographer
- *Liza with a Z*, 1972, filmed for television concert, director & choreographer
- *Chicago*, 1975, book; director & choreographer
- *Dancin'*, 1978, director & choreographer
- *Big Deal*, 1986, director & choreographer

### **FILMS**

- *My Sister Eileen*, 1955, actor, choreographer
- *The Pajama Game*, 1957, choreographer
- *Damn Yankees*, 1958, dancer, choreographer
- *Sweet Charity*, 1969, director, choreographer
- *Cabaret*, 1972, director, choreographer
  - *Lenny*, 1974, director
- *The Little Prince*, actor, choreographer
  - *Thieves*, 1977, actor
- *All That Jazz*, 1979, screenwriter, director, choreographer
  - *Star 80*, 1983, screenwriter, director

### **AWARDS**

- 9 TONY AWARDS: for Choreography: *The Pajama Game*, 1955; *Damn Yankees*, 1956; *Redhead*, 1959; *Little Me*, 1963; *Sweet Charity*, 1966; \**Pippin*, 1973; *Dancin'*, 1978; *Big Deal*, 1986; for Direction: *Pippin*, 1973.
- 1 OSCAR: \**Cabaret*, 1973, for Best Director.
- 2 EMMYS: \**Liza with a Z*, 1972, for Direction and Choreography.
- PALM D'OR (Cannes): *All That Jazz*, 1979.
- 2007 - INDUCTED IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF DANCE.
- 1994 – LOS ANGELES DANCE AWARDS CALLED THE “FOSSE AWARDS” (now called the American Choreography Awards).
- A length of Paulina Street in Chicago (roughly 4400 North) designated “Bob Fosse Way.”
- \*Bob Fosse is the only person to have won all three awards in the category of “Best Director” in the same year.

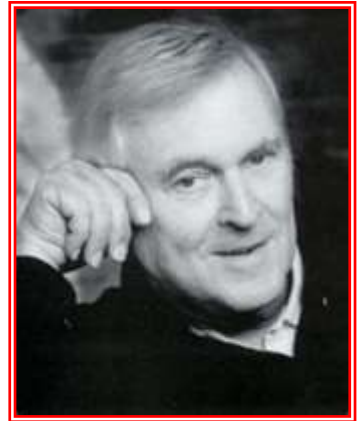
## MUSIC BY JOHN KANDER / LYRICS BY FRED EBB

### **John Kander**

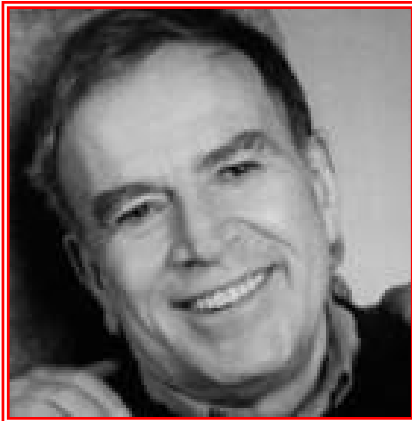
John Kander was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on March 18, 1927. He was taking piano lessons by the age of six, and later studied music at the Conservatory of Music in Kansas. He worked as a conductor and pianist for several theatre productions. From 1955 through 1958, he was choral director for the Warwick Musical Theatre in Rhode Island.

When Kander replaced the vacationing pianist for the pre-Broadway tryout of *West Wide Story*, he played rehearsals for Jerome Robbins and Ruth Mitchell, who invited him to be the pianist for auditions for *Gypsy*. Robbins then asked him to write dance arrangements for that show. He also arranged dance music for *Irma La Douce*.

In 1962, he made his Broadway debut as a composer with the musical *A Family Affair*, working with lyricists James and William Goldman, and supplied incidental music for *It's Never Too Late* at the Playhouse.



### **Fred Ebb**



Fred Ebb was born in New York City on April 8, 1935, and was raised in the city. He turned to the theater in his twenties, after earning a Masters in English Literature from Columbia University. He had already worked at odd jobs, at a hosiery company, in a department store credit office, as a trucker's helper, and bronzing baby shoes. Ebb wrote for various night club acts and theater revues, and contributed to the television news satire *That Was The Week That Was*. He wrote for Kaye Ballard, Carol Channing, and Tommy Tune. Prior to meeting John Kander, his writing for the theater was less than stellar – *From A to Z*, for which he wrote the lyrics, ran briefly on Broadway in 1960; *Morning Sun*, for which he adapted the libretto, ran for only eight performances before closing. In 1953 he joined composer Phil Springer to write his first published song, “Heartbroken,” for Judy Garland.

Fred Ebb died in New York City on September 11, 2004.

### **Kander and Ebb**

In the early 1960s, Kander and Ebb were introduced to one another. Their first successful song was “My Coloring Book,” recorded by Barbra Streisand, who also recorded their “I Don’t Care Much.” They continued writing songs, and wrote a never-produced musical, *Golden Gate*, which they used to audition for *Flora, the Red Menace*, which they were hired to write; this was the beginning of a long relationship with Liza Minnelli. They also wrote the industrial musical *General Electric’s Go Fly a Kite* in 1966.

Their first big success came when Harold Prince asked them to write the score for the musical adaptation of Christopher Isherwood’s *Berlin Stories* and John Van Druten’s play *I Am a Camera* – *Cabaret* ran for 1,165 performances on Broadway and won several Tony Awards, including Best Musical and Best Score. They wrote a couple of new songs when it became a hit movie directed by Bob Fosse and starring Liza Minnelli a few years later.

Kander and Ebb wrote other shows, *The Happy Time*, *Zorba*, and *70 Girls 70*. They also wrote new songs for a television special, *Liza With a Z*, for Liza Minnelli, and the movie *Funny Lady* for Barbra Streisand.

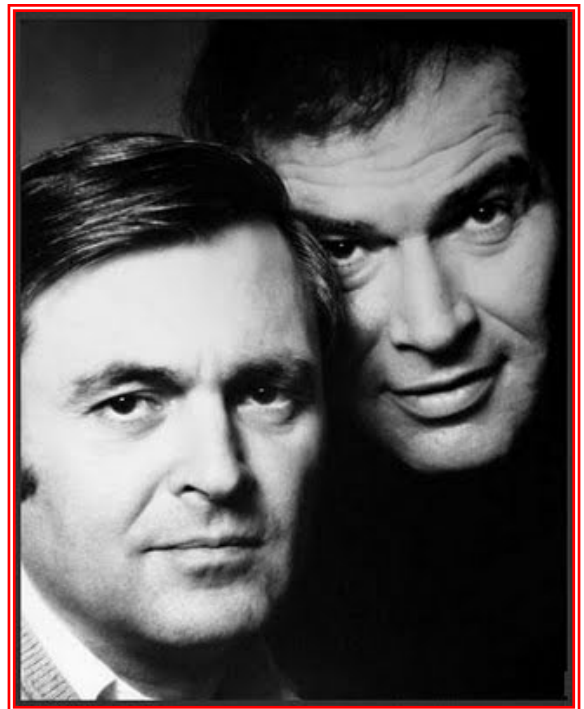


In 1975, they wrote *Chicago*, which at the time was eclipsed by the success of *A Chorus Line*. The original *Chicago* ran for 932 performances, and was later revived. It was turned into a successful movie, for which they wrote a new song “I Move On,” which was nominated for an Oscar.

In 1977 they wrote their most famous song, “New York, New York,” the title song of a Martin Scorsese film. The song was originally sung by Liza Minnelli, but made a hit by Frank Sinatra; it became the official theme song of New York City.

The duo continued to write: *The Act*, a stage musical written for Liza Minnelli; and *Woman of the Year* with Lauren Bacall, which won them their second Tony; *The Rink*; *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, which garnered their third Tony; *Steel Pier*; *Over and Over* (also known as *The Skin of Our Teeth*), *The Visit*, and *Curtains*, a mystery musical. Their final collaboration was *The Scottsboro Boys*, which ran briefly in 2010.

Kander and Ebb worked together for almost fifty years, and they became the longest running music and lyrics partnership in Broadway musical history. They wrote ballads like “A Quiet Thing,” comic songs like “The Grass is Always Greener,” simple melodies like “Second Chance,” terrific dance numbers like “All That Jazz,” and of course memorable show tunes like “Cabaret” and “New York, New York.”



## **KANDER AND EBB WORKS**

### **STAGE PRODUCTIONS**

- *Flora, The Red Menace* (1965)
- *Cabaret* (1966)
- *Go Fly A Kite* (1966),  
an industrial musical for General Electric
- *The Happy Time* (1968)
- *Zorba* (1968)
- *70, Girls, 70* (1971)
- *Chicago* (1975)
- *2 by 5* (1976)
- *The Act* (1978)
- *Woman of the Year* (1981)
- *The Rink* (1984)
- *And The World Goes 'Round* (1991)
- *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1992)
- *Steel Pier* (1997)
- *Fosse* (1999)
- *Over And Over* aka *All About Us*  
(a.k.a. *The Skin Of Our Teeth*) (1999)
- *The Visit* (2001)  
*Liza's Back* (Wrote the Title Song: 'Liza's  
Back') (2002)
- *Curtains* (2006)
- *The Scottsboro Boys* (2010)

### **FILMS**

- *Cabaret* (1972)
- *Funny Lady* (1975)
- *New York, New York* (1977) (Four original songs, including the famous title song)
- *Chicago* (2002)

### **KANDER AND EBB'S AWARDS**

1967: TONY AWARD, BEST MUSICAL, *Cabaret*

1967: TONY AWARD, BEST COMPOSER AND LYRICIST, *Cabaret*

1967: GRAMMY AWARD, Original Cast Album, *Cabaret*

1973: EMMY AWARD, *Liza With A Z*

1981: TONY AWARD, Best Original Score, *Woman Of The Year*

1993: TONY AWARD, Best Original Score, *The Kiss Of The Spider Woman*

1998: LAURENCE OLIVIER AWARD, *Chicago, London Production*

1998: GRAMMY, Musical Show Album, *Chicago*

1988: (Kander) HONORARY DOCTORATE DEGREE, Oberlin College (His Alma Mater)

1994: HONORARY DOCTORATE DEGREES, Niagara University, Lewiston, New York

1996: (Kander) PRESIDENT'S AWARD, Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers

1998: KENNEDY CENTER HONORS

2000: OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN MUSICAL THEATER,  
New York Theatre Company of New York City

## BASED ON THE PLAY *CHICAGO* BY MAURINE DALLAS WATKINS



Maurine Watkins was born July 26, 1896 in Louisville, Kentucky; her family soon thereafter moved to Crawfordsville, Indiana. Her given name was Maurine Watkins; she gave herself her middle name, Dallas, in deference to her father's birthplace, Dallas County, Missouri. She grew a precocious child, with plenty of imagination. She wrote her first play, *The Heart of Gold*, when she was fifteen. That same year, she co-founded her high school's first newspaper, *The High School Billiken*, and began her journalistic career. By the end of her high school years, she had begun writing short stories; and during her senior year won second place with "My Lady Will-o-the-Wisp."

She continued writing during her attendance at five different undergraduate universities, touching on short story, journalism, and playwriting. She taught high school in Indiana, and also attended Radcliffe and Professor George Pierce Baker's English and playwriting classes.

Maurine was working at the *Chicago Tribune* in 1924, and received her byline within three months of starting there. She worked there only seven months, but covered a few sensational cases. The most famous were the 1924 murders allegedly committed by cabaret singer Belva Gaertner and Beulah sheriff Annan.

Then, in 1925 – 26, she returned to Professor Baker's class and his 47 Workshop. It was there that she wrote the first draft of *Chicago* (originally titled *The Brave Little Woman*). The professor sent the play to Sam Harris in New York, and Harris immediately acquired the rights; the play was in rehearsals by September, 1926, and had been renamed *Chicago*. She later fought several attempts to restage *Chicago* as a musical production. When finally staged, Bob Fosse's musical production, though highly successful, was overshadowed by *A Chorus Line* the year it was produced. The 1996 revival, with a darker, more satirical approach, was a hit; and the film versions have been popular

Maurine revived her journalism career briefly, and her short story career did well. She wrote at least twenty other productions, including *Up the River* in 1930, *No Man of Her Own* in 1932, and *Libeled Lady* in 1936. She moved to Hollywood in October 1929, when the Stock Market crashed, and became a screenwriter. She continued writing plays and short stories, but they were mainly used as bases for films. Before her film career ended in the early 1940s, she had written for almost all the major film studios. Her masterpiece in film was 1936's *Libeled Lady* for MGM. Her last play was *Easy to Wed*, in 1946.

Maurine Watkins developed a disfiguring type of facial cancer, and by 1968 never left her apartment without a heavy veil. She died of lung cancer on August 10, 1969, in Jacksonville, Florida. She left her fortune of over \$2 million to establish chairs in Biblical Studies at a number of American universities.

## HISTORY

In 1924, the Great War was five long years in the past. A new era – “The Roaring Twenties” – had begun. It was a time for fun – music and radio – fashion and celebrity. The music of the time was jazz. Flappers (girls with short skirts and wavy, bobbed hair) danced the Charleston. Vaudeville acts were at the height of their popularity. Talking pictures were about to hit the country, with Al Jolson starring in the world’s first talkie, *The Jazz Singer*, in 1927.

Illiteracy in America was at a new low of 6%. There were now 387,000 miles of paved roads in the country; it took thirteen days to travel between New York and California. Women were changing their appearance, starting to drive cars, and living longer, on average, than men.

Beginning in January of 1920, it was illegal to make, transport, sell, or buy liquor in the United States. Prohibition did not, however, stop people from drinking alcoholic beverages. In Chicago, bootlegging flourished and was run largely by organized crime. Chicago, America’s “second city,” was a gateway to the undeveloped wilderness; many young men often made the city their last stop to buy supplies – or drink illegal liquor – before their adventurous trip West.

Trial lawyers like Clarence Darrow were famous Chicago celebrities, as were their clients, due mostly to extensive newspaper publicity. In the days before television, murder trials often provided entertainment value for the local inhabitants.

Maurine Dallas Watkins was a young reporter hired by *The Chicago Tribune* to cover the courts from “a feminine perspective.” A budding playwright, she had decided to take a break from college to get some real-world experience. She covered some of the days’ most flamboyant trials.

Beulah Annan was a glamorous Chicago flapper married to Albert Annan, a garage mechanic. The unfaithful wife (Watkins named her character Roxie Hart) shot her lover, Harry Kalstedt, in the spring of 1924, when he told her he was leaving her. Beulah sat listening to music and drinking steadily as Harry died. She called her husband and told him that she had shot a burglar, in defense of her honor. When the police arrived, Albert backed his wife’s story; but Beulah was drunk and confessed to the crime. Beulah soon claimed to be pregnant, and her lawyer objected to the prosecutor’s request to delay the trial. W. W. O’Brien was a fast-talking lawyer skilled at speaking out to the press about his cases, and Beulah received much support as a result of the publicity he generated. Her trial became a media circus, with Beulah seeming to consider herself to be part of a performance, with carefully selected costumes and makeup. Beulah testified at the trial that she and Kalstedt “both went for the gun” and it had just “gone off.” Although the prosecutor admonished the jury not to let Beulah off just because she was pretty, after only two hours of deliberation, she was found Not Guilty. There was never any further mention of a baby; Beulah divorced her husband shortly after the trial. A remarriage also ended in divorce. Beulah Annan died in 1928 from tuberculosis.

Belva Gaertner (renamed Velma Kelly in the play) was a twice-divorced 38-year-old former socialite who performed as a cabaret singer, using the stage name Belle Brown. Walter Law, her married boyfriend, was a car salesman. When Walter was found dead in Belva’s car, she was the obvious suspect – she was found, drunk, with a gun and with Walter’s blood on her body. Her legal team, led by William Scott Stewart, reshaped crafted a defense with the given facts, claiming that Law may have killed himself; she claimed not to remember what had happened. Belva was dubbed “the most stylish” woman on Murderess Row by reporter Maurine Watkins of *The Chicago Tribune*. She was found Not Guilty by an all-male jury. She remarried her second husband, and by 1930 they were living in Europe. Belva Gaertner died of natural causes in California in May, 1965.

Watkins turned the facts of these two cases into a play after resuming her studies at Yale. Her story incorporating the stories of murders committed by two beautiful young

women became the play *The Brave Little Woman*, and was given the title *Chicago* when brought to Broadway by George Abbott. It later became the basis for Bob Fosse's musical *Chicago*, and the storyline was the basis for *Chicago*, the movie.

*Chicago* opened at the Music Box Theatre on Broadway on December 30, 1926, and ran for 172 performances. In this version (and the 1927 film version), Velma was only a minor character. In 1927, a silent film version was produced, thought to be directed by Cecil B. DeMille (whose name was not attached because he also directed *King of Kings* in 1927) and starring June Haver. Due to the film's treatment of murder and public attraction to such crimes, whenever the film was screened for censorship boards, it was preceded by this title: "*Chicago* attacks a great evil in our time – the hysterical tendency to make a vulgar criminal an heroic figure in a public circus. Since the force of the story comes from the biting truth with which it is presented we ask you to consider very earnestly before suggesting changes which may weaken its effect."

In 1942, Twentieth Century-Fox produced *Roxie Hart*, starring Ginger Rogers as Roxie, George Montgomery as the reporter, and Adolphe Menjou as Billy Flynn. In this version, in order to conform to the Production Code, Roxie was innocent of the murder, and wound up with the handsome reporter.

In 1975, a musical version of the show, *Chicago*, ran on Broadway for 936 performances. It was directed and choreographed by Bob Fosse, and had songs by John Kander and Fred Ebb, and the cast included Gwen Verdon as Roxie, Chita Rivera as Velma, and Jerry Orbach as Billy. Although nominated for eleven Tony Awards, the show lost out in every category when *a Chorus Line* swept the awards. This show was revived in 1996, choreographed by Ann Reinking "in the style of Bob Fosse, and as of April 2011 had run for more than 5,900 performances. The Revival won six Tony Awards, including "Best Revival of a Musical," "Best Lighting Design," "Best Choreography," and "Best Direction of a Musical," and spawned a national tour.

In 2002, Miramax produced a film musical based on the Bob Fosse stage musical. It starred Renee Zellweger as Roxie, Catherine Zeta-Jones as Velma, Richard Gere as Billy Flynn, Queen Latifah as the matron, and John C. Riley as Amos Hard. Directed by Rob Marshall from a screenplay by Bill Condon, this film won six Academy Awards, including Best Film and Best Supporting Actress (for Zeta-Jones).

## **VAUDEVILLE**

Vaudeville (a farce with music) in the United States was a form of light entertainment that was popular from the 1890s until the early 1930s. Known in England as music hall and variety, it consisted of ten to fifteen unrelated acts, featuring magicians, acrobats, comedians, trained animals, jugglers, singers, and dancers. The term *vaudeville*, adopted in the United States from the Parisian boulevard theatre, is probably a corruption of *vaux-de-vire*, satirical songs in couplets, sung to popular airs in the 15th century in the Val-de-Vire (Vau-de-Vire), Normandy, France. It passed into theatrical usage in the early 18th century to describe a device employed by professional actors to circumvent the dramatic monopoly held by the Comédie-Française. Forbidden to perform legitimate drama, they presented their plays in pantomime, interpreting the action with lyrics and choruses set to popular tunes. It eventually developed into a form of light musical drama, with spoken dialogue interspersed with songs, that was popular throughout Europe.

In the United States, the development of variety entertainment was encouraged in frontier settlements as well as in the widely scattered urban centers. In the 1850s and 1860s, straight variety became popular. Held in beer halls, the coarse, sometimes obscene, shows were aimed toward a primarily male audience. Tony Pastor, a ballad and minstrel singer, is credited both with giving the first performance of what came to be called vaudeville by the

late 19th century and with making it respectable. In 1881 he established a theatre in New York City dedicated to the “straight, clean variety show.” His unexpected success encouraged other managers to follow his example. By the 1890s, vaudeville was family entertainment, and exhibited high standards of performance.

Many future stars were developed under the vaudeville system—W.C. Fields, juggler and comedian; Will Rogers, cowboy and comic; the famous “American Beauty,” Lillian Russell; Charlie Case, monologist; and Joe Jackson, pantomimist. European music hall artists such as Sir Harry Lauder, Albert Chevalier, and Yvette Guilbert also appeared in vaudeville in the United States.

By the end of the 19th century, the era of the vaudeville chain, a group of houses controlled by a single manager, was firmly established. The largest chains were United Booking Office, with 400 theatres in the East and Midwest, and Martin Beck’s Orpheum Circuit, which controlled houses from Chicago to California. Beck also built the Palace Theatre in New York, which from 1913 to 1932 was the outstanding vaudeville house in the United States. In 1896, motion pictures were introduced into vaudeville shows, as added attractions and to clear the house between shows. They gradually preempted more and more performing time until, after the advent of the “talkies” about 1927, the customary bill featured a full-length motion picture with “added acts” of vaudeville. The great financial depression of the 1930s and the growth of radio, and later of television, contributed to the rapid decline of vaudeville, and to its virtual disappearance after World War II.

### **Chicago AS VAUDEVILLE**

The story of *Chicago* is told in the language of vaudeville, with almost every song in the style of a specific vaudeville performer or tradition. *Chicago's* central premise, that crime and lawlessness are glamorized by our culture and can too easily become popular entertainment, is communicated through the most popular entertainment form of the time:

vaudeville. Before the song “Razzle Dazzle” in Act II, Billy Flynn says to Roxie, “These trials – the whole world – all show business.” And he’s right, after all. The trials, his and Roxie’s whole world, is all a musical called *Chicago*, and they’re all vaudeville acts. They are literally just show business. And yet, they’re also far too real.

Almost every song in the show is modeled on an actual vaudeville act or star. In “All That Jazz,” Velma is playing Texas Guinan, inviting the audience in to drink and have a good time. She is our host for the evening

Mary Sunshine, played by a man in drag in the original 175 production, and her terribly optimistic “A Little Bit of Good in Everyone” was (in that production) an imitation of Julian Eltinge, a famous turn-of-the-century drag queen and vaudeville star, and Bert Savoy, his less classy successor. Many recent productions have completely discarded the idea of Mary Sunshine being played in drag. Perhaps it’s enough that she parodies the many “sob sister” reporters of the 1920s. And even without the drag, Mary Sunshine still has her models in vaudeville. Legitimate opera singers like Rosa Ponselle frequently appeared on vaudeville stages singing arias from famous operas and operettas, in an attempt to lend some class to the proceedings.

“When Velma Takes the Stand” and the entire courtroom scene is an imitation of the many courtroom comedy sketches, a staple of vaudeville and burlesque. “When Velma Takes the Stand” is also modeled on the many vaudeville acts that showcased the latest dance crazes, in this case, the Charleston. Fosse’s use of the Charleston in “Velma Takes the Stand” and in other numbers in *Chicago* is not just a tribute to period dance but also a reminder of the moral climate in America in the middle 1920s – a climate in which anything popular and fun was denounced as immoral and dangerous.

## VAUDEVILLE AS LIFE

Velma is the link in *Chicago* among the plot, the structure of the show, and its central theme of people performing their lives. She is a former vaudeville performer in the story as well as acting as a kind of host. She takes on the role of host at the beginning of each act by quoting famous lines from Texas Guinan. She killed her own vaudeville act by killing her sister, paralleling the death of vaudeville itself in the late 1920s. She's the only one who performs a vaudeville style song, "I Can't Do It Alone," while knowing that that's what she's doing. None of the other characters know that they're doing vaudeville acts; that's merely the style of storytelling the authors chose. Her song "When Velma Takes the Stand," is also a song about performing. Roxie is a housewife, Billy Flynn is a lawyer, Mary Sunshine is a reporter, but Velma is a vaudeville performer. And by positioning her as our hostess, starting out each act not only quoting Texas Guinan but also singing the first song of each act, Fosse eases us into the convention of all the songs being full-front, "performed" vaudeville-style numbers. In the non-musical play *Chicago*, Velma is only a minor character.

But Velma also links us to the central theme of the show – that everyone in *Chicago*, except Amos, "performs" their lives. No one – except Amos – is genuine. Velma, Roxie, and the other Merry Murderesses play the role of Innocence. In the courtroom, Billy plays the role of The Common Man Fighting for Justice. Mama Morton plays the role of dedicated public servant. Mary Sunshine and the other reporters play the role of Objective Reporter. Everyone's life is a performance. Only Amos really is what he seems, and everyone gets away with it. Only Amos, who isn't performing his life, gets screwed.

-- From "Inside Chicago", an analysis by Scott Miller

## CABARET

Cabaret is a style of performing that is very intimate between a solo singer and an audience, featuring novelty songs, torch songs, and popular or theatrical standards. The term "cabaret" also was used to describe a small nightclub that featured tables and chairs (rather than theater seats), with a bar and often a kitchen for serving late night dinner. These nightclubs featured cabaret entertainers.

## BURLESQUE

Burlesque is a musical, dramatic, or literary work meant to cause laughter with caricatures of the manner or spirit of serious works, or by farcical or nonsensical treatment of their subjects. The word "burlesque" is derived from the Italian *burlesco*, a form of the Italian *burla*, which means a joke, ridicule, or mockery.

## WHAT DID SHE SAY?

The Hungarian woman's name is Katalin Helinszki, but she is referred to as The Hunyak, the Hungarian.

The translated speech by Hunyak in "Cell Block Tango" in ACT I, scene 3 is: "What am I doing here? They say my famous tenant held down my husband and I chopped his head off. But it's not true. I am innocent. I don't know why Uncle Sam says I did it. I tried to explain at the police station but they didn't understand." The original, in Hungarian, is: "Mit keresek én itt? Azt mondják, a híres lakóm lefogta a férjem, én meg lecsaptam a fejét. De nem igaz. Én ártatlan vagyok. Nem tudom, miért mondja Uncle Sam, hogy én tettem. Próbáltam a rendőrségen megmagyarázni, de nem értették meg."

## Chicago: The True Murders That Inspired the Movie

**By: Nancy Gupton (National Geographic News) Updated: March 24, 2003**

Sizzle, sequins, sex, and murder. It sounds like the stuff of movies—and it is. But the Oscar-winning courtroom musical *Chicago* is based on true murder cases: a laundry worker and a cabaret singer both accused of killing their lovers in 1924.

The stage and screen versions of *Chicago* stem from one source. Former reporter Maurine Watkins based her 1926 play, *Chicago*, on her Chicago Tribune stories of two women—Belva Gaertner and Beulah Annan—accused of murdering under the influence of drink and jazz. But were Gaertner and Annan anything like the characters Velma Kelly and Roxie Hart?

In 1924, Belva Gaertner—the model for Velma Kelly—was a cabaret singer accused of shooting her lover in her car, then leaving his body there with a bottle of gin and a gun.

One month later, Beulah Annan—the inspiration for Roxie Hart—was arrested for shooting and killing her lover in her house. There's no evidence the two ever met outside of jail.

In *Chicago*, the two women meet on Murderess Row and become rivals in and out of Cook County Jail. So how do the real cases stack up against the Hollywood version?

In the movie, cabaret vamp Velma Kelly shoots her sister and husband after catching them together. Later she says, "I can't remember a thing." In real life, twice-divorced cabaret singer Belva Gaertner—dubbed the "most stylish" woman on Murderess Row by reporter Watkins—was accused of shooting her lover in her car. Gaertner, 38, said she had been drinking and had no memory of what happened.

*Chicago's* Roxie Hart, a married wanna-be cabaret star, shoots her paramour, Fred, because he can't further her singing career, as he promised. She says he was a burglar, but a neighbor rats her out. In reality, twentysomething, married laundry worker Annan—the "prettiest woman" on Murderess Row—was accused of shooting her lover, co-worker Harry Kelstedt. She first said Harry had broken into her home. Later she admitted they were lovers and said she shot him after he told her he was through with her. Her story changed further over time.

In the movie, after a new arrival to Murderess Row steals media attention from Hart, she lies and says she's pregnant to draw it back. In real life, Annan announced she was pregnant the day after learning a fellow Murderess Row inhabitant received the death sentence for murdering her lover. She never gave birth.

After their trials Hart and Kelly go on to share a stage, bringing the house down. In reality, Annan had no such happy ending. After the trial, she divorced her long-suffering husband, then wed another man, only to find that he was already married. A breakdown led her to a mental hospital, where she died in 1928 of causes not generally known. Gaertner may have fared better. After her acquittal, she said she planned on remarrying husband number two and traveling to Europe. What became of her is unknown.

Watkins, a young reporter, hit the jackpot with the Gaertner and Annan cases. Her winking style helped land her articles on the front page of the Tribune.

"In the 1920s people began treating crime with a sense of humor in metropolitan cities," says English professor Thomas Pauly, whose book *Chicago* collects Watkins's play as well as several of her original Tribune articles. "They were trying to laugh at crime, to show a sense of sophistication."

Watkins' articles are full of subtle jabs and strong color. She quoted Belva Gaertner as saying: "Why it's silly to say I murdered Walter. I liked him and he loved me—but no woman can love a man enough to kill him. They aren't worth it, because there are always plenty more." A month after Gaertner's arrest, Beulah Annan was jailed and Watkins gave her case the same

treatment.

Readers ate the stories up. "Her stories made Beulah and Belva celebrities—and helped get them acquitted" by showing them in a sympathetic light, Pauly says. Both women were pronounced not guilty by all-male juries, apparently sensitive to their charms.

"So Beulah Annan, whose pursuit of wine, men, and jazz music was interrupted by her glibness with the trigger finger, was given freedom by her beauty-proof jury," Watkins quipped.

*Chicago* accurately captures the feel of the city at the time, historians say.

"Movies always exaggerate, of course, but Chicago in the 1920's was a really vibrant, bustling city," says Russell Lewis, Andrew D. Mellon Director for Collections and Research at the Chicago Historical Society.

In 1924, Prohibition had been in effect for five years. Now that alcohol was illegal, it was more popular than ever. Gangsters were getting rich off bootlegged liquor, and speakeasies were popping up all over town.

"You had the introduction of jazz to the broader audience. You had Al Capone and other gangsters," Lewis says. "But Chicago was then, as it is now, a place of hardworking people.

"In the twenties there was also an explosion of mass culture," Lewis says. "It was the heyday of movies, advertising was coming into its own, radio was coming along—all these were avenues for mass communication, and people were hungry for this. "In a lot of these avenues there was a tendency to sensationalize, especially in the newspapers," Lewis says.

Soon after the Annan and Gaertner trials, Watkins left journalism and went to the Yale School of Drama. She wrote a play, *Chicago*, which satirized the trials and the media's role in them.

The play was turned into the movie *Roxie Hart* in 1942, and then into a Broadway musical by director Bob Fosse in 1975.

"Even from the time the play came out, Watkins tried to hide the fact that she had covered the crimes," Thomas Pauly says. Through his research he came to believe that Watkins later became a born-again Christian and may have been ashamed of her apparent involvement in the women's acquittals.

As to the popularity of Watkins's stories, Pauly says: "Crime as entertainment has been around since the Bible. Maurine Watkins made fun of the whole business. She delighted in the carnival that she herself created."

As the Mama Morton character says in the movie, "In this town, murder is a form of entertainment."

## **SUMMARY**

Set during the roaring twenties and the age of prohibition, *Chicago* tells the story of Roxie Hart's quest for fame and fortune through the unlikely means of adultery, murder, and incarceration. As she awaits her trial, Roxie vies with another murderess, vaudeville entertainer Velma Kelly, for the spotlight and the headlines. The jazz score includes the hits "All That Jazz," "Cell Block Tango," and "Razzle Dazzle." *Chicago* was the winner of six Tony Awards (1996) including Best Revival. A Civic premier!

- Fort Wayne Civic Theatre webpage

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **Act I**

As the *Overture* comes to a close, we meet Velma Kelly, Chicago's spotlight chanteuse in prison for murdering her sister and husband after finding them in bed together. Through *All that Jazz*, Velma tells us the story of Roxie Hart, an aspiring nightclub performer and fellow inmate. Roxie has killed Fred Casely, the man she was having an affair with and almost succeeds in blaming the murder on her husband, Amos Hart (*Funny Honey*).

Roxie and Velma, along with the other murderesses in Cook County Jail, claim their innocence through *The Cell Block Tango* while the jail matron, Mama Morton tells the girls about her give-and-take benefit system (*When You're Good to Mama*).

Velma becomes discontented when she sees Roxie stealing her lawyer, Billy Flynn. Through *All I Care About*, Billy sings about his love of legal procedure and the justice system. Billy rearranges Roxie's case and tells it to the sympathetic columnist Mary Sunshine, who always tries to find *A Little Bit of Good* in everyone. Roxie's crime turns into a sob story about her runaway marriage, foolish affair, and then *We Both Reached for the Gun*. Through his manipulation of the media, Roxie becomes media's top murderer-of-the-week with newspaper headlines like "*Roxie Rocks Chicago!*" Velma tries to convince Roxie to re-create her sister act through *I Can't Do It Alone*, but Roxie turns her down, wanting to have all the fame to herself. However, after a new murderess gains the press' attention, both Roxie and Velma's celebrity fade away. The pair realizes that they can only count on themselves (*My Own Best Friend*), and Roxie decides to fake pregnancy in order to recapture the spotlight.

### **Act II**

After the *Entr'acte*, Velma expresses her disbelief of Roxie's run of luck through *I Know A Girl*, and Roxie sings to her supposed baby in *Me and My Baby*. Amos proudly claims paternity, but because nobody pays attention to him, he calls himself *Mr. Cellophane*.

While Velma tries to show Billy all the tricks she has planned for her trial through *When Velma Takes the Stand*, Roxie fires Billy for being too bossy. However, after Roxie finds out that one of the murderesses is hanged, she immediately rehires him. Billy then teaches her how to *Razzle Dazzle* the courtroom.

After hearing about Roxie's ridiculous acts in court, Velma and Mama Morton lament the demise of *Class*. Roxie is found not guilty, but another sensational murder occurs and quickly steals the media attention away from her. Returning to her days as an unknown, Roxie reflects on her life *Nowadays*.

The scene changes to a nightclub, where Roxie and Velma are performing together to *Hot Honey Rag* as the new hit vaudeville team.

## CHARACTERS

**ROXIE HART** - Innocent, sexy, desperate, selfish. Roxie is not very bright and never thinks about the consequences of her actions before she says or does things. Every move is selfish, yet she remains strangely sympathetic because we know her selfishness is not malicious; but childish. All Roxie cares about is getting into Vaudeville.

**VELMA KELLY** - Sarcastic, sexy, tough, funny. Velma is a former vaudeville performer who also serves as the hostess.. She killed her husband and her sister after finding them together. Used to being the "headliner" she learns to hold her tongue and make nice to save her vaudeville career.

**BILLY FLYNN** - Sexy, persuasive, manipulative, masculine. Billy is a suave, educated lawyer who can persuade anyone to do anything. Billy will take any case as long as it is sure to put money in his pocket. Billy is a lot like a Hollywood Agent.

**AMOS HART** - Charming, funny, vulnerable, timid man. Amos is an average guy, not very good looking, not very smart. Manipulated easily, Amos is the only character in Chicago whose motives are entirely pure, never selfish, and he's the only character who really loses ultimately.

**MATRON "MAMA" MORTON** - Sexy, funny, powerful and tough. The matron of the Cook County Jail who believes that all favors she gives should be reciprocated or paid for. If Billy is the Agent, Mama would be considered the Manager.

**MARY SUNSHINE** - Has the image of a good natured talk show hostess but is actually a high-powered gossip columnist.

## CHORUS

**HUNYAK** - Accused of chopping off her husband's head. She is actually innocent (one of the only ones), but because she only speaks Hungarian and refuses to plead guilty, she is found guilty and hanged.

**LIZ** - Killed her husband with a shotgun because he "popped" his gum.

**ANNIE** - Found out her husband had several wives and killed him with Arsenic.

**JUNE** - Killed her husband with a carving knife after he found out she cheated on him.

**MONA** - Killed her boyfriend after she found out he was sleeping around.

**GO-TO-HELL KITTY** - Kills her boyfriend in her apartment after coming home and finding him with two girls. She is wealthy and goes crazy telling everyone to "go-to-hell".

**MASTER OF CEREMONIES/BANDLEADER** - Introduces all the "Vaudeville Acts." Interacts at times with the other characters.

**FRED CASLEY** - Sleeping with Roxie Hart and is shot and killed.

**SERGEANT FOGARTY** - Police detective who interviews Amos after Roxie kills Fred. Typical “Chicago” cop who has been through this kind of thing many times.

**AARON** - Court appointed lawyer who tries to defend Hunyak. He gets extremely frustrated because he can’t understand her language and she refuses to plead guilty.

**HARRY** - Boyfriend killed by Kitty.

**MARTIN HARRISON** - District Attorney who is prosecuting Roxie.

**JUDGE** - Judge in the courtroom scene.

**COURT CLERK** - Clerk in the courtroom scene.

**DOCTOR, REPORTERS, DANCERS**

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

### **ACT ONE:**

- 1) All That Jazz – Velma & Company
- 2) Funny Honey – Roxie
- 3) Cell Block Tango – Velma & the Girl
- 4) When You’re Good to Mama – Matron
- 5) Tap Dance – Roxie, Amos & Boys
- 6) All I Care About – Billy & Girls
- 7) A Little Bit of Good – Mary Sunshine
- 8) We Both Reached for the Gun – Billy,  
Roxie, Mary Sunshine & Company
- 9) Roxie – Roxie & Boys
- 10) I Can’t Do It Alone – Velma
- 11) Chicago After Midnight – The Band
- 12) My Own Best Friend – Roxie & Velma

### **ACT TWO:**

- 1) I Know A Girl – Velma
- 2) Me and My Baby – Roxie & Boys
- 3) Mister Cellophane – Amos
- 4) When Velma Takes the Stand – Velma & Boys
- 5) Razzle Dazzle – Billy & Company
- 6) Class – Velma & Matron
- 7) Nowadays – Roxie
- 8) Nowadays/Hot Honey Rag - Roxie & Velma

## REVIEWS

*The New York Times*

### **In Musical 'Chicago,' Crime Pays**

**By LEAH D. FRANK Published: July 19, 1987**

THE Bob Fosse, Fred Ebb and John Kander musical "Chicago," which had its premiere on Broadway in 1975, still manages to bring life to daily newspaper stories of political corruption and covert activities. "Chicago," currently receiving a strong production at Theater Three in Port Jefferson, is a bitter show about murder, greed, corruption and treachery in Chicago circa 1920.

The show's fascination hinges on the fact that it relies on theatrical razzle-dazzle to make entertaining its coldly cynical story of two murderesses who parlay the lurid press coverage of their crimes into a vaudeville career. There are no sympathetic characters in "Chicago," and the tendency is to root for deceit over decency.

The heroine of "Chicago," Roxie Hart, a brittle woman who never hesitates to do whatever she has to in order to win an acquittal in her murder trial, is married to a chump named Amos. Amos, who is basically the only honest one in the lot, is portrayed as a fool at best, as an insensitive clod at worst, and a wimp the rest of the time. It's in their tricky dealings with each other that these characters really shine.

Roxie, played to cold-steel perfection by Marci Bing, shoots her lover, Fred Casely, who made the fatal error of attempting to walk out on her. First she tries to convince Amos, played with an appropriately simpering sweetness by Rick Heuthe, to take the blame. When that doesn't work out, she learns to play the corrupt judicial system with a virtuosity of a Horowitz at the piano.

In prison, awaiting trial, she meets Velma Kelly, another murderess, who has learned to use the system to beat the system. They share a lawyer, Billy Flynn, who is as corrupt as they are, except that he operates on the officially sanctioned side of the law.

"Chicago" is a cold and heartless musical that successfully attempts with form and structure to produce a theatrical entertainment. Its look at the concepts of law and justice, among other virtues, makes it one of the few musicals that provide the viewer with something to think about the next day.

Marci Bing is excellent as the resourceful Roxie Hart, who turns her prison cell into a command center for her raids on Chicago's courts. Although she keeps ice water running through Roxie's veins, Mrs. Bing occasionally gives a glimpse of an indecisive, almost vulnerable murderess, which keeps Roxie an interesting character.

Karen Fitzgerald is Velma Kelly, Roxie's cellblock mate. The part calls for a first-rate dancer, and Miss Fitzgerald is excellent in the high-kicking role.

Brent Erlanson shines as the dapper, cynical and fashionable lawyer, Billy Flynn. Debbi Starker plays the mammoth prison matron with heavy-handed charm. The rest of the cast performs well in roles ranging from law enforcers to lawbreakers.

"Chicago" is the dancingest show that Theater Three has produced in a long time, and while the choreographer, Judy Greenhut, has maintained Bob Fosse's signature bump-and-grind routines, she has made her own creative contributions to the show.

The director, Jerry M. Friedman, has done an adequate job in staging the show, although there are sections that seem to demand more theatrical glitter than they receive.

Stephen Currie designed the set, which is a simple double-height-center semicircle with the orchestra on top and the action flowing under, around and in front of this black-painted construction. Gary Hygom's lighting design fails to compensate for the vast expanse of light absorbing black paint and fabric on stage, and consequently much of the show is darker than it should be.

As a musical entertainment, however, the show offers a ton of summer fun. It is full of dancing, singing and food for thought, and on top of everything else, Theater Three's new air-conditioning system makes "Chicago" a hot-weather alternative to movie houses.

"Chicago" will continue through Aug. 15 at Theater Three's Main Stage Theater in Port Jefferson. It comes highly recommended.

## **A Lively Legacy, A Come-Hither Air**

By **BEN BRANTLEY** Published: **November 15, 1996**

WHO would have thought there could be such bliss in being played for a patsy?

In the pulse-racing revival of the musical "Chicago," which opened last night at the Richard Rodgers Theater, all the world's a con game, and show business is the biggest scam of all.

It makes a difference, though, when the hustle involves a cast of top-flight artists perfectly mated to their parts and some of the sexiest, most sophisticated dancing seen on Broadway in years.

By the time the priceless Bebe Neuwirth, playing a hoofer turned murderer, greets the audience at the beginning of the second act with the salutation "Hello, suckers!," it's a label we're all too happy to accept. The America portrayed onstage may be a vision of hell, but the way it's being presented flies us right into musical heaven.

This sharp-edged, self-defined tale of "murder, greed, corruption, violence, exploitation, adultery and treachery" received a healthy initial run in the mid-1970's but very ambivalent reviews.

Even with such mesmerizing stars as Gwen Verdon and Chita Rivera, swell vaudeville-pastiche songs by John Kander and Fred Ebb and the acutely stylish direction and choreography of Bob Fosse, "Chicago" seemed too chilly, in those days, to be truly loved in the way "Oklahoma!" or "A Chorus Line," its warmhearted contemporary and rival, might be.

Yet this new incarnation, directed by Walter Bobbie and choreographed by Ann Reinking (who also stars), makes an exhilarating case both for "Chicago" as a musical for the ages and for the essential legacy of Fosse, whose ghost has never been livelier than it is here.

There's been talk in the press that theatergoers, in the era of O. J. Simpson and Amy Fisher, are now more likely to accept the work's jaded take on pathological celebrity worship and a fractured justice system. But that's not what makes this "Chicago" so immensely appealing.

What this production makes clear is how much "Chicago" is about the joy of seducing an audience that goes to the theater, above all, to be seduced. Fosse, who had a fiercely conflicted relationship with his profession, may have regarded entertainers as applause-addicted grifters. (Take another look at his autobiographical movie, "All That Jazz," if you want confirmation.)

Yet he also reveled in the adrenaline rush that comes from singers and dancers doing what they do best, at their best. Every number in this "Chicago" (and most of them are show-stoppers) buzzes with an implicit, irresistibly arrogant declaration: "Watch me. What I'm about to do is going to be terrific, and you're going to love every second of it."

This sensibility was already evident when the show, which is set in the violence-drunken Chicago of the 1920's (and based on Maurine Dallas Watkins's play of that period), was staged last spring in a concert version as part of the Encores! series at City Center.

Underscoring the conceit of this musical as a self-conscious series of vaudeville turns, the show (which had the same stars and much of the same production team) brought down the house, using only minimal scenery and costumes.

Still, there were worries about how the production might transfer to Broadway. To dress it up more elaborately for a big house might dilute what was magic about it to begin with. On the other hand, would theatergoers paying top ticket prices of \$70 feel cheated by the lack of the flashy scenery and special effects to which they had become accustomed?

Well, this is not a show to leave anyone feeling bilked. The revival's creators have indeed retained the spare visual essence of what was seen at City Center. The orchestra (still sublime under the direction of Rob Fisher) remains center stage in John Lee Beatty's witty evocation of a giant witness box in a courtroom.

An elevator (for grand entrances and exits) has been added, but most of the scenery is still nothing more than some chairs and ladders. And nearly everything, down to the last, flesh-framing inch of William Ivey Long's sleek costumes, is in shades of black and white, set off by Ken Billington's expert film-noir lighting.

And yet somehow everything feels richer, like an expensive, perfectly constructed sheath from a designer like Mainbocher. It creates the ideal environment for a tribute to the illusions that can be woven out of air by the right combination of music, actors, singers and dancers. And each of the performances has been polished like

the Astors' silver.

Much of the credit, of course, goes to Mr. Bobbie, whose delightfully inventive direction sustains just the right tone of heady irony. Ms. Reinking, a former dancer for Fosse (and, for a time, his companion), has brought her own light-handed sparkle in evoking the Fosse spirit, and the corps de ballet couldn't be better, physically capturing the wry, knowing pastiche of some of Kander and Ebb's best songs.

Dance for Fosse, a man who came of age backstage at Chicago's bump-and-grind houses, always had an air of the striptease. And the numbers, which usually begin with Mr. Kander's gripping, sustained vamps, are all built on the idea of tantalizing. They often start with Fosse's come-hither pelvic thrusts and finger snapping, segue into slow, silky routines (punctuated by eruptions of splits and leaps) and finally burst into orgasmic displays of energy that never spin out of control.

It's hard to know where to start in singling out cast members. Ms. Reinking's Roxie Hart, the over-the-hill chorine who becomes a star when she murders her straying lover, emerges as the most entertainingly erotic cartoon character since Jessica Rabbit. Every vocal inflection and gesture is writ large (watch how she keeps extending her arms as if to embrace an entire adoring throng) but also with precise, elegant calligraphy.

Ms. Reinking meets her match, though, in her co-star. As Velma Kelly, a vaudevillian in jail for a bloody crime of passion and Roxie's competitor in publicity seeking, Ms. Neuwirth has translated her deadpan comic persona and technical proficiency as a dancer into an ecstatic benchmark performance.

The deliciously mechanical wriggle in her walk embodies the very soul of the show. And to see her turn her legs into a pair of air-slicing scissors, her face set in a bewitching expression of self-satisfaction, is like falling in love, against your better judgment, with a specialist in breaking hearts.

James Naughton, a superb musical leading man who in another age would have the status of a Robert Preston, brings flawless timing and a velvety crooner's voice to the role of the press-manipulating lawyer. Marcia Lewis, as a predatory prison matron, and D. Sabella, as a goeey gossip columnist who is not what she appears to be, have refined what were already superior performances.

And as Amos, Roxie's limp dupe of a husband, Joel Grey (best known as the decadent emcee in another Kander-Ebb musical, "Cabaret") achieves the miracle of turning passivity into pure show-biz electricity, all the more arresting for being kept a low voltage.

Amos's big number, "Mr. Cellophane," is a lament on the worst thing that can befall an actor: not to be noticed. "You can look right through me," he wails. "Chicago" is, of course, all about being noticed, with the characters' lust for attention mirrored by that of the performers playing them.

The show takes the bold extra step of breaking down the methodology of getting attention in a musical. When Roxie sings of the raptures of being famous, she summons a phalanx of chorus boys to "frame me better." Her lawyer lets us know in advance just how he's going to sing to win over reporters (and then does so using Roxie as a ventriloquist's dummy). And when Velma rehearses her appearance on the witness stand, it's a dancer's anatomy lesson.

See, the performers seem to be saying, what we're doing is all illusion, and you're falling for it. Or as a line from the song "Razzle Dazzle" has it, "Long as you keep 'em way off balance, how can they spot you got no talents?"

Nonsense. This production isn't smoke and mirrors. It's flesh and blood shaped by discipline and artistry into a parade of vital, pulsing talent. If there's any justice in the world (and "Chicago" insists that there isn't), audiences will be exulting in that parade for many, many performances to come.

“CHICAGO” Book by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse; music by John Kander; lyrics by Mr. Ebb; based on the play by Maurine Dallas Watkins; original production directed and choreographed by Fosse. Based on the presentation by City Center's Encores! Directed by Walter Bobbie; choreography by Ann Reinking, in the style of Fosse. Music director, Rob Fisher; sets by John Lee Beatty; costumes by William Ivey Long; lighting by Ken Billington; sound by Scott Lehrer; original orchestration by Ralph Burns; dance music arrangements by Peter Howard; script adaptation by David Thompson; musical coordinator, Seymour Red Press; associate producer, Alecia Parker; presented in association with Pace Theatrical Group.

Presented by Barry and Fran Weissler, in association with Kardana Productions. At the Richard Rodgers Theater, 226 West 46th Street, Manhattan. WITH: Ann Reinking (Roxie Hart), Bebe Neuwirth (Velma Kelly), James Naughton (Billy Flynn), Joel Grey (Amos Hart), Marcia Lewis (Matron "Mama" Morton) and D. Sabella (Mary Sunshine).

# ***The Sydney Morning Herald***

**“CHICAGO”**

**Reviewed by Jason Blake • May 19, 2009 • Lyric Theatre, Star City**

ACCORDING to *Chicago's* celebrity lawyer Billy Flynn, the old razzle-dazzle works wonders in the courtroom. But there's no room for fakes and finagles on this stage.

In Ann Reinking's and Walter Bobbie's staging of the musical, stripped of scenery, period costume and pretty lights, everything depends on the ensemble's precision and silky skills. The audience will spot anything less than razor-sharp in an instant.

The book has its roots in a now forgotten 1926 play by a former court reporter, Maurine Dallas Watkins, who had covered the sensational trials of Belva Gaertner and Beulah Sheriff Annan, both of whom had shot their lovers in drunken rages. Good women corrupted by hard liquor and bad men, it was argued. Both walked free.

After Watkins's death in 1969 John Kander, Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse seized on the plot and reframed the story in a vaudeville context. Gaertner became Velma Kelly; Annan, Roxie Hart. Together they became one of the great double acts in one of the truly timeless works of musical theatre.

In this version, which originated in New York in 1996, the orchestra sits on stage, tiered like jurors. As they play the brassy, blaring score, the characters emerge from the shadows to present "a story of murder, greed, corruption, violence, exploitation, adultery and treachery. All those things we hold near and dear to our hearts." It's a deeply sardonic portrait of American values.

Caroline O'Connor reprises the part of the wiry, scheming Velma she played in Sydney a decade ago and she is in complete command of all aspects of the role, matching a fiercely tight ensemble opener, *All That Jazz*, move for move. And she has to be right on top of her game throughout because Sharon Millerchip is outstanding as her partner-in-crime Roxie Hart, a deliciously wicked mix of kitten and vixen - a wiser, dirtier and more knowing Roxie than Chelsea Gibb's portrayal in the 1999 production. That show was Velma's. This one - by a nose - is Roxie's.

Those who can't get their heads around the idea of Craig McLachlan as Billy Flynn are in for a surprise. Looking every inch the Yale man, he imbues Flynn with the kind of smirking gravitas you might expect from a heavy hitter such as Kelsey Grammer.

The vocal strength of Gina Riley's Mama Morton is a surprise, too. *When You're Good To Mama* is a fraction shouty in the final bars but her duet with O'Connor, *Class*, is just that. Excellent work, too, from Damien Birmingham as Amos Hart, who self-erases very poignantly into Mr. Cellophane.

There aren't many things you can bank on these days, it seems, but this sexy, pin-sharp and near flawless production is one of them.

## ***Chicago* • Cambridge Theatre, London**

**“Wrong destiny for Michelle”** *(Rated 2/5)*

**Reviewed by Rhoda Koenig • Tuesday, 21 July 2009**

The role of the murderess Roxie Hart in the musical *Chicago* must have seemed a good choice for the London stage debut of Michelle Williams, late of Destiny's Child. The revival of John Kander, Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse's musical, directed by Walter Bobbie, has accommodated many and various talents in its 12-year run, and the part, a caricature of the wide-eyed but cold-blooded killer elevated to stardom by the tabloids of the Twenties, would seem to require little acting ability. Written for Fosse's wife Gwen Verdon, a dancer with a very small vocal range, the songs are undemanding. His sex-machine choreography (recreated by Ann Reinking) is mostly small, easily managed, drop-dead-cool movements, such as rotating shoulders and clockwork-doll raised and lowered arms. (The splits are left to Leigh Zimmerman as Roxie's cellmate Velma Kelly, and the members of the chorus.)

But the most important quality for the role is one that does not appear in a straightforward inventory of its characteristics – or in Williams' performance. *Chicago* is a dark, dark show, dependent on its casting for falling on the right side of the boundary between cynical and depressing. Its female murderers can count on being acquitted so long as they put up an extravagantly lachrymose defence to let the public wallow in sensation and sentiment.

In order for the role to be amusing rather than distasteful, the actress cast as Roxie has to play against it. Verdon managed it with fragile-but-persistent vulnerability, and others have given it some of the radiant ingenuousness of Marilyn Monroe as Lorelei Lee of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* ("It seems that I had a revolver in my hand and it seems that the revolver had shot Mr Jennings").

Williams, however, by playing the part in a literal-minded way, creates a Roxie who is small, hard, and mean. She gives the role smugness instead of softness and becomes less sympathetic than Zimmerman, who, though meant to be the nastier one, has a sensuality and easy grace that constantly outshines Williams. At times she doesn't seem to be acting at all, as when she sits waiting for her turn to perform with the polite boredom of a singer at an audition rather than a jailed murderess suspicious of everyone's every move.

Williams isn't helped by the fact that the show's audience-pleasing numbers are given to others: Zimmerman puts plenty of pizzazz into a paean to the late-night joys of Chicago and a daffy one-woman demonstration of a double act, and Di Botcher, as the prison matron, brings down the house with a Weill-style brothelkeeper's ballad. Williams' songs are far smaller in scale and she doesn't bring to them the outsize emotion (such as that of Eddie Cantor or Helen Morgan) that they were meant to satirise, in the musical's depiction of show business narcissism as the prevailing tone of contemporary society.

Like many before her, Williams has underestimated the colossal amount of energy needed to power a musical-comedy performance. She is never incompetent or embarrassing, but, as George S Kaufman said, "adequate" is another word for "inadequate".

*Michelle Williams will appear until 22 August.*

## ***Chicago Tribune***

### **“Chicago the Musical” at the Oriental Theatre: The old razzle dazzle**

**Chris Jones    June 08, 2011**

**THEATER REVIEW: “Chicago the Musical” ★★★** *Through June 12 at the Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St.; Running time: 2 hours, 25 minutes; Tickets: \$30-\$95 at 800-775-2000 and [broadwayinchicago.com](http://broadwayinchicago.com)*

With most touring shows the age of the musical “Chicago” — 14 years and counting — producers are sorely tempted to try a bit of the old hocus pocus. You can snare audiences with the familiar title, and then quietly cut down the set, replace the musicians with computers, fire those union actors and hire some eager kids just out of college.

“What if your hinges all are rusting,” go the lyrics by the late, great Fred Ebb. “What if, in fact, you're just disgusting? Razzle dazzle ‘em. And they'll never catch wise.”

Here in Chicago, we try to stay vigilant. And I'll say this for the producers Barry and Fran Weissler. They have rolled “Chicago” into its namesake city many, many times — this must be my 10th review — but never without a full Equity cast, the requisite number of horns in the band and a very good sprinkling of Broadway artists such as Ron Orbach (readers with long memories will remember he was the first Franz Liebkind in “The Producers” until he broke his leg here in Chicago) and the spectacular Roz Ryan, whose definitive Mama Morton has been good to me many times, and was good to me again on Tuesday night at the Oriental Theatre.

The current Roxie and Velma, Tracy Shayne and Terra C. MacLeod, are also no slouches. Both have done plenty of Broadway stints in their roles — in Shayne's case, dating back seven years or more. This is a show you only want to see performed by people who've paid their dues. Here, you don't need to ask for receipts.

Better yet, the Weissler have always opened their wallets and done a little extra for Chicago — they coaxed the silver-haired John O'Hurley to do another week as the silver-tongued lawyer Billy Flynn. The perfectly coiffed O'Hurley — whose silky delivery makes his newscaster doppelganger Bill Kurtis sound raspy in comparison — comes with just the right tinge of self-parody. We don't need stunt casting in the Velma and Roxie roles; leave that for New York. We'd rather have the likes of Shayne, who has a very striking fragility, and MacLeod, all heart and guts. And O'Hurley is just right.

Does “Chicago” convey all of its initial excitement? Of course not. On Tuesday night, one missed the force of sound that has sometimes flowed from the stage in great waves on such incomparable Kander and Ebb anthems as “I Am My Own Best Friend.” Shayne in particular does not have a massive voice, but she has a very lovely one that could use a little more help from the mixing board, which seemed to be more interested in the brass than the brassy dames on Tuesday. That, I hope, will be fixed before you've acted on this review.

But it's mostly a pleasure to take one more trip to the Cook County Jail and witness the results of what happened when a prescient Chicago Tribune reporter named Maurine Dallas Watkins saw the show-business possibilities of the tale-spinning Chicagoans on her beat. This production, which features some stellar ensemble work, deserves a good welcome home, although there also is something about seeing veteran actors and Bob Fosse dancers like these do “Chicago” in a half-empty theater, where you can taste their disdain for cheap, temporary celebrity with all of its painfully tangible rewards.

# SONG LYRICS

## **All That Jazz**

[VELMA]

Come on babe  
Why don't we paint the  
town?  
And all that jazz  
I'm gonna rouge my  
knees  
And roll my stockings  
down  
And all that jazz

Start the car  
I know a whoopee spot  
Where the gin is cold  
But the piano's hot  
It's just a noisy hall  
Where there's a nightly  
brawl  
And all that jazz

[VELMA]

Slick your hair  
And wear your buckle  
shoes  
And all that jazz  
I hear that Father Dip  
Is gonna blow the blues  
And all that jazz  
Hold on, hon  
We're gonna bunny hug  
I bought some aspirin  
Down at United Drug  
In case you shake apart  
And want a brand new  
start  
To do that - Jazz

[COMPANY]

Skidoo!

[VELMA]

And all that jazz

[COMPANY]

Hotcha! Whoopee!

[VELMA]

And all that jazz

[COMPANY]

Ha! Ha! Ha!

[VELMA]

It's just a noisy hall  
Where there's a nightly brawl  
And all that jazz  
Find a flask  
We're playing fast and loose

[ALL]

And all that jazz

[VELMA]

Right up here  
Is where I store the juice

[ALL]

And all that jazz

[VELMA]

Come on, babe  
We're gonna brush the sky  
I bet your lucky Lindy  
Never flew so high  
'Cause in the stratosphere  
How could he lend an ear  
to all that jazz?

[COMPANY]

Oh, you're gonna see your  
sheba shimmy shake

[VELMA]

And all that jazz

[COMPANY]

Oh, she's gonna shimmy 'till  
her garters break

[VELMA]

And all that jazz

[COMPANY]

Show her where to park  
her girdle  
Oh, her mother's blood'd  
curdle  
If she'd hear her baby's  
queer  
For all that jazz

[VELMA]

And all that jazz  
And all that jazz  
Come on babe  
Why don't we paint the  
town?

And all that jazz

I'm gonna rouge my  
knees

And roll my stockings  
down

And all that jazz

Start the car

I know a whoopee spot  
Where the gin is cold

But the piano's hot

It's just a noisy hall

Where there's a nightly  
brawl

And all that-

[COMPANY]

Jazz

[VELMA]

No, I'm no one's wife  
But, Oh, I love my life  
And all that jazz!

[COMPANY]

That jazz!

# The Cell Block Tango

[ANNOUNCER] And now the six merry murderesses of the Cook County Jail in their rendition of "The Cell Block Tango"

[LIZ] Pop  
[ANNIE] Six  
[JUNE] Squish  
[HUNYAK] Uh uh  
[VELMA] Cicero  
[MONA] Lipschitz!  
(4X)

[ALL]  
He had it coming  
He had it coming  
He only had himself to blame  
If you'd have been there  
If you'd have seen it

[LIZ] Pop  
[ANNIE] Six  
[JUNE] Squish  
[HUNYAK] Uh uh  
[VELMA] Cicero  
[MONA] Lipschitz!

[VELMA]  
I betcha you would have  
done the same!

[LIZ (Spoken)]

*You know how people have these little habits that get you down. Like Bernie. Bernie liked to chew gum. No, not chew. POP. So I came home this one day and I am really irritated and looking for a little sympathy and there's Bernie layin' on the couch, drinkin' a beer and chewin'. No, not chewin'. Poppin'! So, I said to him, I said, "You pop that gum one more time..." and he did. So I took the shotgun off the wall and I fired two warning shots... into his head.*

[ALL]

He had it coming  
He had it coming  
He only had himself to blame

If you'd have been there  
If you'd have heard it  
I betcha you would have done the same!

[ANNIE (Spoken)]

*I met Ezekiel Young from Salt Lake City about two years ago and he told me he was single and we hit it off right away. So, we started living together. He'd go to work, he'd come home, I'd fix him a drink, we'd have dinner. And then I found out, "Single" he told me? Single, my ass. Not only was he married...oh, no, he had six wives. One of those Mormons, you know. So that night, when he came home, I fixed him his drink as usual. You know, some guys just can't hold their arsenic*

[ALL]

He had it coming  
He had it coming  
He took a flower in its prime

And then he used it  
And he abused it  
It was a murder But not a crime!

[JUNE (Spoken)]

*Now, I'm standing in the kitchen, carvin' up the chicken for dinner, minding my own business, and in storms my husband Wilbur, in a jealous rage. "You been screwin' the milkman," he says. He was crazy and he kept screamin', "you been screwin' the milkman." And then he ran into my knife. He ran into my knife ten times!*

[ALL]

If you'd have been there  
If you'd have seen it  
I betcha you would have done the same!

[HUNYAK (Spoken in Hungarian)]

*Mit kersek, en itt? Azt mondjok, hogy a hires lakem lefogta a ferjemet en meg lecsaptam a fejet. De nem igaz, en artatlan vagyok. Nem tudom mert mondja Uncle Sam hogy en tettem. Probaltam a rendorsegen megmayarazni de nem ertettek meg...*

[JUNE (Spoken)] Yeah, but did you do it?

[HUNYAK] Uh uh, not guilty!

[VELMA]

*My sister, Veronica and I did this double act and my husband, Charlie, used to travel round with us. Now, for the last number in our act, we did these 20 acrobatic tricks in a row. One, two, three, four, five...splits, spread eagles, back flips, flip flops, one right after the other. So this one night before the show we're down at the hotel Cicero, the three of us, boozin', havin' a few laughs and we ran out of ice, so I go out to get some. I come back, open the door, and there's Veronica and Charlie doing Number Seventeen- the spread eagle. Well, I was in such a state of shock, I completely blacked out. I can't remember a thing. It wasn't until later, when I was washing the blood off my hands, I even knew they were dead!*

[VELMA]

They had it coming  
They had it coming  
They had it coming all along  
I didn't do it  
But if I done it  
How could you tell me that  
I was wrong?

[VELMA] They had it coming

[GIRLS] They had it coming

VELMA] They had it coming

[GIRLS] They had it coming

[VELMA] They had it  
coming

[GIRLS] They took a flower

[VELMA] All along

[GIRLS] In its prime

[VELMA] I didn't do it

[GIRLS] And then they  
used it

[VELMA]

But if I'd done it,  
How could you tell me  
that I was wrong?

[MONA(Spoken)]

*I loved Al Lipschitz more than I can possibly say. He was a real artistic guy...sensitive... a painter. But he was always trying to find himself. He'd go out every night looking for himself and on the way he found Ruth, Gladys, Rosemary and Irving. I guess you can say we broke up because of artistic differences! He saw himself as alive...and I saw him dead!*

[ALL]

The dirty bum, bum, bum, bum, bum

The dirty bum, bum, bum, bum, bum

[Group 2] And they abused us

[ALL] How could you tell us that we were  
wrong?

[Group 1] They had it comin'

[Group 2] They had it comin'

[Group 1] They had it comin'

[Group 2] They had it comin'

[Group 1] They had it comin'

[Group 2] They had it comin'

[Group 1] All along

[Group 2] All along

[Group 1] 'Cause if they used us

[Group 2] 'Cause if they used us

[Group 1] And they abused us

[Group 1] He had it coming

[Group 2] He had it coming

[Group 1] He only had himself to blame

[Group 2] He only had himself to blame

[Group 1] If you'd have been there

[Group 2] If you'd have been there

[Group 1] If you'd have seen it

[Group 2] If you'd have seen it

[ALL] I betcha you would have done the  
same!

[LIZ (Spoken)] *You pop that gum one more time!*  
 [ANNIE (spoken)] *Single my ass!*  
 [JUNE (Spoken)] *Ten times!*  
 [HUNYAK (Spoken)] *Miert csukott Uncle Same bortonbe!*  
 [VELMA (Spoken)] *Number seventeen-the spread eagle!*  
 [MONA (Spoken)] *Artistic differences*  
 [ALL] I betcha you would have done the same!

## When You're Good to Mama

[MAMA MORTON]

Ask any of the chickies in my pen.  
 They'll tell you I'm the biggest mother  
 hen.  
 I love 'em all and all of them love me.  
 Because the system works  
 The system called reciprocity...

Got a little motto  
 Always sees me through  
 When you're good to Mama  
 Mama's good to you

There's a lot of favors  
 I'm prepared to do  
 You do one for Mama  
 She'll do one for you

They say that life is tit for tat  
 And that's the way I live  
 So, I deserve a lot of tat  
 For what I've got to give

Don't you know that this hand  
 Washes that one too  
 When you're good to Mama  
 Mama's good to you

If you want my gravy  
 Pepper my ragout  
 Spice it up for Mama  
 She'll get hot for you

When they pass that basket  
 Folks contribute to  
 You put in for Mama  
 She'll put out for you

The folks atop the ladder  
 Are the ones the world  
 adores  
 So boost me up my ladder,  
 Kid  
 And I'll boost you up yours

Let's all stroke together  
 Like the Princeton crew  
 When you're strokin'  
 Mama  
 Mama's strokin' you

So what's the one  
 conclusion  
 I can bring this number  
 to?  
 When you're good to  
 Mama  
 Mama's good to you!

## A Little Bit of Good

[MARY SUNSHINE]

When I was a tiny tot  
 Of maybe two or three  
 I can still remember what  
 My mother said to me...

Place rose colored glasses  
 On your nose  
 And you will see the robins  
 Not the crows

For in this tense and tangled web  
 Our weary lives may weave  
 You're so much better off  
 If you believe...

That there's a little bit of good  
 In everyone  
 In everyone you'll ever know

Yes, there's a little bit of good  
 In everyone  
 Though many times,  
 it doesn't show

It only takes the taking time  
 With one another  
 For under every mean veneer  
 Is someone warm and dear  
 Keep looking...

For that bit of good in everyone  
 The ones we call bad  
 Are never all bad  
 So try to find that little bit of  
 good!  
 Just a little, little bit of good

Is someone warm and dear  
 Keep looking...

For that little good in everyone  
 Although you meet rats  
 They're not complete rats  
 So try to find that little bit of  
 good!

## Razzle Dazzle

[BAILIFF (Spoken)] *Mr. Flynn, his honor is here*

[ROXIE(Spoken)] *Oh Billy, I'm scared*

[BILLY(Spoken)]

*Roxie, you got nothing to worry about  
It's all a circus, kid. A three ring circus  
These trials- the whole world- all show business  
But kid, you're working with a star, the biggest!*

[BILLY(Singing)]

Give 'em the old razzle dazzle  
Razzle Dazzle 'em  
Give 'em an act with lots of  
flash in it  
And the reaction will be  
passionate  
Give 'em the old hocus pocus  
Bead and feather 'em  
How can they see with  
sequins in their eyes?

What if your hinges all are  
rusting?  
What if, in fact, you're just  
disgusting?  
Razzle dazzle 'em  
And they'll never catch wise!

Give 'em the old Razzle  
Dazzle

[BILLY AND COMPANY]  
Razzle dazzle 'em  
Give 'em a show that's so  
splendiferous

[BILLY]

Row after row will crow  
vociferous

[BILLY AND COMPANY]

Give 'em the old flim flam  
flummox  
Fool and fracture 'em

[BILLY]

How can they hear the truth  
above the roar?

[BILLY AND COMPANY]

Throw 'em a fake and a  
finagle  
They'll never know you're  
just a bagel

[BILLY]

Razzle dazzle 'em  
And they'll beg you for more!

[BILLY AND COMPANY]

Give 'em the old razzle dazzle  
Razzle dazzle 'em  
Back since the days of old  
Methuselah  
Everyone loves the big  
bambooz-a-ler  
Give 'em the old three ring  
circus

Stun and stagger 'em  
When you're in trouble, go  
into your dance

Though you are stiffer than a  
girder  
They'll let you get away with  
murder  
Razzle dazzle 'em  
And you've got a romance

[COMPANY]

Give 'em the old Razzle  
Dazzle

[BILLY]

Give 'em an act that  
understandable  
They'll wait a year til you're  
available

Give 'em the old Razzle  
Dazzle

Razzle dazzle 'em  
Show 'em the first rate  
sorcerer you are  
Long as you keep 'em way off  
balance  
How can they spot you've got  
no talent  
Razzle Dazzle 'em

[BILLY AND COMPANY]

Razzle Dazzle 'em  
Razzle Dazzle 'em  
And they'll make you a star!

## ACTIVITIES

### QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- In “He Had It Comin’,” to what do “pop, six, squish, uh uh, Cicero, Lipschitz” refer?
- Does Roxie get back together with her husband after the trial?
- The Announcer says, “You are about to see a story of murder, greed, corruption, violence, exploitation, adultery, and treachery.” Why is the word “scandal” not used in the description?
- In planning her trial, whose handkerchief does Velma want to ask for during her trial?
- What does Billy want Amos to do to Roxie?
- According to the “Press Conference Rag,” where did Roxie come from?
- What is the title of Mary Sunshine’s paper?
- What was the name of Velma’s husband?
- How many merry murderesses of the Cook county Jail are there?
- What night club regular did Roxie kill?

### ASSIGNMENTS, RESEARCH, AND WRITING PROMPTS

#### Historical Context

- Is *Chicago* reflective of the justice system in the 1920s? Why or why not?
- Read the article entitled “Chicago: The True Murders that Inspired the Movie” in the “History” section. Did *Chicago* accurately tell the real-life stories that inspired it, or did the authors have to fictionalize some parts for dramatic reasons? Give specific examples to support your answer.
- What made *Chicago*’s original premiere in 1975 unsuccessful relative to its revival in 1996?

#### Theme

- What is the theme of *Chicago*?
- Review the song lyrics earlier in the packet. How do the song lyrics or dialogue contribute to the theme?
- How is *Chicago* a satire?
- Discuss how shows like *Saturday Night Live* and *Mad TV* satire current events. How are these television shows similar to or different from musicals like *Chicago*?
- *Chicago* shows how the media can influence the outcome of court cases. Give some recent examples of where media has influenced a trial decision.

#### Symbolism

- What does Mary Sunshine’s naiveté symbolize?
- At the end of *Chicago*, one murderess is hanged, but both Roxie and Velma are freed from jail. What does this show?
- Read the lyrics for “When You’re good to Mama” in the Song section. What does Mama Morton’s character and her song suggest about the justice system?
- Read the lyrics for “All That Jazz” in the Songs section. What does the “jazz” symbolize?

## CHICAGO Word Search

T	E	V	J	A	U	C	N	N	R	K	R	T	R	M
T	P	L	M	L	P	N	A	N	I	O	X	V	I	U
Q	G	L	Z	Y	U	J	D	Y	K	I	W	C	A	R
V	E	B	H	Z	V	Q	M	L	T	K	C	O	I	D
V	R	U	N	U	A	M	Y	F	F	C	G	P	R	E
X	M	H	T	E	O	D	V	Y	F	C	C	K	A	R
L	G	T	T	W	G	E	E	L	N	S	L	S	W	E
O	G	N	A	T	K	C	O	L	B	L	L	E	C	S
X	T	N	E	C	O	N	N	I	Z	H	X	C	F	S
K	Z	N	R	O	U	Q	D	B	Z	Z	D	Z	C	I
M	A	M	A	M	O	R	T	O	N	E	A	G	U	N
S	O	Y	K	O	X	L	R	H	I	I	U	R	F	I
T	G	U	N	S	H	P	D	Z	V	X	I	H	N	L
B	M	G	Q	U	O	A	S	E	N	O	S	D	P	H
H	Z	Y	B	B	H	O	K	A	G	R	D	T	C	W

Find these words in the puzzle:

BILLY FLYNN  
CELL BLOCK TANGO  
GUN  
HUNYAK  
INNOCENT  
MAMA MORTON  
MURDERESS  
RAZZLE DAZZLE  
ROW  
ROXIE  
VELMA