

a chorus line



Monday 8 –
Sunday 14
September 2025

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a chorus line

The legendary musical

Conceived and originally Directed & Choreographed by Michael Bennett

Book by James Kirkwood & Nicholas Dante

Lyrics by Edward Kleban

Music by Marvin Hamlisch

Co-choreographed by Bob Avian

Original Broadway production produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival, Joseph Papp Theatre in association with Play Production Inc.

Director: Joseph Meighan

Musical Director: Mark Goggins

Choreographer: Louise Pettitt

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Matinee at 2:30pm, Sat 13 Sept
Matinee at 6:00pm, Sun 14 Sept

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Based upon his award-winning BBC Radio 4 Comedy series

Directed by Pete Brassington

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Lyrics by Scott Whitman & Marc Shaiman

Book by David Greig

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Director: Joseph Meighan

Musical Director: Simon Mercer-Murray

Thurs 23 – Sun 26 October & Weds 29 October – Sun 2 November 2025

Evenings: 7:30 pm (except Sunday 26, Sunday 2)

Matinee: Sunday 26 October at 6:30 pm
Sunday 29 October at 2:30 pm
Sunday 26 October at 1:30 pm
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Music by Frederick Loewe

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Musical Director: Mark Goggins

Choreography: Louise Pettitt

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Matinee at 2:30pm, Sat 27 June
Matinee at 4:00pm, Sun 28 June

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Directed by Joseph Meighan

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Hello and Welcome

...to Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, and the opening production of our 2025-26 Season.

When *A Chorus Line* first opened at the Public Theater in New York in 1975, it revolutionised the American musical. Conceived by Michael Bennett and created through workshop sessions with real Broadway dancers, the show stripped away the traditional glamour of musical theatre to reveal the raw, unvarnished stories of performers struggling for a place in the chorus. With music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Edward Kleban, it was groundbreaking not for elaborate sets or spectacle, but for its honesty: a group of dancers standing on a bare stage, telling their truths. This intimacy struck a chord with audiences, making *A Chorus Line* both a critical and commercial triumph. It moved to Broadway the same year, won nine Tony Awards, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and ran for 15 years – at the time becoming the longest-running musical in Broadway history.

Over five decades, *A Chorus Line* has evolved from an experimental workshop piece into an iconic fixture of the musical theatre canon. Its influence can be seen in countless shows that foreground personal stories and ensemble-driven narratives. The format – interweaving monologues with song and dance – paved the way for later works that blur the line between autobiography and performance. Productions worldwide have adapted the show to reflect contemporary audiences, while preserving the universal themes of ambition, sacrifice, identity, and resilience.

The musical's longevity also stems from its timeless subject matter: the human cost of pursuing a dream. While the dancers' experiences are rooted in the 1970s, their struggles with insecurity, rejection, and the desire to be seen remain as relevant today as ever. Over the years, revivals and tours have updated casting and cultural references, ensuring the piece continues to resonate across generations. The 2006 Broadway revival, for instance, reintroduced the show to a new audience while highlighting its enduring emotional power.

Now, at its 50th anniversary, *A Chorus Line* stands as more than a period piece – it is a landmark of theatrical storytelling. Its minimalist staging and deeply personal narratives have secured its place as a classic, cherished by performers and audiences alike. What began as a workshop experiment among dancers has become an emblem of the Broadway dream: vulnerable, relentless, and profoundly human.

Yet again, I'm thrilled to have been able to gather together a brilliantly talented company, both onstage and behind the scenes, for this production. Some of the faces you will recognise as Garrick regulars, others are returning after a having achieved successes elsewhere, and several of the cast are making their debuts with us. I'm also once again indebted to both Mark Goggins and Louise Pettitt for having agreed to join in the fun of putting this show together, and also to the unbelievably dedicated, talented corps of people that you don't actually see, but whose hard work and commitment to maintaining the quality of shows that we stage is simply invaluable.

I'm proud that we are an organisation that is able to give opportunities to many talented people of all ages and backgrounds. Any theatrical organisation is only as good as the people it involves, and there's still room for you to join in! Whatever your experience or expertise, you'll be assured of a warm and friendly welcome. Whether it's singing with the *Altrincham Garrick Show Choir*, learning as a youngster with *GAPA*, joining in social events like our *Play-Reading Club*, or working behind the scenes or even on-stage in our huge variety of productions, we need you! Get in touch today.

On the opposite page you'll see details of just some of the hugely exciting Main House productions that we have planned for our 2025-26 Season, and once again we are delighted to offer 'something for everyone', with contemporary and classic dramas, comedies, musicals, shows for all the family, and also a series of six productions in our Studio Theatre based around a 'Manchester Drama' theme. We would encourage you to book early for all of these productions – tickets are on sale now! But also – keep your eyes on social media for a couple of huge announcements coming up in the next month – we think you'll be really thrilled to hear what else we have planned!

I sincerely hope that you enjoy tonight's production. Many thanks for supporting us, have a safe journey home afterwards, and we look forward to welcoming you back very soon!



Joe

Joseph Meighan

Artistic Director, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse.

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Programme written, designed and produced for the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse by Nick Sample Creative Graphic Design 07950 332 645 njcsample1@mac.com www.nicksample.co.uk

"God, I hope I get it!"

"We call them the gypsies – and they call themselves that. They are homeless, wandering people for the most part, defying all the conventions. They dress as they please – sloppy slacks and beat-up old sweaters seem to be the most popular street garments. As soon as they arrive at the theatre, they change into rehearsal clothes of an unglamorous nature. The contrast between the lovely airborne creatures who will appear in music and light and colour upon the stage, and these drab, lacklustre girls in their brown, black and grey union suits known as leotards is always incredible... Most of them live only for their art. They have turned to the dance because of a need to express themselves". – George Abbott, 1964.

All Michael Bennett DiFiglia ever wanted was to be one of those wandering, convention-defying people – or better yet, the guy who showed them what to do. Born in 1943 in Buffalo, he was encouraged by his parents to pursue his early interest in dance; they bankrolled his dance classes and trips to Manhattan to see *Damn Yankees*. His precociousness was matched only by his talent; by his teens, Michael had his own dance company and was appearing on a local TV show. At the age of seventeen, he left high school and Buffalo ("To commit suicide in Buffalo is redundant" volunteers one of the characters in *A Chorus Line*) to tour in *West Side Story*. He made his Broadway debut in 1961, dancing in the chorus – and sometimes being featured – in several mediocre Broadway shows that at least displayed challenging choreography by the likes of Peter Gennaro and Michael Kidd.

Bennett made his debut as a Broadway choreographer in 1966 and worked his way through several flops, acquiring, as he went, a coterie of colleagues who would become invaluable to him in the future, among them Donna McKechnie, Baayork Lee, Tommy Tune, and Bob Avian. Bennett had his first big hit as choreographer with his fluid discotheque-inspired dances for *Promises, Promises* and went on to choreograph *Company* in 1970 and to co-direct and choreograph *Follies* in 1971. Directing and choreographing his own musical from scratch was his passion but, as of 1974, despite the immense praise (and a Tony) he had received for his earlier work, which had also included making his directorial debut on the play *Twigs* and overseeing the slick musical comedy *Seesaw*, that particular prize had eluded him.

It was a fortuitous combination of Bennett's personal ambition and a larger professional desperation that created *A Chorus Line*. The Broadway scene in the early 1970s was discouraging for everyone

in the musical field, but particularly harsh for dancers in the chorus line, the gypsies. The big shows of the 1960s, with their huge dancing choruses, were curtailing their runs both in New York and on the road; it was getting harder and harder to find jobs.

Two Broadway chorus dancers, Tony Stevens and Michon Peacock, were so dismayed by the prospects on Broadway that they decided to organise a discussion session with a group of gypsies to explore their lives and future professional possibilities. They asked Bennett, who had been toying with the idea of a show about dancers for some time, to help run their session. On the night of January 18th, 1974, at the Nickolaus Exercise Centers on East 23rd Street, New York, eighteen dancers, many of whom had worked with Bennett, gathered for an all-night discussion about what it meant to be a Broadway dancer. It was late at night because most of the dancers who had been invited were working, and couldn't meet up until after their shows. Bennett provided food and wine – "very cheap red wine" said Donna McKechnie, who later played Cassie in the show (and also married Bennett for a short period). Another important participant was a reel-to-reel tape recorder...



Above: Michael Bennett leading the company in rehearsals for the original production. Top: A formal portrait of Michael Bennett in 1966.

Donna McKechnie, who created the role of Cassie, recalled:

"In the tape sessions, Michael essentially asked the first questions that are put to the characters in the play: Step forward. Tell me your name, where you're from, when you were born, and why did you want to become a dancer. And we started talking and all of these things came out, beyond facts; it was all of everybody's secret passions and dreams and desires, and we found great delight and surprise that so many people felt the same way about so many things".

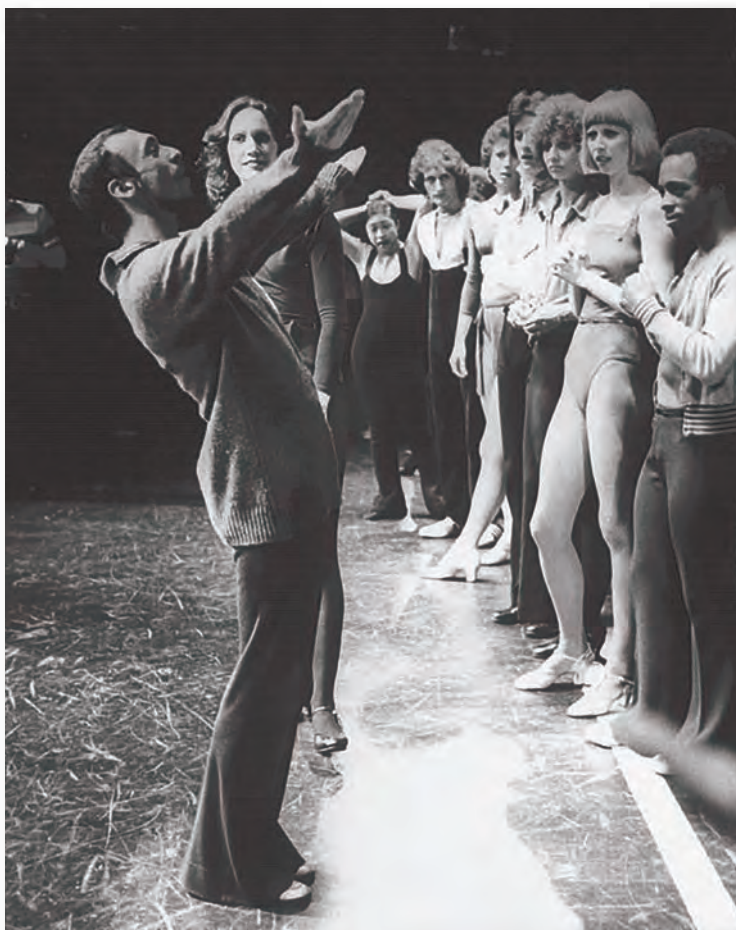
With Bennett asking most of the questions, and fuelled by wine, the dancers told their stories. Many had grown up in unhappy households. Some talked about alcoholic parents. Others spoke about philandering fathers and broken marriages. Many of the men talked about their sexuality, and the consequences of hiding it from friends and family. Nicholas Dante recalled his experiences of working at night as a drag queen in a tawdry club. His story would inspire what would become the show's climax – the character Paul's monologue about meeting his parents, unexpectedly, at the stage door of a drag club where he worked.

One dancer talked about her weak singing voice and how it hurt her auditions (*'Sing!'*). Another spoke about her father's string of infidelities and how she found solace at ballet class (*'At the Ballet'*). The session lasted 12 hours, and was so fruitful that Bennett decided to hold another.

When Bennett told his lawyer, John Breglio, about the tapes and his plan to make a show from them, Breglio blanched. *"Wait a minute. You can't have all these people sitting around telling you their life stories for a show. You're going to have 20 authors – and 20 lawsuits. You've got to get them to sign a release."*



In the end, the dancers who took part in the recordings waived their right for their life stories for a dollar each – and the stipulation that, if their stories were used, their names would be changed. When the show became a hit, Bennett had Breglio draw up a contract that gave a share of the royalties to the dancers. At the height of its popularity, *A Chorus Line* earned close to \$10,000 a year for each dancer. That, of course, was nothing compared with the millions of dollars it earned Bennett. And many of the original dancers would later complain that they had sold their lives for a pittance. But nobody had any idea that two tape sessions would become the basis for the (then) biggest hit in Broadway history.



Above: Michael Bennett and Joseph Papp. Top: Donna McKechnie as Cassie (2nd right) and Robert Lupone (elder brother of Patti, right) as Zach in the original production.

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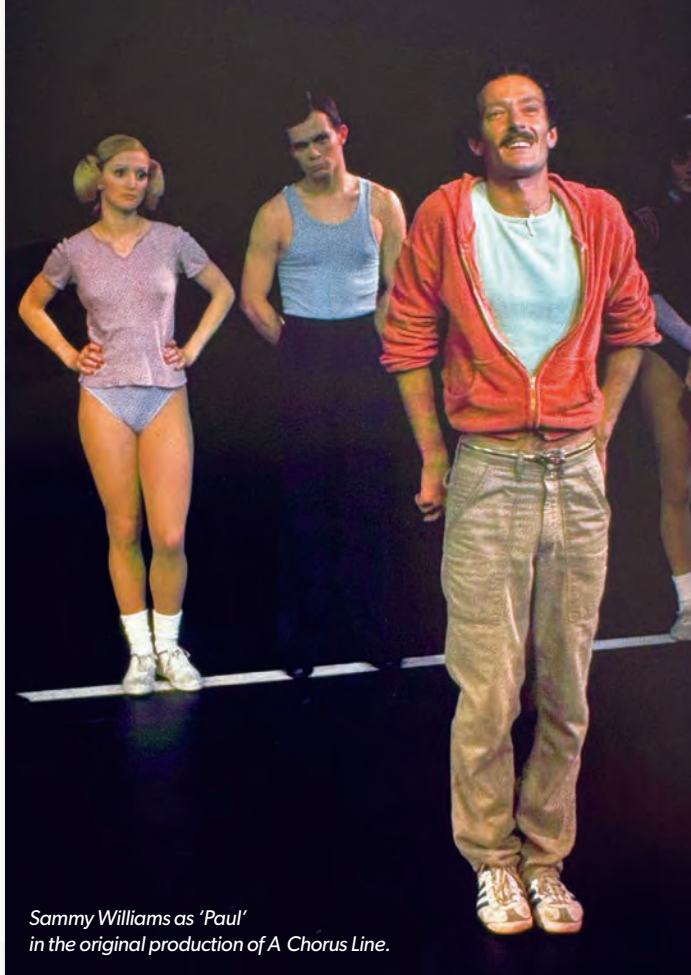
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Sammy Williams as 'Paul'
in the original production of *A Chorus Line*.

When the tapes were eventually transcribed, Bennett and his group, which included Nicholas Dante, a dancer with playwriting aspirations, knew they had something, but they weren't quite sure what.

Their problems were solved, or perhaps extended, by producer Joseph Papp. The producer had supposedly wanted Bennett to overhaul a musical that was in trouble at the Public Theater, *More Than You Deserve*, which featured a performer named Meat Loaf. Bennett had another idea, however, and arrived at Papp's office carrying a reef-to-reel tape recorder. He had nearly 24 hours of interviews with Broadway dancers and thought there might be a show in it. After listening to the recordings for 45 minutes, Papp said. "OK. let's do it."

Papp gave Bennett a rehearsal room for five weeks and money to hire some dancers and creative staff at \$100 a week each, and he demanded very little in return. Bennett recounted: "I don't think (Papp) always understood what we were doing, but he always understood that we were passionate about what we were doing, and he kept writing the checks."

The group that assembled downtown near Astor Place in August 1974 was a mixed bag. To write the music, Bennett turned to Marvin Hamlisch, who'd just won Oscars for *The Way We Were* and *The Sting*. He was one of the most sought-after composers in Hollywood and stood to earn millions scoring movies. But Hamlisch had dreamed since childhood of writing a Broadway musical.

Composer and lyricist Edward Kleban came aboard to write lyrics; Nicholas Dante would function as a writer, alongside Bennett; and frequent collaborator Bob Avian was the co-choreographer. The cast was selected from many of the dancers who participated in the taped session – but not all of them; some dancers were not considered right to tell their own stories, so several were re-assigned to other dancers.

The first five-week workshop led to a second seven-week one at the beginning of 1975, where the exploration would go deeper, and with the addition of James Kirkwood as a co-librettist, elements of the show would finally be set.

"One day in rehearsal, Michael Bennett took a chalk and - wham! - drew a line on the floor, and he said that's the line that we're all behind, we're all on the line. Well, now, with us all on the line it becomes: "Oh God, I need this job, I really need this job," Everything now changes, it's not just about dancers and their résumés and showing off, it's "I'm desperate, I am desperate for this thing in my life" - somehow or other, we're all in it together." - Marvin Hamlisch.

The finale of the show had the eight selected dancers performing (along with their rejected colleagues) a typical rousing show-stopper – *"One"* – backing up a non-existent star. At one point, Bennett thought of bringing someone different out of the audience every night to be the *"Ann-Margret of the evening,"* but that was abandoned. The point was, as cast member Baayork Lee observed, *"After two hours of spilling our guts out and just cutting our wrist and giving this choreographer everything that we have and begging him for the job, you finally get to see the job that we are auditioning for and we are all in the same costume and we all look alike and we all dance alike."* That image was key to Bennett; it was a way of highlighting the anonymity of the chorus performer.

In April, the time came to open the show at the Public's 299-seat Newman Theatre. Whatever the audience was going to see on April 16, it was certainly going to be different. The show received unprecedented word of mouth from the preview audience, and by the time the reviews came out, a commercial transfer to Broadway was a foregone conclusion. The Shubert Organization had contributed "enhancement money" to the project at the Public and quickly moved *A Chorus Line* to the Shubert Theatre on Broadway in July, only weeks after it closed its sold-out run at the Public. It caught the public's imagination and became Broadway's longest-running show in September 1983, continuing after that for another seven years, eventually notching a record-breaking run of 6,137 performances. *A Chorus Line* won every prize the theatre can offer, including the Pulitzer and nine Tonys, two of which went to Bennett. He had overnight become the most desirable artist on Broadway.

The overwhelming success of the show is especially admirable because, in a history decorated with unlikely shows *A Chorus Line* was in many ways Broadway's most unlikely. It is an anti-musical or, perhaps more accurately, the first counterintuitive musical. It had no scenery beyond some mirrors, no costumes but leotards except for a few spangles for the finale, no setting other than a nondescript theatre, no intermission, and no star. Its very ethos was contrary to every convention the American musical had carefully built up over a century. Musicals (like *42nd Street*) had been about girls getting out of the chorus line to become stars; here, Cassie, Donna McKechnie's

character, was a star who was desperate to get back into the chorus line.

The immensely popular show changed Broadway in many ways. The idiosyncratic, neurotic characters and their psychological profiles were the first musical manifestation of a trend begun in the late 1960s to glamourise unglamorous people. In Hamlisch's energetic, backbeat-heavy score, Broadway finally found the pop-rock sound it had been waiting for since *Hair*. The show also provided the Broadway musical's first extended sympathetic portrayal of homosexuals; few will ever forget actor Sammy Williams, his hands crammed as deeply into his pockets as his shame, delivering the show's climactic monologue – a monologue, not a song – about his experience in a drag show.

A Chorus Line almost single-handedly raised the fortunes of Broadway. It certainly raised them for the Shubert Organization and became a cash cow for the nonprofit Shakespeare Festival, bringing it almost \$50 million in exchange for a \$500,000 investment in money and resources.

The image of Bennett's heroic army of beautifully toned dancers, clad only in pre-spandex leotards, infiltrated nearly every aspect of pop culture. Television specials paid tribute to 'gypsies', Hollywood re-discovered dance, producing movies such as *The Turning Point* and *All That Jazz* for the older crowd, and *Staying Alive*, *Footloose* and *Flashdance* for the younger crowd. Jane Fonda aerobicised on videotape, costumed like one of the eight dancers who get eliminated at the top of *A Chorus Line*, and became an idol to millions.



Michael Bennett, who had always had his eyes on the prize, finally "got it" in a way that eclipsed all others. The fact that he achieved his goal by introducing the world to the anonymity of the chorus line that he so desperately sought to escape is but one of *A Chorus Line*'s many ironies. He had a theatrical magic that allowed him to create Broadway's most exorbitant success out of its humblest practitioners.

Above, l to r: Bob Avian, James Kirkwood Jr., Joe Papp, Donna McKechnie, Marvin Hamlisch and Michael Bennett at the 1976 Tony Awards.

References: "Razzle Dazzle: The Battle for Broadway", by Michael Riedel, published by Simon & Schuster Inc. © by the author; "Broadway, The American Musical" by Michael Kantor and Laurence Maslon, published by Bulfinch Press, Time Warner Book Group, New York. © by the authors.; 'A Chorus Line – Curve Learning Pack'. Produced in 2024 by Curve, Leicester as a springboard for creative responses to the key issues and ideas raised in the musical A CHORUS LINE. Images by Shutterstock Inc. Alamy, iStockphoto.com.

"I'm a composer/lyricist. I usually do both. But in this case Michael and Marvin go back a long time, and they had plotted to do this show. Michael called me up about doing the lyrics and asked me to come over to his house. He played me a little of the tapes, and I loved the material. After I officially got the job, I had four to six weeks before Marvin was back in town. So I started going around to all the dance studios, listening to all the words, getting local colour. Doing the homework. I also listened to every minute of the tapes, and of course read the transcripts at length. I filled files with all kinds of things that I was interested in writing about. On this show I think of myself as supportive, as a kind of journalist-cum-theatre-songwriter, in that the transcripts were there.

Some of the songs came right from the tapes, like "Nothing" I don't mean to make it sound that easy. The word "nothing" was never used. But right from the top I was interested in doing a song about the bob-sled improvisation. On other songs, there wasn't enough in the transcript for me to get a bead on what I really wanted to know. That's when I instituted the method of interviewing some of the people on the tapes.

"Ballet" came out of an interview. We talked about her parents, fantasies – she was very open. She told me about how her father had said to her mother that it was her last chance for marriage. So I asked how old her mother was at the time – assuming that I would hear forty-five. And when I heard "twenty-two" – That's when lights go on and bells ring and you start to write your song."

Edward Kleban

"By this time I'm sure everyone knows that Paul San Marco is Nicholas Dante. I'd been a dancer for ten years, but the first time I'd ever auditioned for Michael Bennett was the night of the tape sessions. Now I know that he came there as a dancer – just to talk with, and about, dancers. But in my mind he was the director, and I was the dancer on that line. I didn't know if I would be able to tell about my life. But as the evening wore on, slowly - it all came out. By the time I'd finished talking, Michael knew that above all I was a survivor, and he admires that in people. So when he called and asked me if I'd like to write a show about the sessions we had, I was overwhelmed. I'd been writing for about ten years, but nothing had been produced. At first I thought all we'd have to do was edit, but I was wrong. We had to create a show, we had to write. We had thirty hours of tapes - they were the essence. It was like building a house. The foundation took thirty hours to build, the house took a year and a half. We went through six complete scripts, and from the original twenty-one people grew hundreds of characters who came and went overnight as we tried to hold onto certain truths. I learned from Michael, and he wrote a lot of this show. Then Jimmy Kirkwood joined us, and it was thrilling for me because he had written my favourite book, *Good Times, Bad Times*.

When we were finally ready to go into rehearsal, we had a four-hour script. By the time the final story emerged, we'd used only fifteen minutes of those original thirty hours. So here I am – that high school dropout, dancer-cum-writer. At last I'm part of a show that says we are all special, and yet ordinary. I'm a Buddhist, and I've learned that if you make a cause, you get an effect. I know I've been able to communicate and to touch other people by telling the story of Paul San Marco. And in my own life, *A Chorus Line* has enabled me to be what I am, and what I want to be."

Nicholas Dante

"I'm a New Yorker who for years always wanted to get to Broadway as a composer. When I didn't get a chance to write my own music for a Broadway show and the opportunity came to do something in Hollywood, I decided to go there and begin. Seven years later, Michael Bennett, who's an old friend, called about *Chorus Line*. He brought me together with Ed Kleban, and as we began to work, we realised that most of the songs had to be written after we knew who would play the characters, so we could include some of the performer's characteristics in the show. We tried to make each song in a different style, so that every person would be unique. And that offered me the possibility of mixing musical styles - rock, classical, folk, theater. We were doing all this, and at the same time trying to capture the energy and feel of an audition.

With this show, I've been able to combine my experience from both Broadway and Hollywood. It's a synthesis of writing foreground music, which is theater music, and background music or underscoring which you use in films. There's a tremendous amount of underscoring in the show. The music is non-stop until Paul's monologue.

That's because Michael wanted a musical show that stopped only for the dialogue. Most shows are dialogue which stops for the music. What we tried to do was make sure the songs would be part of the whole fabric and never get in the way of the intensity of the evening. Sometimes it's hard to tell where the song begins and where it ends, as it weaves in and out of the libretto.

One of the things I've enjoyed about the work is the collaborative process. I mean sometimes Michael and I would talk about music, but other times we'd discuss the book or talk about dancing. The nice thing is that we all had a say in every department.

In April, 1974, I won three Academy Awards. By June of that year I had already spoken to Michael and decided to leave Hollywood and take the chance on coming back to New York. I

know why I did it, why I think we all did it, and it's summed up in the last song before the finale.

A *Chorus Line* represents "what I did for love."

Marvin Hamlisch



"What we did for love"

The Band

Reed 1

Simon Murray

Reed 2

Mel Waddington

Reed 3

Jess Martin

Reed 4

Sue Goffee

Trumpet 1

Jonny Thompson

Trumpet 1

Seb Williman

Trombone 1

Joe Starbuck

Trombone 2

Matt Corrigan

Percussion

Andrew Saunders

Drums

Dan Bennett

Bass

Simon Chaplin

Keys 1 / MD

Mark Goggins

Keys 2

Dave Dossett

Keys 3

Simon Pickup

a chorus line

An Audition

Time: 1975. Place: A Broadway Theatre

The characters portrayed in A Chorus Line are, for the most part, based upon the lives and experiences of Broadway Dancers.

"This show is dedicated to anyone who has ever danced in a chorus, or marched in step... anywhere" – Michael Bennett

Musical Numbers

Opening: I Hope I Get It..... The Company

I Can Do That..... Mike Costa

And..... Bobby Mills, Al DeLuca, Val Clark, Judy Turner & The Line

At The Ballet..... Sheila Bryant, Bebe Benzenheimer & Maggie Winslow

Sing!..... Kristine DeLuca, Al DeLuca and The Company

Montage 1:

Hello Twelve, Hello Thirteen, Hello Love..... The Line

Montage 2: Nothing..... Diana Morales

Montage 3: Mother..... Line

Montage 4: Gimme The Ball..... Al DeLuca and The Line

Dance: Ten; Looks: Three..... Val Clark

The Music and The Mirror..... Cassie Ferguson

One..... The Line

The Tap Combination..... The Line

What I Did For Love..... Diana Morales and The Line

Finale / One Singular Sensation..... The Company

Conceived, Originally Directed & Choreographed by **MICHAEL BENNETT**

Book by **JAMES KIRKWOOD & NICHOLAS DANTE**

Music by **MARVIN HAMLISCH** Lyrics by **EDWARD KLEBAN**

Co-Choreographed by **BOB AVIAN**

Original Broadway production produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival, Joseph Papp, Producer, in association with Plum Productions Inc.

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with

Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Tams-Witmark LLC. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk



"Who am I anyway? Am I my resumé?"



Cassie Ferguson ★

Caitlyn Brady



Sheila Bryant ★

Helen Swain



Valerie Clarke ★

Niamh Mulvihill



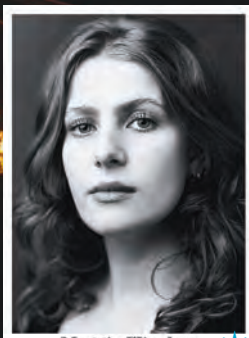
Diana Morales ★

Ciara-Alexandra Booker



Kristine DeLuca ★

Jess Middlemiss



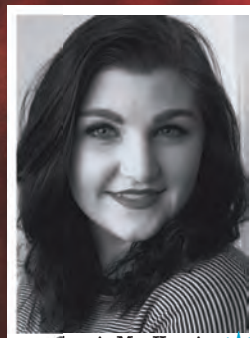
Maggie Winslow ★

Madeleine Healey



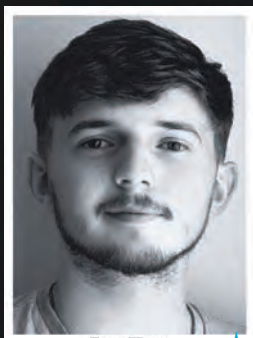
Bebe Benzenheimer ★

Lauren Brown



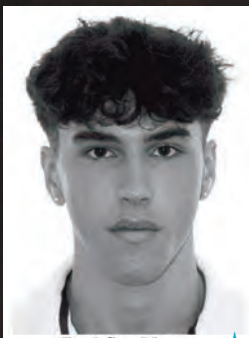
Connie MacKenzie ★

Bethan Jackson



Don Kerr ★

Jack Whitehead



Paul San Marco ★

Casey Johann Martin



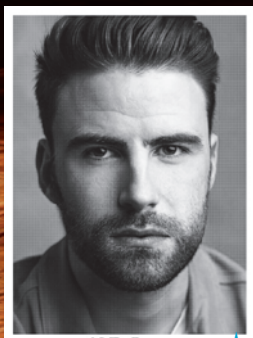
Mark Anthony ★

Daniel Willson



Gregory Gardener ★

Cameron Kershaw



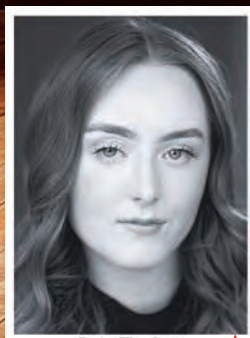
Al DeLuca ★

Connor J Ryan



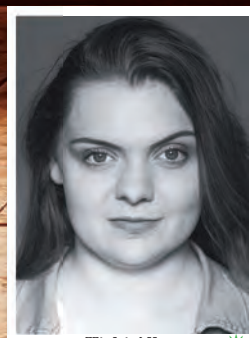
Zach Wilson ★

Joseph Meighan



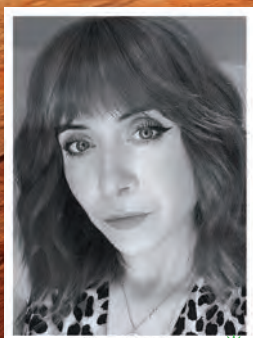
Lois Hughes ★

Amy Dart



Vicki Allen ★

Claire Garrett



Nina Foster ★

Rebecca Allmark



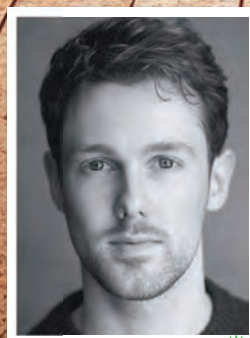
Erin Garcia ★

Paige Doherty



Lexi Miller ★

Megan Webber Thomas



Frank Anderson ★

Luke O'Hara



Judy Turner

Sophie Robinson



Mike Costa

Ronan Pilkington



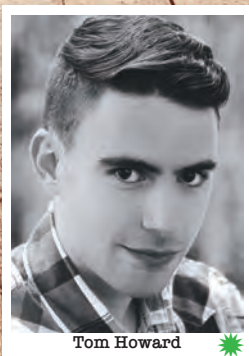
Bobby Mills

Max Lawrence



Tricia Tucker

Elise Evans



Tom Howard

Myles Ryan

The Cast

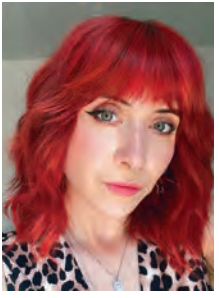
- ★ The Line
- ★ The Creatives
- ★ The Ensemble

The Creative Team

Director	Joseph Meighan
Musical Director	Mark Goggins
Choreographer	Louise Pettitt
Set Design	Barry Purves
Head of Stage	Mark McEwan / Paul Simpson
Stage Manager	Trevor McKie
Assistant Stage Managers	Sue Duffy
	Elizabeth Bowden
Lighting Design & Operation	James Merrington & Team
Sound Design & Operation	Tom Maurice & Team
Rehearsal Prompt	Alison Davis
Properties	Claire Eddleston-Rose
Costumes	Mike Shaw & the Garrick Wardrobe Team:
	Stella Blackburn
	Julie Shaw
	Betty Farmer
	Lynne Saleh
	Catherine Phillips
	Helen Phillips
	Sarah Steer
	Noel Watson
	Jen McEvoy
Production Carpenter	Steve Cox
Assisted by	Trevor McKie
Scenic Artist	Mandy Cooke
Assisted by	Barry Purves
	Trevor McKie
	Jane Milner
	Charlotte Leigh
	Rob Robinson
	Ruth Hetherington
	Holly Cooper
Set Construction	Paul Simpson
	Steve Cox
	Trevor McKie
	Alan Jones
	Barry Borgen
	Mark McEwan
	Nick McKie
	John Murphy
	Andy McHugh
	John Ross
	Cliff Mills
	Dave Bailey
	Bob Green
	Drew Lightfoot
	Alistair Duffy
Rehearsal & Production Photography	Martin Ogden
Publicity & Programme Design	Nick Sample

Without our incredibly dedicated, enthusiastic team of **Volunteers** and **Staff**, whose sheer hard work often goes unnoticed, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse would simply be unable to continue providing such a range of top quality productions for you to enjoy. **With their continuous commitment to excellence, we owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Thank-you everyone!**

The Company

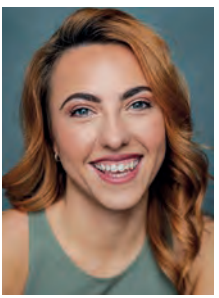


Rebecca Allmark

Nina Foster

Rebecca is thrilled to be making her Altrincham Garrick debut in *A Chorus Line*! She trained at the Blackpool School of Creative Arts, receiving a degree in Musical Theatre. Her performance credit highlights include playing *Lois Lane* in *Kiss Me Kate*, *Helene* in *Sweet Charity*, one of *Reno's Angels* in *Anything Goes*, as well as featured dancer roles in *Carousel*, *West Side Story*, and *The Pajama Game*.

Earlier this year she appeared in Hope Mill Theatre's *9 to 5* and is extremely excited to be returning to the Garrick stage later this season in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. She's absolutely loving working with such a talented cast and creative team and can't wait for audiences to enjoy this fantastic show!



Ciara-Alexandra Booker

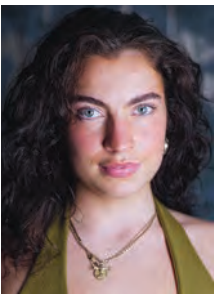
Diana Morales

Ciara-Alexandra trained in Musical Theatre at Bird College of Performing Arts.

Professionally she has worked on the BBC Documentary *TSEliot in Love* and been a dancer on ITV's *Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway*. More recently she has worked with Guildford Fringe Company.

She has also worked as Movement Director on a number of short films and plays. Ciara currently teaches dance and acting at numerous schools around Manchester and has her own production company, *Basement 43 Productions*, putting on MT showcases and runs adult Jazz Classes.

Garrick credits include: *Lies!* in *The Sound of Music*, *Viola* in *Shakespeare in Love*, *Mary* in *Bombshells*, *Dorothy* in *The Wizard of Oz*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Let the Right One in*.



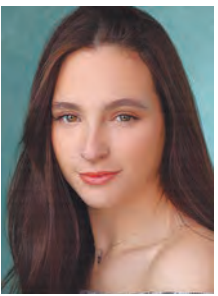
Caitlyn Brady

Cassie Ferguson

Caitlyn is thrilled to be making her debut at the Garrick, Cassie has always been a dream role and she can't wait to bring her to life. She trained at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts in London graduating in 2023 with a B.A.(Hons) in Musical Theatre, Represented By YOUManagement.

Credits while training: *Rita O'Grady* in *Made in Dagenham*, *Jetson* in *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, *Featured ensemble (dance captain)* in *The Addams Family*, *Choir* in *Magic at the Musicals* at The Royal Albert Hall, *Jean MacLaren* in *Brigadoon*, *Audrey* in *The Albion*, *Beth Spencer* in *Merrily We Roll Along*.

Caitlyn would like to thank Joe for this opportunity and her mum and dad for their unwavering support in everything she does.



Lauren Brown

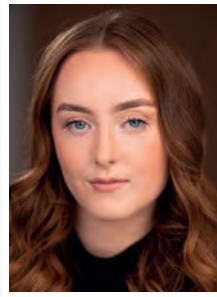
Bebe Benzenheimer

Lauren is a recent graduate of Shockout Arts, having trained on their Musical Theatre Degree course. She began dancing at the age of 4 and found her passion for Musical Theatre and Acting during high school.

Her previous appearances at Altrincham Garrick include *Jim Hawkins* in *Treasure Island*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *The Jitterbug* in *The Wizard of Oz* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Earlier this year she played

Siobhan in the Garrick Ensemble's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, *Coleen Rooney* in *Vardy v Rooney: The Wagatha Christie Trial* and *Betty* in *Beautiful*

Other Theatre Credits include *Lily St. Regis* in *Annie*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Fame*, and most recently she appeared in *Opening Up! A Musical Showcase*. Lauren has also danced around the country at many prestigious venues including Her Majesty's Theatre, London, Liverpool Empire and The Lowry, Salford, and last year performed at *Move It*.



Amy Dart

Lois Hughes

Amy trained for 3 years at Shockout Arts and achieved a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre. Her theatre credits include *Our House*, *Footloose* and *Fame* at her hometown theatre: YMCA Scarborough. Amy has performed at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse in numerous productions including *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Treasure Island*. Amy is thrilled to be involved in this production of *A Chorus Line*!



Paige Doherty

Erin Garcia

Paige trained as a dancer at Cardwell Theatre School since the age of 8 years old. Having danced competitively for several years during her time there, she has just embarked upon a 3-year course at M26 Dance College. Having previously appeared with the English Youth Ballet, Paige made her Garrick debut back when she was 12 in the pantomime *Aladdin*, and she went on to appear in both *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*.

More recently, Paige featured as *Louisa von Trapp* in our memorable staging of *The Sound of Music* in 2023, and she is really excited to be back on our stage again as part of the brilliant company in *A Chorus Line*.

Paige would also like to thank her friends and family for all the continuing support they have given her with her career in dance and helping her embark on this journey.



Elise Evans

Tricia Tucker

This is Elise's third show at the Garrick Playhouse after having performed in *Merrily We Roll Along* in 2024 and playing *Young Eponine* in *Les Misérables* in 2012 - which was her first experience of musical theatre.

Elise has most recently played *Maria* in *West Side Story* and also completed her studies at ArtsEd this year. Elise is excited to be a part of *A Chorus Line*

and can't wait for the audience to see how much work the cast and crew have put into bringing this iconic show to life!



Claire Louise Garrett

Vicki Allen

Claire is delighted to be returning to the Garrick stage once again. She has performed in several shows through the years including *Hairspray*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Dick Whittington*, *Annie*, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and most recently *The Wizard of Oz*.

Claire trained in Musical Theatre at The Hammond in Chester and then moved to London to train at

The American Musical Theatre Academy. She now uses those performing skills whilst teaching adults and children to ski and snowboard... a bit of a change but if you ever get a lesson with her, you're in for a treat!

She would like to thank her family for putting up with her randomly breaking out into the dances especially her dad and her boyfriend when she does it when she should be doing her share of the house renovation!





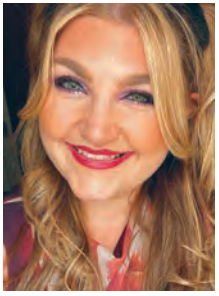
Madeleine Healey

Maggie Winslow

Madeleine trained at Manchester School of Acting, and subsequently graduated with a BA (Hons) in Drama from the University of Manchester.

Credits include *Sally Bowles* in **Cabaret**, *Nickie* in **Sweet Charity**, *Morticia* in **The Addams Family – the Musical**, *Amy March* in **Little Women the Musical**, and, at Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, *Nurse Ratched* in **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's**

Nest, *Carolyn* in **Blue Stockings**, *Eva* in **Last Summer at Bluefish Cove** and *Adele* in **A Man of No Importance**. Most recently, Madeleine lived a dream come true (and gave a performance that will never be forgotten by anyone who saw the show) by playing the title role of *Carole King* in **Beautiful: The Carole King Musical**.



Bethan Jackson

Connie MacKenzie

Bethan began dancing at the age of three at Cardwell Theatre School in Altrincham, before continuing her training gaining her B.A. (Hons) from Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds and moving to New York City to train at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. This is Bethan's second production at the Garrick having previously played *Jennyanydots* in **Cats**. Other credits include *Charity* in **Sweet Charity**, *Ian* in **Grease** and *Wendy-Jo* in

Footloose. She is excited to be back on the stage performing especially now she is a mum to an energetic toddler who has just started dance classes himself. Bethan currently teaches back where her training started at Cardwell Theatre School and enjoys sharing her passion and knowledge with her students.



Cameron Kershaw

Gregory Gardener

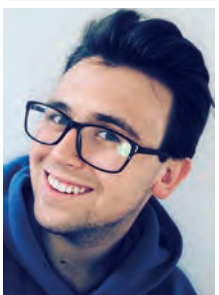
Cameron is making his debut in **A Chorus Line** at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, and is excited to experience such a beautiful stage for the first time.

Cameron's journey began at the age of 12 as an aspiring artist at a small community dance group, Mainly specialising in street dance, Cameron got the opportunity to perform in places such as the Royal Albert Hall, at the World Championships and

European finals, and at Disneyland Paris and Disneyland Florida.

Having played different roles in various High School productions during his time there, Cameron finally played the title role in the musical **Billy Elliot**. He finished college with an A level in Professional Dance. Currently, Cameron is going into his 3rd Year in University, studying at Shockout Arts for a B.A. Honours Degree in Commercial and Professional Dance, where he has been part of professional productions such as **Spotlight**, directed by Kristopher Russell, as well as performing at **Move It**.

Cameron hopes to continue his life in the world of performance and self expression, and is beyond grateful for the opportunity to perform at the Garrick Playhouse as a key part of his journey into the industry.



Max Lawrence

Bobby Mills

No stranger to musical theatre productions, Max made his debut at the Garrick Playhouse last year in **The Wizard of Oz**, and was part of the Ensemble for **Beautiful - The Carole King Musical** in June. While a member of **Manchester Musical Youth**, as well as being in the Ensemble for **Guys And Dolls** he played *Malcolm* in **13**, *Chitterlow* in **Half A Sixpence** and *Fagin* in **Oliver!**

Subsequently, with the **Manchester Musical Youth Graduates**, Max's roles have included *Pugsley* in **The Addams Family** and *Josh* in **9 to 5**, and he's also been part of the Ensembles for their productions of **RENT** and **Made In Dagenham**. Max also took on the role of *Roger* in **Grease** at Hope Mill Theatre.



Casey Johann Martin

Paul San Marco

Casey started dancing at the age of just 2 ½ at Cardwell Theatre School in Altrincham, doing ballet, modern, and tap.

His first venture onto the stage was at the age of 3 in the Northern Ballet production of **Madame Butterfly**, followed by appearances in **Aladdin** (8) and **Gypsy** (11). More recently he made his Altrincham Garrick Playhouse debut as *Friedrich*

in **The Sound of Music**. Casey has recently completed a 4-year associate programme with Northern Ballet, and is currently a student at St Ambrose College heading into year 12.



Joseph Meighan

Zach Wilson

Joseph trained as an actor and his credits whilst training include Craig in **Fanatical - A New Musical**, *Reverend Parris* in **The Crucible** (Arcola Theatre, London) and *Tim Bunty* in **Singer**. After graduating, he appeared as *Ian* in **Might Never Happen** (UK Tour) before concentrating on his career as a Theatre Director, and subsequently as Artistic Director of Altrincham Garrick Playhouse,

where he has appeared as *George Deever* in **All My Sons**, and several pantomimes – both planned and unplanned! Turn to page 15 for more about Joe...

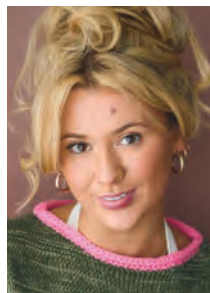


Jess Middlemiss

Kristine DeLuca

Jessica trained at Shockout Arts and subsequently graduated with a B.A. (Hons) in Musical Theatre from the University of Greater Manchester.

Her performance credits include *Emma* in **Spotlight**, *Vanessa* in **In the Heights**, and featured ensemble roles in a variety of dance productions. She has performed at notable venues including, The Manchester Opera House, Aviva Studios, The Northern Stage, and the People's Theatre. This is Jessica's first production at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, and she is thrilled to be working with such a talented and driven company.



Niamh Mulvihill

Valerie Clark

Niamh trained in Musical Theatre, completing a BA (Hons) at Performance Preparation Academy. She further developed her craft in screen and TV acting at Inspire Actors London, where she honed her skills for on-camera performance. Her credits while training include *Alice Beane* in **Titanic the Musical**, *Spider Woman* / *Aurora* in **Kiss of the Spider Woman**, and *Mother Superior* in **Sister Act**.

Alongside performing, Niamh is the proud founder of Vivacity School of Theatre in Sale, where she shares her passion for the arts with the next generation of performers.

Niamh is absolutely thrilled to return to the Altrincham Garrick – the very stage where her performing journey began, playing *Little Jessie* in **Annie Get Your Gun** back in 2007. To now be stepping into one of her dream roles, surrounded by such a talented and joyful cast and crew, is a truly surreal and special experience.



Luke O'Hara

Frank Anderson

Luke is a Manchester based actor who earned an MA in English Literature and Theatre Studies from the University of Glasgow, and currently acts weekly with Manchester Television Workshops under the mentorship of practitioner Anthony Crank.

Previous roles at Altrincham Garrick Playhouse include *Ernie* in **The Shawshank Redemption**, *Jocke* in **Let The Right One In**, and *Scripps* in last year's revival of **The History Boys**. Luke's credits beyond the Garrick include Richard Bean's **One Man Two Guvnors**, Tristan Bernays' **Boudica** and Timberlake Wertenbaker's **Our Country's Good**.



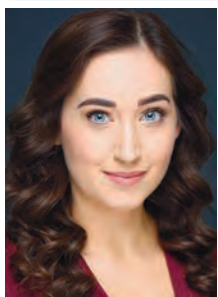
Ronan Pilkington

Mike Costa

Ronan made his Garrick debut last year as *The Scarecrow* in *The Wizard of Oz*, before going on to play *Gerry Goffin* in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Now appearing in his third Garrick production, he is stepping into the (dance) shoes of *Mike Costa* in *A Chorus Line*! Ronan has loved collaborating with such a talented cast and creative team on one of his favourite musicals, on its 50th Anniversary.

Ronan's recent theatrical highlights include *Seymour* (*Little Shop of Horrors* – regional tour), *Dr Frederick Frankenstein* (*Young Frankenstein*) and *Robbie Hart* (*The Wedding Singer*). He has received multiple acting nominations and is a multi-time NODA Award winner. Other notable roles include: *Emmett* (*Legally Blonde*), *Riff* (*West Side Story*), *Danny* (*Calendar Girls*), *Rapunzel's Prince* (*Into the Woods*), *Johnny* (*American Idiot*), *Lonny* (*Rock of Ages*), *Edward* (*Blood Brothers*), *Tom* (*The Glass Menagerie*), *George* (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*) and *The Phantom* (*The Phantom of the Opera*).

His directing credits include *The Addams Family* and *Sister Act*, alongside producing work on *Avenue Q*. Outside of rehearsals, Ronan works as a doctor currently completing his GP specialty training and is undertaking a Masters degree in Palliative/End-of-Life Care.



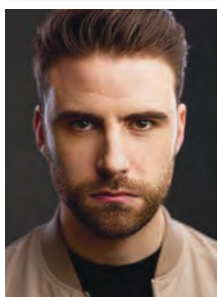
Sophie Robinson

Judy Turner

Sophie started her training at Cardwell Theatre School in Altrincham; she then went on to study at Phil Winston's Theatre works where she completed a 3-year diploma in Dance and Musical Theatre. She has most recently performed as *Kathy* in *Company* at the Altrincham Little Theatre with SAMT. Other Professional Credits include: Warner Leisure Hotels, Solo Vocalist and Dancer; *A Chorus Line* Pele Productions, Lowry Theatre; Ensemble Performer,

Simon Rawlings; *From There to Here*, Kudos Productions; Background Actress, James Strong; *Peter Pan's Adventures on Ice*, BIBCA; Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Voice over artist for Wendy.

Sophie is the principal of Cardwell Theatre School in Altrincham where she teaches Ballet, Tap, Jazz and Musical Theatre, and is also an examiner for the International Dance Teachers Association. She is thrilled to be making her Garrick Playhouse debut in *A Chorus Line*!



Connor J Ryan

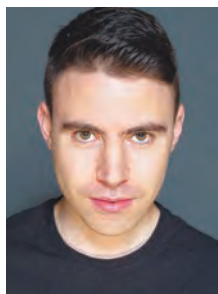
Al DeLuca

This is Connor's eighth production with Altrincham Garrick following his performances in *Let The Right One In*, *Into The Woods*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Sound of Music*, *One Flew Over The Cuckoos Nest*, *The Little Mermaid* and most recently as *The Tin Man* in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Previous theatre credits include *Anthony Hope* in *Sweeney Todd* (SAMT/TMTC), *Laurie Lawrence* in

Little Women (SMAOS), *Lucas Beineke* in *The Addams Family* (MMY Grads), *Ally* in *Sunshine on Leith* (MCMTC), *Danny Zuko* in *Grease* (SMAOS/TMTC) and *Dennis* in *All Shook Up* (TMTC). He most recently portrayed *Marius* in *Les Misérables* at the Liverpool Empire as part of the "Let The People Sing" project celebrating the 40th anniversary of the show.

Connor is a multi-award winning performer having been previously recognised by NODA North West as "Best Supporting Male in a Musical" in 2019 and The Association of Community Theatre as "Most Accomplished Actor" in 2022. He most notably appeared on *Britain's Got Talent* in 2010, where he reached the final as part of boyband *Connected*.



Myles Ryan

Tom Howard

This is Myles' 7th show with the Altrincham Garrick and he is thrilled to be returning to be part of this Broadway classic. He has performed in a number of shows in the North West over the years, appearing in roles such as *Dean Hyde* in *All Shook Up* (KMTC, 2018), *Seymour Krelbourn* in *Little Shop of Horrors* (FPAC, 2022), *Mowgli* in *The Jungle Book* (Altrincham Garrick, 2023), *Tobias* in *Sweeney*

Todd (Sale & Altrincham Musical Theatre, 2023) *Jack* in *Into The Woods* (All Saints, 2019), *Joseph* in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (AWMTC, 2024), *Neil Sedaka* in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Altrincham Garrick, 2025) and *Davy* in *Sunshine on Leith* (Mid Cheshire Musical Theatre, 2021), for which he received the Act Award in 2022 for "Most Accomplished Actor".

Myles has gained several years of theatre experience from a young age as part of Stagecoach, performing in shows such as *A Christmas Carol*, *The Wiz* and *The Jungle Book*. He was thrust into the limelight in 2010 as he appeared in the 4th series of *Britain's Got Talent* as part of boyband *Connected*, making it to that year's final. Along with twin brother Connor, he has also performed at events such as the *Blackpool Illumination Switch On* and the *Bury Olympic torch relay* event. Myles has also presented and produced his own panel show 'Student Speak' on local TV station *That's TV*. Myles wants to thank everyone at the Garrick for their continued support and hopes everyone enjoys the show.



Helen Swain

Sheila Bryant

After a very long and busy break away from the theatre, Helen revived her passion for acting by giving her debut performance at the Garrick Playhouse in 2022 in the production of *Calendar Girls - The Musical*, playing the role of *Cora*.

Helen has since performed in 5 more productions at the Garrick, playing the roles of *Baroness Schroeder* in *The Sound of Music*, *The Bakers Wife*

in *Into The Woods*, *Alice Tinker* in *The Vicar of Dibley*, *K.T* in *Merrily We Roll Along* and then back again to Dibley to once again to embrace the iconic role of *Alice Horton* (nee *Tinker*!) in *The Vicar of Dibley Christmas: The Second Coming*!

Helen is incredibly excited to be part of the supreme Broadway classic that is *A Chorus Line* and would like to thank her gorgeous little family for their constant love, support, encouragement – and in this case, ice packs!!



Megan Webber Thomas

Lexi Miller

Megan has trained at Cardwell Theatre School for 14 years and is beginning her professional dance training at the Northern Ballet School in Manchester this September. She has performed in pantomimes *Cinderella* (2015) and *Aladdin* (2016) as ensemble at the Manchester Opera House and in the English Youth Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker* (2015) at Buxton Opera House. This is Megan's debut show at the Garrick.



Jack Whitehead

Don Kerr

Beyond excited, Jack is making his Garrick debut with this production of *A Chorus Line*. Jack has only recently started his Musical Theatre journey, embarking on a dream he didn't know he had from young. He is currently studying at Shockout Arts and will be starting his 3rd Year this September. Jack has done productions across Manchester, professional work for Bury Council and also performed at *Move It*.

Jack is incredibly grateful for the Cast & Crew of this production and is sure this is "One" to remember!



Daniel Willson

Mark Anthony

Dan is currently in training at a ballet school, Kate Simmons Dance, and entering his final year this month, leaving with a Level 6 Diploma in Dance!

Dan has performed in amateur musicals across the north west for around 10 years! His theatre credits to date include *Ren McCormack* in *Footloose*, *Lonny Barnett* in *Rock of Ages*, *Ratty* in *The Wind in the Willows*, *Buddy* in *We Will Rock You*, and *Bottom/Demetrius* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

He's so excited to make his Garrick debut with this wonderful and talented cast!

The Production Team



Joseph Meighan
Director

Joseph is the Artistic Director at Altrincham Garrick Playhouse and trained at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts in London. He has worked as a Theatre Director, Producer and Actor in both Manchester and London, and his love for theatre began at the age of four when he joined The Helen Donohue School of Speech and Drama.

Directing credits include *The Jury* (Upstairs at the Gatehouse/ Off-West End, London), *Parade*, *A Chorus Line*, *The Addams Family*, *GHOST*, *Chicago* (Waterside Arts), *The Wizard of Oz*, *Betrayal* (Z-Arts), *Our Town*, *Anne Boleyn*, *Into The Woods*, *Guys & Dolls*, *Scrooge! The Musical*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables* and many more.

Directing credits at Altrincham Garrick Playhouse: *People*, *Priscilla: Queen of the Desert*, *Annie*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Crucible*, *The Secret Garden*, *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, *The Last Five Years*, *CHATROOM*, *Curtain Up*, *Peter Pan*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Jumpers for Goalposts*, *Calendar Girls: The Musical*, *The Sound of Music*, *Shakespeare In Love*, *The Laramie Project*, *Our Town*, *Into The Woods*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Let The Right One In*, *Treasure Island*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Of Mice And Men* and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*.

Joseph was the Founder and Artistic Director of MYT Productions in Manchester for ten years. He also regularly works as an acting coach and for the past few years he has trained actors at different stages of their careers.



Mark Goggins
Musical Director

Mark held the position of Reader in Music Theatre at The University of Central Lancashire until 2024. There he led the BA (Hons) Music Theatre programme, which he set up in 2003, as well as conducting the award-winning University Chamber Choir.

His professional musical theatre work includes the UK tours of *Beauty and the Beast*, *Starlight Express*, *Cats*, *The Producers*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *The Sound of Music*, *Shrek*, *Wicked* and *The Lion King*, as well as Hope Mill Theatre's 2024/25 production of *A Christmas Carol* at The Lowry.

Mark has conducted at many of the leading UK concert venues including The Royal Festival Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall and The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, where he has performed with the Hallé Orchestra.

Previous credits with the Garrick Playhouse as Musical Director include *La Cage aux Folles*, *A Little Night Music*, *Follies*, *Cabaret*, *West Side Story*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Cats*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Calendar Girls - The Musical*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*.

Mark also works as a Sound Designer and Composer, with credits here at The Playhouse including *Shakespeare in Love*, *Blue Stockings*, *Let The Right One In*, *Jane Eyre*, *The History Boys*, *The Audience* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. Earlier this year he was Sound Designer for *Glorious!* At The Hope Mill Theatre, Manchester.

Mark directed *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the opening show of this year's Irish Season in the Studio and is looking forward to directing *Pomona* next year. As ever, he has thoroughly enjoyed MD-ing this production and has loved working with the company of *A Chorus Line*.

Next month Mark will be MD-ing *Life Class*, a new work by Richard Taylor (*Flowers for Mrs Harris*, *The Go-Between*) which was commissioned by Bradford City of Culture 2025 and 509 Arts.



Louise Pettitt
Choreographer

Louise trained at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, graduating with a degree in dance and the performing arts. Louise has also gained her Master's Degree in Creative Practice and Education and her Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

Professional theatre credits: *Cats* (UK, Italy and Portugal Tours), *Beauty and the Beast* understudy *Belle* (UK Tour), *Starlight Express* understudy *Pearl* (Bochum, Germany), *Verve* (UK Tour), *Aura Dance Company* (UK), *Cinemagique* (Costa Cruises).

Television and recording credits: *Casualty 1909* (BBC), *Nightmare in Suburbia* (Nine Lives Media), *Holland's Meat Pies Commercial* (MT), *Starlight Express New Songs* (Universal Music, GAMBA).

Choreography credits: Numerous shows and musicals for leading vocational dance and performing arts colleges, including events such as *Move it* and *CMDR*, *Sadler's Wells Making Moves*, *Rambert Elements* (Lowry, Salford), *Chicago* (Waterside Arts), *A Chorus Line*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Scrooge! The Musical* (Eccleston Theatre, Pendleton).

Louise is currently the Musical Theatre Coordinator on the Degree programme at the performing arts institution, Shockout Arts, Manchester. Previous choreography credits for the Garrick include *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *The Sound of Music* and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

We value your feedback and invite you to share your thoughts about the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse. Have you enjoyed a recent performance, or perhaps there's something we could improve? Are there specific plays, musicals, or shows you'd love to see on our stage? Any visiting acts you'd like to recommend? We would love to receive your reviews and suggestions.

This season, we've partnered with Star Feedback to make it easy for you to share your opinions. Simply scan the QR code (right) and let us know what you think. Thank you for helping us create the best experience possible!



**altrincham
garrick
cinema**

INCLUDING

**National
Theatre
Live**

Saturday 20 September 7:30pm



Wicked, the untold story of the witches of Oz, stars Emmy, Grammy and Tony winning powerhouse **Cynthia Erivo** (*Harriet*, *The Color Purple*) as **Elphaba**, a young woman, misunderstood because of her unusual green skin, who has yet to discover her true power, and Grammy-winning, multi-platinum recording artist and global superstar **Ariana Grande** as **Glinda**, a popular young woman, gilded by privilege and ambition, who has yet to discover her true heart. The two meet as students at Shiz University in the fantastical Land of Oz and forge an unlikely but profound friendship. Following an encounter with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, their friendship reaches a crossroads, and their lives take very different paths...

Sunday 21 September 7:30pm



Oscar-nominated **Rosamund Pike** (*Gone Girl*, *Saltburn*) is **Jessica** in the much-anticipated next play from the team behind *Prima Facie*.

Jessica Parks is a smart Crown Court Judge at the top of her career. Behind the robe, she is a karaoke fiend, a loving wife and a supportive parent. When an event threatens to throw her life completely off balance, can she hold her family upright?

Writer **Suzie Miller** and director **Justin Martin** reunite following their global phenomenon *Prima Facie*, with this searing examination of modern motherhood and masculinity.

World-class theatre from across the U.K., and brilliant West End musical-theatre productions, can now be seen right here in Altrincham!

Tickets:

Wicked:
£6.00 Full Price
(Friends £5.00)

Inter Alia – NT Live:
£21.00 Full Price
(Friends £18.00)

"I can do that!"–

Michael Bennett

Original Director & Choreographer



Michael Bennett was born Michael Bennett DiFiglia on April 8, 1943. He grew up in Buffalo, New York, where he studied dance as a teenager and choreographed his high school musicals. He quit school at sixteen when he was cast as *Baby John* in a tour of *West Side Story* across the U.S. and Europe. At eighteen, he made his Broadway debut in the chorus of Jule Styne, Betty Comden and Adolph Green's *Subways Are for Sleeping* (1961). A year later, he assisted choreographer Ron Field on the one-week run of *Nowhere to Go But Up*, followed by dancing in the choruses of two middling Broadway musicals: *Here's Love* (1963) and *Bajour* (1964). He even managed to squeeze in time in Los Angeles, appearing on the TV dance series *Hullabaloo*, which is where he met the dancer who would become his muse (and for a brief moment his wife), the peerless Donna McKechnie.

In 1966, the first Broadway musical to feature the credit "*Choreography by Michael Bennett*" was *A Joyful Noise*, a folksy musical that starred John Raitt and closed after twelve performances. However, a few months later, voters remembered Bennett's work and he received his first Tony nomination at age twenty-four. *How Now Dow Jones* and *Henry, Sweet, Henry* came next, and Bennett's dances scored successfully, even if the shows didn't. It was only with 1968's *Promises Promises* that he had his first hit, and the first time he was able to showcase Donna McKechnie. "*Turkey Lurkey Time*" was a high-voltage number that audiences remembered long after they left the theatre. The song also featured Margo Sappington, who would later choreograph the nude revue *Oh! Calcutta!*, as well as Baayork Lee, who would go on to have a role in *A Chorus Line*, crafted to her specific talents (and life story), just like McKechnie.

1970 brought *Company*, where Bennett was able to work with collaborators who, like him, were at the top of their game: Stephen Sondheim, George Furth, Harold Prince and Boris Aronson. No one had ever seen anything like *Company* before, immediately recognised for its groundbreaking production and non-linear story telling. All his male collaborators mentioned above took home Tonys for *Company*, but not Bennett, whose crafty stylings were a bit too subtle for the average theatregoer. What he did with a cast of mostly non-dancers was ingenious, and the show moved with a fluidity that Bennett steadily improved upon with *Follies*, *A Chorus Line* and finally *Dreamgirls*, where his integration of lighting, scenery and actors flowed seamlessly.

When Prince offered Bennett a co-directing credit on *Follies*, the results elevated him to an equal footing with a master. But it proved their final collaboration, as from then on it was "*The Michael Bennett Show*." He desperately needed to live the lyrics Jerry Herman would later write and become "*his own special creation*." Sadly, during the decade of the seventies, an over dependence on alcohol and drugs drove Bennett relentlessly (and others as well). Still, he took over the troubled *Seesaw*, an ailing musical in its 1973 try out, and managed the rare feat of successfully overhauling it (firing so many people in the process, that those left standing felt like wounded war vets). Winning a third Tony Award for choreography was nice, but Bennett wanted more – much more. So he buckled down and launched something he would eventually call his own (much to his collaborators anger and confusion). Exercising complete creative control as his goal, he achieved it with *A Chorus Line*.

Much has been written about *A Chorus Line* and how it not only changed the American musical, but changed the fortunes of the American Theatre. Many Broadway houses were dark when it literally lit up West 44th Street

the creators of “A Chorus Line”

(and the rest of the theatre district, too), becoming the Shubert's then-unheard of sole tenant for fifteen years. It changed the fortunes of Joe Papp's Public Theatre as well, since the foresighted producer provided the workshops that made the show possible, allowing the Public to share in *A Chorus Line*'s profits and keep it solvent for years to come. It also changed Bennett immeasurably, and not for the better. He became a multi-millionaire, and with that came power and paranoia (unquestionably linked to his drug use). He began to alienate people left and right, some of them his closest associates.

Ballroom, Bennett's next musical was in the unenviable position of having to follow *A Chorus Line*, so it almost had to fail (and it didn't help that it was relatively understated). The critics had their knives out and literally killed it. Undeterred, Bennett came roaring back four years later with *Dreamgirls*, a monumental achievement by anybody's standards. Then in 1985, he unexpectedly pulled the plug on an original musical titled *Scandal* that he had been work-shopping for four years. It was a shockingly abrupt end that took his creative team, composer **Jimmy Webb** and television writer **Treva Silverman** totally by surprise, in addition to its star **Swoosie Kurtz**. Bennett's mysterious behaviour reared its head a year later in 1986 when he dropped out of his next directing assignment, *Chess*, with a score by Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus and Tim Rice. A heart ailment was the story used to explain why he couldn't proceed, when it was actually his AIDS diagnosis, which he kept hidden from nearly everyone.

On April 8, 1987, he died alone in Tucson, from complications caused by AIDS at the age of forty-four, refusing any help from those he had once been close to; a sad and lonely end for a man who thrived on the company of his fellow showmen (and women), the only people with whom he felt most at home.

Bob Avian Co-Choreographer

Born on December 26, 1937, in New York City, Robert Avian received a BA from Boston University College of Fine Arts. Also a student at Boston Ballet, Mr. Avian began his career as a dancer, appearing in the original Broadway production of *West Side Story*. He was also seen in *Nowhere to Go But Up*, *Funny Girl*, *Cafe Crown*, and *Henry, Sweet Henry*.



He was the assistant stage manager for the 1966 musical *I Do! I Do!* – co-starring Mary Martin and Robert Preston – and in 1968 he co-choreographed the Tony-nominated Burt Bacharach musical *Promises, Promises*, which began his long association with Michael Bennett.

For the next two decades, Mr. Avian was an integral part of every Bennett production, including *Coco*, *Company*, *Follies*, *Twigs*, *Seesaw*, and *God's Favorite*. In 1976 he won his first Tony Award for co-choreographer (with Bennett) of the ground-breaking, Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Chorus Line*. His second Tony Award for Best Choreography (also with Bennett) came in 1979 for the short-lived musical *Ballroom*, for which he also served as producer. He was also a lead producer for the 1981 Tony-nominated musical *Dreamgirls*, directed and choreographed by Bennett, as well as the subsequent national touring companies, and was the production supervisor for the musical's 1987 Broadway revival.

Bob Avian will never forget the moment Michael Bennett told him he had AIDS. The two had been friends since 1959, when they met as dancers on a tour of *West Side Story*. But over the Christmas holidays in 1985, Avian arrived at Bennett's sprawling office at 890 Broadway to find him in hysterics. “I have it,” Bennett said, removing his sock to reveal a purple lesion on his foot. “I have it.” Avian was stunned.

Bennett's 1987 death was a tragedy, but it opened the door for Avian's career as one of Broadway's top choreographers. Had Bennett lived, Avian

would have been content to remain his No. 2. “Not in a million years did I ever want to be like Michael. He had enough ambition for a hundred people. I was very happy being a dancer. I was a stage manager. If a door opened, I walked through it.”

Cameron Mackintosh opened a door when he asked Avian to choreograph a revival of *Follies* in London in 1987. Avian wasn't sure he was up to it. But Bennett, close to the end, told him, “You should do this. You know what we did with the original, and you know the characters.”

Avian accepted the assignment. He went on to choreograph *Miss Saigon*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Martin Guerre* and a well-received 2006 revival of *A Chorus Line*.

Mr. Avian's memoir, *Dancing Man: A Broadway Choreographer's Journey*, was published by University Press of Mississippi in 2020. Bob Avian passed away on January 21, 2021 at Holy Cross Hospital in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, from a cardiac arrest. He was 83.

Marvin Hamlisch Music

As composer, Marvin Hamlisch won virtually every major award that exists: three Oscars, four Grammys, four Emmys, a Tony, three Golden Globe awards and the Pulitzer Prize. Only Hamlisch and Richard Rodgers have won a 'PEGOT' (Pulitzer, Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, Tony Awards).

For Broadway, Hamlisch wrote the music for his groundbreaking show, *A Chorus Line*, as well as *They're Playing Our Song*, *The Goodbye Girl* and *Sweet Smell of Success*. Additional theatrical scores include *Jean Seberg* (1983) and *The Nutty Professor* (2012).

A graduate of the Juilliard School of Music and Queens College, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, he was the composer of more than 40 motion picture scores, including his Oscar-winning score and song for *The Way We Were* and his adaptation of Scott Joplin's music for *The Sting*, for which he received a third Oscar. His prolific output of scores for films include original compositions and/or musical adaptations for *Sophie's Choice*, *Ordinary People*, *The Swimmer*, *Three Men and a Cradle*, *Ice Castles*, *Take the Money and Run*, *Bananas*, *Save the Tiger* and *The Informant!*, starring Matt Damon and directed by Steven Soderbergh.

At the time of his passing, in Los Angeles on August 6 2012 at the age of 68, he had just finished his last musical score for film, *Behind the Candelabra*. Directed by Soderbergh and starring Michael Douglas and Damon, the movie was shown at the 2013 Cannes Festival and went on to win several Emmys, including Best Actor for Douglas.

Hamlisch had a long association with Barbra Streisand that began when, at 19, he became a rehearsal pianist for her show *Funny Girl*. He was Musical Director and arranger of her 1994 concert tour of the US and England as well as of the television special, Barbra Streisand: The Concert (for which he received two of his Emmys).

Hamlisch had his second-biggest pop hit with Carly Simon's *Nobody Does It Better*, the theme from the James Bond film *The Spy Who Loved Me*, written with the lyricist Carole Bayer Sager. (His song *Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows*, with lyrics by Howard Liebling, had become a Top 20 hit in 1965 for Lesley Gore, when Mr. Hamlisch was just 21). Thom Yorke, the lead singer of the band *Radiohead*, which has performed *Nobody Does It Better* in concert more recently, has called it “the sexiest song ever written.”



Continued overleaf...>

Tuesday 23 – Sunday 28 September



a taste of honey

by **Shelagh Delaney**

Directed by **Carole Carr**

Living in a filthy tenement bedsitter, 17-year-old Jo is deserted by her nagging peroxidised mother, Helen, who is unaware that her daughter is pregnant by a black sailor.

To soothe, clean and cook for Jo is Geoff, an effeminate art student, with whom she makes a temporary home. Bruised by insensitivity and rejection, the boy and girl find a very real comfort in each other.

A stunning portrayal of the complex bond between a mother and daughter, who – despite their sharp bickering – are both holding on for that taste of honey.

This iconic play is a sharply observed portrait of working-class life in Salford in the late 1950s.



**altrincham
garrick
studio**

WARNING: This production contains themes of alcohol abuse, racism, domestic violence, sexual themes, teenage pregnancy, homophobia, sexism, and ableism.

Edward Kleban

Lyrics

Ed Kleban was an American composer and lyricist, best known for his work on the Tony Award-winning musical **A Chorus Line**. Born on April 30, 1939, in the Bronx, New York, Kleban grew up in a musical family and began playing the piano at a young age. He attended the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan and went on to study at the Columbia University School of General Studies.



Kleban's career in theater began in the 1960s, when he worked as a rehearsal pianist for various Broadway productions. He later transitioned to writing his own material, and in 1975, he began collaborating with composer Marvin Hamlisch on a new musical called **A Chorus Line**. The show was a critical and commercial success and won nine Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

He went on to write the music and lyrics for several other musicals, including **Gallery** and **The Madwoman of Central Park West**. In 1987, he released a solo album called **A Class Act**, which featured songs from his unproduced musicals (and was subsequently staged in 2001).

Despite his success on Broadway, Kleban struggled with personal demons throughout his life. He was known for his sharp wit and acerbic personality, which often alienated those around him. He was also plagued by health problems, including a heart condition that required him to undergo multiple surgeries. Kleban died on October 28, 1987, at the age of 48, due to complications from surgery.

Nicholas Dante

Book

Born **Conrado Morales** in New York City, Dante began his career as a dancer and performer, appearing on Broadway in **Applause**, **Ambassador** and **Smith**, among others.



In 1974, Michael Bennett invited Dante to participate in the late-night interview sessions with Broadway dancers which provided ample material for a potential Broadway musical. Collaborating with Bennett and James Kirkwood Jr, Dante created **A Chorus Line**, which earned him the 1976 Tony Award and Drama Desk Award for Best Book of a Musical and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The character of **Paul**, a gay Puerto Rican dancer whose early career consisted of working in a drag show, was based primarily on Dante. **Sammy Williams**, who originated the role, won the 1976 Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a Musical. Dante later assumed the role himself.

In 1991, aged 49, Dante died in New York City from AIDS-related complications.

James Kirkwood Jr

Book

Born in Los Angeles, James Kirkwood (1924 – 1989) began his career as an actor, appearing on television in **Valiant Lady** and **Perry Mason**, and on Broadway in **Small Wonder** and **Dance Me a Song**, among others. As an author, he penned the semi-autobiographical novel **There Must Be a Pony**, along with **Good Times / Bad Times**, **Some Kind of Hero** and **Hit Me With a Rainbow**. His comedic play **Legends!** toured the United States starring **Mary Martin** and **Carol Channing**. He later wrote an account of the experience... In 1976 he received the Tony Award, the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Book of a Musical, and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his work on **A Chorus Line**.



Kirkwood died of AIDS-related complications in 1989.

WE ARE A CHARITY...

...but what does that mean?

All of the income we receive goes directly back into the work on our stages, and into our projects with the community.

Altrincham Garrick Playhouse receives no public funding from any official organisation, regional or local council.

Therefore all of our income is generated by ticket sales for our own productions, hiring of the theatre for concerts and one-night stands, and donations.

Just like all non-profit making charities, we fund-raise all year round to keep our work in the community going. Our projects include:



**altrincham
garrick
academy of
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arts**

Our hugely popular academy offering exciting, fun-filled drama workshops for students aged 6 – 18. Music, movement, monologues and much more!

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Joy, laughs, music and harmony – singing together and creating music in a relaxed, fun and social environment. A no-stress and no-audition Community Show Choir.

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garrick
play reading
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A relaxed, no-pressure way to read plays alongside like-minded people who love theatre, drama, comedy, musical theatre, poetry and much more...

Friday 3rd October
The Diary of Anne Frank
by F Goodrich/A Hackett

Friday 7th November
Hedda Gabler
by Henrik Ibsen

Play YOUR Part!

You can support us in a number of ways – by making a Donation, becoming a Friend, Member or Volunteer, 'sharing a show', sponsoring us or leaving a legacy. As a Registered Charity, any donations we receive can be supplemented by gift-aiding. Simply scan the QR Code to find out more... Thank you!



Thursday 23 – Sunday 26 October
and Wednesday 29 October
– Sunday 2 November 2025

Please contact the Box Office for full details of dates and performance times



Music by Marc Shaiman

Lyrics by Scott Wittman & Marc Shaiman

Book by David Greig

Based on the novel by Roald Dahl and the Warner Bros. film

Directed by Joseph Meighan

**The world-famous Willy Wonka is opening
the gates to his mysterious factory...
but only to a lucky few!**



Charlie Bucket, an imaginative boy with a knack for making something out of nothing, dreams of acquiring a golden ticket to tour Willy Wonka's magical chocolate factory and can't believe his luck when it actually happens! Fellow contest winners: Veruca Salt, Violet Beauregarde, Mike Teavee, and Augustus Gloop, have no idea what they're getting themselves into, as they each learn valuable lessons from Mr. Wonka. Nobody leaves the same way that they arrived...

Discover a magical world full of amazement, innovation, sugary treats, and, of course, Oompa-Loompas!

Based on the famous novel by Roald Dahl, **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory** features an original score from the multi award-winning songwriters of **Hairspray** (Music by Marc Shaiman with Lyrics by Shaiman and Scott Wittman and a Book by David Greig), blended with songs from the 1971 motion picture including "**Candy Man**," "**I've Got a Golden Ticket**," "**The Oompa Loompa Song**," and "**Pure Imagination**" (Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley).

**Get your GOLDEN ticket
to a world of pure imagination!
TICKETS ON SALE NOW!!!**

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Music Theatre International. All authored performance materials are also supplied by M.T.I. - www.mtiShows.co.uk

A hilariously funny parody on the works of Charles Dickens



Bleak Expectations



Written for the stage by Mark Evans
Based upon the award-winning
BBC Radio 4 Comedy series.

Directed by Pete Brassington



Mon 29 September –
Sat 4 October 2025

Evenings at 7:30pm
Matinée at 2:30pm, Sat 4 October

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Box Office: 0161-928 1677

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