



# STAGE RAGE

## CONTENTS

- AGM Notice of Meeting
- CHICAGO Sponsorship
- Friday Social
- Can You Help?
- Time to Renew
- Open Adult Ballet Classes
- Thank you
- Regional Theatre Awards:  
ACT THREE Winners
- What's Going On?

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

The Palmerston North Operatic Society's  
*(trading as ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS)*

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
Is to be held on

**Tuesday, 28 April 2026**

at  
ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS  
75 The Square, Palmerston North

7.30 pm Refreshments & Nibbles  
8.00 pm Meeting Proper

**ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS**  
He Whānau Tuatini

Nominations are now being called for the position of **President** (for a one year term) and **five (5) Board members** (for a two year term). Please note that the position of President may only be filled by a member who has served at least one (1) on the Board.

In addition, nominations are now being called for a Youth Representative, aged 16-22 years of age. This will be for a fixed term of one year and will be an advisory role only (i.e. not entitled to vote). A Role Definition for this position and the official notice of meeting are attached with this newsletter.



ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS  
PROUDLY INVITE YOU TO SPONSOR

# CHICAGO

17 APRIL - 2 MAY 2026  
REGENT ON BROADWAY

## \$450 SPONSORSHIP

- ★ 2x premium tickets to opening night
- ★ 1x complimentary programme
- ★ 2x drinks on arrival
- ★ After show cast meet and greet with cash bar
- ★ Your logo in our show programme
- ★ Promotion on our social media platforms
- ★ The satisfaction of supporting your local arts community

We also have larger sponsorship deals available. Please get in touch to see what we can offer your business!  
Contact Jen Lambert at [admin@actthree.co.nz](mailto:admin@actthree.co.nz) for further details.  
To secure your sponsorship, please email [admin@actthree.co.nz](mailto:admin@actthree.co.nz)

06 355 0499      [actthree.co.nz](http://actthree.co.nz)      ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS



Now that we have our venue and bar well established, we're bringing back social nights to ACT THREE. ACT THREE Social Fridays will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month. Come and have a drink, wind down from the week, catch up with old friends, grab some takeaways and come eat, have a shared dinner ... The bar will be open, karaoke will be available, or perhaps an old "movie" might be available to watch, or you could bring some games. It's your evening. These nights will be open to all members, families and friends.

They are open to all ages but under 16s must have a parent or guardian present. Non members are still welcome, but must have a membered person present. So come join us on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of every month (excluding January and December) at 7.00 p.m. – we'd love to see you. The dates are;

Friday, 27 March 2027 / Friday, 24 April / Friday, 22 May / Friday, 26 June / Friday, 24 July /  
Friday, 28 August / Friday, 25 September / Friday, 23 October / Friday, 27 November





### **Cook County Security**

We are currently on the lookout for volunteers to help with backstage security at the Regent on Broadway during our season of *CHICAGO*. This role involves being stationed at the sign in desk inside the King Street entrance, checking off company members as they arrive, recording the names of any visitors, and noting departures at the end of the evening. It's an important part of keeping our backstage spaces safe and running smoothly. Once everyone is signed in, your main job is simply to remain present by the King Street entrance to ensure only authorised people come through the door. You're very welcome (and encouraged) to bring a book, phone, headphones, a device for games or movies, snacks, crossword puzzles, etc. to keep yourself entertained between arrivals and departures – just keep a friendly eye on the door and make sure no unexpected guests wander in. If you or someone you know are able to help us out, please get in touch with the Administrator at ACT THREE ([admin@actthree.co.nz](mailto:admin@actthree.co.nz)) and when you might be available to help. Many hands make light work and all help would be greatly appreciated. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **Calling all dazzling dames and debonair gents ...**

We are also looking for dazzling dames and debonair gents, and all those in between, to help out with volunteer ushering and/or programme selling for *CHICAGO*. Front of house volunteering is your chance to step into the spotlight and soak up that pre-show buzz in one of New Zealand's most beautiful venues. It's going to be one HOT season, and we'd love for you to be part of the razzle dazzle that keeps our Society humming. If this sounds like something you – or a friend, lover, lawyer or lifelong fan – would be keen to join us for, please e-mail [admin@actthree.co.nz](mailto:admin@actthree.co.nz) by Friday, 27 March 2026 with;

- Your name
- Contact mobile number
- Usher or programme seller preference
- The dates you can commit to

If you didn't usher during our 2025 season of *COME FROM AWAY*, you would need to attend a one hour training session at the Regent front of house at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 1 April 2026. If you **were** part of that fabulous crew, you're good to go – no training required. Programme sellers are also not required to attend the training session.





Your ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS membership is due for renewal. The renewal fees for **current** financial members (i.e. your membership card expires on 31 January **2026**) are as follows;

- **Adult Membership – \$30.00**
- **Child Membership (under 16) – \$15.00**
- **Family Membership (2A & any children under 16) – \$60.00**

Membership renewal rates, if paid after the AGM on 28 April 2026, will be;

**Adults – \$40.00**

**Child (under 16) – \$20.00**

**Family (2A & any) – \$80.00**

Pro-forma invoices for membership will be sent to current members within the next couple of weeks. Membership fees can be paid to **PN Operatic Society: 06-0729-0024947-00**



## *OPEN ADULT BALLET CLASSES*

Join us on Wednesday nights for Adult Ballet with the lovely Chantelle – a warm, welcoming class open to all experience levels. Whether you're brand new or returning to the barre, this is your space to stretch, move, and enjoy the joy of ballet in a relaxed and supportive environment. No bookings needed – just come as you are to ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS, 75 The Square. E-mail for more information if needed to [jessie@actthree.co.nz](mailto:jessie@actthree.co.nz) – **\$10 for members | \$15 for non-members (pay per class)**. The perfect way to move your body and lift your spirits – we can't wait to dance with you!

**ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS**  
He Whānau Tuatinihiti  
Open Adult Ballet Classes  
with  
**Chantelle Vivian-Christensen**  
Wednesday at 7:30pm-8:45pm  
Act Three Productions  
75 The Square, Palmerston North  
\$10 Members | \$15 Non-Members p/class





ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS thanks the following **CHICAGO** sponsors.



TUITION  
CONFIDENCE  
RESULTS





## CREATIVES

### Choreography

Matthew Lyne – *COME FROM AWAY*

### Musical Direction

Lottie Perry – *COME FROM AWAY* (Large Scale Musical)

### Direction Debut

Jacob McDonald and Jon Samia – *SCHOOL OF ROCK*

### Direction Musical

Phil Anstis – *COME FROM AWAY* (Large Scale Musical)

## PERFORMANCES

### Ensemble (Musical)

*COME FROM AWAY*

### Connection Between Characters (Youth)

Horace Howlers – *SCHOOL OF ROCK*

### Connection Between Characters (Musical)

Jenna Baxter (Rosemary Mullins) and Phil Anstis (Dewey Finn) – *SCHOOL OF ROCK*

### Emerging Actor

Elizah Hobbs – *SCHOOL OF ROCK, ELF Jr, Sugar Baby*

### Supporting Actor in a Female Role (Musical)

Erica Ward (Hannah) – *COME FROM AWAY* (Large Scale Musical)

### Supporting Actor in a Male Role (Musical)

Lindsay Yeo (Kevin Tuerff) – *COME FROM AWAY* (Large Scale Musical)

### Actor in a Female Role (Musical)

Jenna Baxter (Rosemary Mullins) – *SCHOOL OF ROCK* (Large Scale Musical)

### Actor in a Male Role (Musical)

Phil Anstis (Dewey Finn) – *SCHOOL OF ROCK* (Large Scale Musical)



# WHAT'S GOING ON?

## Raúl Esparza-Led *Galileo* Musical Coming to Broadway This Fall

by Jamie Kravitz

*Galileo*, a new pop-rock musical inspired by the life of Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei, is coming to Broadway. The musical will star four-time Tony nominee Raúl Esparza, with Jeremy Kushnier (*Footloose*) as a Catholic prelate and Tony nominee Joy Woods (*Gypsy*) as Galileo's daughter. Performances are scheduled to begin at the Shubert Theatre on 10 November 2026, with opening night set for 6 December. Esparza, whose previous Broadway credits include *Taboo*, *Company*, *The Homecoming*, *Speed-the-Plow*, *Leap of Faith* and more, returns to the Great White Way for the first time in over 13 years. Directed by Tony winner Michael Mayer (*CHESS*, *Spring Awakening*), Mayer announced the news at the Broadway Across America conference in Miami, Florida on 10 February. Mae Jemison, a former astronaut and the first Black woman in space, introduced a presentation of songs from the show. The original rock score is by Zoe Sarnak (*The Lonely Few*, *Empire Records*) and Michael Weiner (*First Date*), with a book by two-time Emmy winner Danny Strong, who wrote the new book for the Broadway revival of *CHESS*. Choreography is by Tony nominee David Neumann (*Hadestown*, *Swept Away*). *Galileo* is the electrifying and emotional new musical about maverick scientist Galileo Galilei. When he makes astronomical discoveries that revolutionise humanity's understanding of the universe, he must defend his findings before the most powerful religious institution in the world. In a statement, the producers said, "The moment Galileo lifts his telescope to the sky and reshapes our understanding of the universe is one of history's great turning points. Bringing that moment to the stage feels both thrilling and urgent. Though this story unfolds more than 400 years ago, its themes resonate with striking clarity today. We're telling a story that captures the enduring tension between truth and power – and the courage required to stand by what you know is right, even when doing so comes at great cost. That kind of courage is the essential force on which human progress relies, and it is why Galileo – and those like him – are the ones who change the course of history." *Galileo* had its world premiere at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in 2024. A one-performance reading led by Esparza took place in June 2019 at the Susan Stein Shiva Theater in Poughkeepsie, New York. Additional casting will be announced.

## EVERYTHING'S COMING UP OZMA

After teasing the possibility of a *WICKED* spinoff, composer Stephen Schwartz has confirmed that he's working with librettist Winnie Holtzman on a new project set in Oz. The basis will be L. Frank Baum's *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, tentatively titled *Ozma*. *WICKED* itself is based on Gregory Maguire's theologically-minded epic *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, which spawned a book series of its own. However, Schwartz says this project will not be an extension of Maguire's universe but rather, "a more a direct adaptation of what Baum wrote, although it [will have] its own spin." Schwartz also revealed that he has discussed this idea with Universal Pictures and producer Marc Platt, both of whom reaped the benefits of *WICKED*'s recent blockbuster film adaptations. Set in the aftermath of Dorothy's departure, *The Marvelous Land of Oz* follows the exploits of Princess Ozma, the rightful ruler of Oz who has been transformed into a boy by the sinister sorceress Mombi. Like the protagonist of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (who undergoes a similar transformation), Ozma has often been invoked in scholarly writings on gender and queerness. Though details remain vague, we can't wait to see what these wizards of musical theater have in store for us!

## Rachel Zegler and Ben Platt Bring *The Last Five Years* Stateside

by Jonah de Forest

As previously reported, Rachel Zegler and Ben Platt will star in a weeklong run of Jason Robert Brown's marital masterwork *The Last Five Years* at the London Palladium from 24–29 March 2026. The harmonies won't stop there, as it has been announced that they are also bringing the show to New York and Los Angeles. The pair of belters will play the Hollywood Bowl on 3 April and Radio City Music Hall on 6 & 7 April. Platt recently appeared on Ryan Murphy's body horror extravaganza *The Beauty* and copped a Tony for his performance in *Dear Evan Hansen*. Zegler's splashy resumé includes Steven Spielberg's *WEST SIDE STORY* remake, Sam Gold's Broadway staging of *Romeo and Juliet* and Jamie Lloyd's *EVITA* revival on the West End. *The Last Five Years* was most recently revived on Broadway last year with Nick Jonas and Adrienne Warren. This particular production will be directed and conducted by none other than Brown himself.

## New musical *God is a DJ* in development, penned by Paddington show writer Jessica Swale

By Alex Wood

The show promises to blend musical theatre and club music. A new musical titled *God Is A DJ* is in development, bringing club and DJ culture to the stage. The piece is written by Jessica Swale and directed by Vicky Featherstone, with musical supervision and orchestration by Matthew Brind. The show combines a live DJ and band with dance music, and centres on a story about relationships, fame and music. The title track "God Is A DJ" has been written for the show by composer David Arnold with songwriter Karen Poole and dance music artist Sam Harper. Brind and Swale recently worked on the *Paddington* musical together, while Featherstone was previously artistic director at the Royal Court. Swale explained the premise, "How could I resist the opportunity to join Vicky and Matthew, two such inspiring creative forces, in making a piece of work which truly challenges the boundaries of conventional playmaking. I've always loved collaborating with live musicians, but we're exploding those boundaries to see what happens when you mix intimate storytelling with heart-stopping immersive sound. I can't wait!" Featherstone added, "Having fallen deeply in love with clubbing and dance music at the Hacienda and the Paradise Factory in the Manchester of the '90s, the opportunity to bring that experience to the stage in a musical which celebrates our eternal search to belong and to exist as one, even for a moment, feels very special. Nothing can ever replace the feeling as we all raise our arms in the air, forgetting the world outside and are taken to a different place by the skill of the DJ and the music. Fusing that with theatre alongside such great collaborators, where we can also explore the dark heart which lurks within that world, is a real adventure." *God Is A DJ* is conceived by producer Irit Ten Hengel. Ten Hengel previously worked on the musical *Obsessed*, based on songwriter Diane Warren. Donna Munday will serve as executive producer.

## BILLY ELLIOTTO RETURN TO THE WEST END IN 2027

By Alex Wood

'Electricity' sparks at the Adelphi! *Billy Elliot the Musical* will return to the West End after a near-12-year absence. The production has been seen by more than 10.5 million people worldwide and has won over 80 international awards, including 10 Tony Awards and five Olivier Awards. Based on the film, the musical is set during the 1984–85 miners' strike and follows Billy's journey from boxing to ballet, changing his life and community. On the creative side are writer Lee Hall (book and lyrics), director Stephen Daldry and choreographer, Peter Darling, joined by Elton John who composed the show's score. The production features scenic design by Ian MacNeil, costume design is by Nicky Gillibrand, lighting design by Rick Fisher, sound design by Paul Arditti and hair, wig and make up design by Campbell Young. Musical supervision and orchestrations are by Martin Koch. The tour director is Simon Pollard and the associate choreographer is Jeroen Luiten. Daldry and John said in a joint statement, "Creating *Billy Elliot the Musical* was one of the most joyous and inspiring moments of our careers, so to bring the show back for a UK tour and a season in the West End for the first time in over a decade is both incredibly emotional and exciting. It's bold, it's British, it's full of heart and the story feels more relevant than ever. We can't wait for a whole new generation to experience it!" It will now run at the Adelphi Theatre on the Strand for a limited season from 12 February to 31 July 2027.

# FOR AARON TVEIT, LEA MICHELE & NICHOLAS CHRISTOPHER, *CHESS* IS NO LONGER SOMEONE ELSE'S STORY

by Jonah de Forest

In the midst of a punishing winter, the Cold War-era musical *CHESS* has been heating up Broadway with an East-West love triangle comprised of Tony winner Aaron Tveit, Lea Michele and Nicholas Christopher. The trio of stars sat down with Broadway.com Editor-in-Chief Paul Wontorek at Rockefeller Center's swanky Pebble Bar to talk about the long-awaited revival and their respective relationships to the material.

*CHESS* has the reputation of being a challenging work to stage, having been tinkered with to varying degrees in the years since its 1986 West End opening and subsequent 1988 Broadway run. In this regard, the show bears similarities to Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's famously troubled *Merrily We Roll Along*, which attained a hard-won triumph in the form of a 2023 Broadway revival more than four decades after it was originally staged. Like the *Merrily* revival, this iteration of *CHESS* can attribute much of its success to the powerhouse trio leading the cast. "When I first started listening to the music and when this project was brought to me, for whatever reason, I just saw it so clearly," says Michele, who plays Florence Vassy, the strong-willed chess second in the middle of the show's romantic triangle. "It's like how we talk about playing chess in our show. For me I could just see the board. I could read it so clearly and I understood everything about it. *Merrily* was a very big factor as well. It's so much about having someone bring in a vision, the timing being right and then three people coming together who have a connection in what we can do individually and what we bring together that really allowed all the stars to align for our production."

Christopher, who plays the disciplined Russian grandmaster Anatoly Sergievsky, was familiar with the song "Anthem" from theatre camp, but not much else. "I knew there was some sort of weird classical rock/pop Broadway show out there, but I had no idea," he says. Now fully immersed in the world of *CHESS*, he recognises the immense power of the score and the story, as well as its continued impact on audiences. "We're seeing parents who had seen one of the 68 shows during the first run on Broadway bringing their kids, or people from London who had seen the original London version coming over and bringing their kids. It really seems like this generational love and passion for this musical is bringing people together, which is so exciting."

Tveit, who plays the arrogant, short-fused American grandmaster Freddie Trumper, echoes this sentiment. "When people come to the show, I say, 'Okay, what did you know about *CHESS*?' It's either nothing or everything, there's nothing in between. So many people have come and said that they saw the [original] show on Broadway. It's incredible that something that ran for seemingly such a short amount of time found this kind of cult following." Reflecting on his character's volatile temperament, Tveit says he's motivated by the humanity underneath. "I'm interested in this guy's mental health state, the idea of trauma and childhood trauma. We live in a day and age where any 11-year-old with a phone can all of the sudden get all this notoriety because they post a video online and a million people watch it. We don't know what the cost of that is going to be in 15 or 20 years. So to think about this guy who was thrust onto the world stage at 11 years old with no support system, no family structure behind him, it started to make sense to me how and why he could become who he is and be in this terrible co-dependent relationship."

This version of *CHESS* features a revised book by Danny Strong. "The three of us had a really intimate experience over the summer with [director] Michael [Mayer] and Danny, where we got to work on these characters and really take the time to develop the dynamics and the relationship and the complexities," Michele shares. "For me, it was so important that Florence not just be this sort of pawn, excuse the pun."

Though all of their characters go through tremendous emotional arcs, Michele concedes that, "Nick wins the crying award. That says a lot, because I usually am the crier. But we have a cry-off at the end of the show." Adds Tveit, "I've been called TT in other shows, for Teary Tveit." Christopher has a particularly charged moment in the form of "Endgame," a power ballad he delivers during the climactic chess match.

"It feels like a true exploration of self. What I have is the sounds of the incredible voices behind me, the sound of the orchestra and then it's just this sort of void of blackness," he says. "And yet there's the added ingredient to the mix of all of these eyes on you at the same time, where it takes an incredible amount of focus to open yourself up to that, to then be able to share a real piece of myself with the audience every night."

As evidenced by the incredible amount of belting they each have to do in this show, all three actors have an impressive number of Broadway roles under their belts at this point in their respective careers. But when asked to reflect on the best part of their lives right now, the communal answer had to do with finding balance. "I have a 14-month-old at home, and I just keep thinking about this moment in her life, that I'm getting to do this thing that I love. My world feels so full. I'm home with her and it's amazing and I have this beautiful family that I'm so grateful for, and then I get to go into work. The complements of the two, it's kind of overwhelming," Tveit says. Michele, who has a 16-month-old and a five-year-old, emphatically agrees. "It's an unbelievable blessing to be able to do what you love and have the support around you of the people that are helping to make that happen, especially as a working mom." For Christopher, it's refreshingly rare to have only one job, to be able to focus on playing a single character. He doesn't take for granted the fact that, "I get to dedicate my full energy and my full focus to this show and to my family, to my friends."

*CHESS* is running at the Imperial Theatre, where Michele made her Broadway debut at eight years old in *Les Misérables*. Reflecting on this full-circle moment in her career, she adds, "Every night before I go out, I have a picture of me at eight in my dressing room, and I just feel so grateful to be able to be doing what I love for 30 years now. When I walk out every night and I sing 'Someone Else's Story,' I look at center stage and think, 'I stood there when I was eight.' It's a really unbelievable gift."

## I am overjoyed to meet you face to face ...

The award-winning Regent's Park Open Air Theatre production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* comes to the iconic London Palladium this Summer, starring Sam Ryder as Jesus. Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar* follows the vents of the last days of the life of Jesus Christ, as seen through the eyes of Judas. Reflecting the rock roots that defined a generation, the legendary scores includes 'I Don't Know How to Love Him', 'Gethsemane' and the iconic title number 'Superstar'. Tim Sheader directs the iconic global phenomenon, with choreography by Olivier Award winner Drew McOnie and design by Tony and Olivier Award winner Tom Scutt. Joining the previously announced Sam Ryder as Jesus is an all-star line up of six actors sharing the role of King Herod.



## *Titanique* Completes Broadway Cast

by Jamie Kravitz

*Titanique* has announced complete casting for the production's Broadway transfer. The full cast has been announced for *Titanique* on Broadway. Sara Gallo (*1776*), Polanco Jones (*The Wiz*) and Kristina Leopold (*SIX*) join as the background vocalists, and Tess Marshall (*Titanique* off-Broadway), Brad Greer (*Titanique* off-Broadway) and Kyle Ramar Freeman (*A Strange Loop*) round out the cast as understudies. Previously announced in the cast are Marla Mindelle as Céline Dion, Jim Parsons as Ruth Dewitt Bukater, Melissa Barrera as Rose DeWitt Bukater, Deborah Cox as Unsinkable Molly Brown, Frankie Grande as Victor Garber, Constantine Rousouli as Jack Dawson, John Riddle as Cal Hockley and Layton Williams as The Iceberg. The original musical comedy, powered by the songs of pop icon Céline Dion, will make its Broadway debut in a 16-week limited engagement at the St James Theatre beginning March 26. Opening night is set for April 12, and the production will run through July 12.

## Matthew Morrison to Star in *Just In Time* as Bobby Darin

by Jamie Kravitz

Tony nominee Matthew Morrison will return to Broadway for the first time in a decade as Bobby Darin in *Just In Time*. As previously announced, Tony winner Jonathan Groff will play his final performance in the role on March 29. Morrison is scheduled for a three-week engagement beginning April 1, through April 19 at the Circle in the Square Theatre. Current *The Great Gatsby* star Jeremy Jordan will then step into the role on April 21. "Our show is made to fit like a glove around all kinds of virtuoso performers. I'm thrilled to get back in there and tailor the material so it's personal to Matthew Morrison, his journey, his many talents, and to welcome him back home to Broadway where he belongs," said co-book writer Isaac Oliver in a statement. Morrison joins current cast members Joe Barbara, Michele Pawk, Sarah Hyland, Lance Roberts, Sadie Dickerson, Caesar Samayoa and Emily Bergl. He was last seen on Broadway in 2016 as J.M. Barrie in *Finding Neverland*. Previous Broadway credits include *South Pacific*, *A Naked Girl on the Appian Way*, *The Light in the Piazza* (for which he received a Tony nomination), *Hairspray*, *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Footloose*. He played Will Schuester on *Glee* from 2009–2015. Developed and directed by Tony winner Alex Timbers, *Just In Time* invites audiences to experience the great American entertainer's meteoric journey – from soaring highs to crushing lows – featuring a live on-stage band performing Bobby Darin's iconic hits including "Beyond the Sea," "Splish Splash," "Dream Lover" and "Mack the Knife." The musical features a book by Tony winner Warren Leight and Isaac Oliver, music supervision and arrangements by Andrew Resnick, orchestrations by Resnick and Michael Thurber, choreography by Shannon Lewis and is based on an original concept by Ted Chapin.

## Jessica Vosk and Kelli Barrett on Bringing *Beaches* to Broadway

by Jonah de Forest

Get your tissues ready, because *Beaches*, one of pop culture's great tearjerkers, is coming to Broadway in musical form. Based on Iris Rainer Dart's bestselling novel about a decades-spanning friendship, *Beaches* will star Jessica Vosk as flamboyant performer Cee Cee Bloom and Kelli Barrett as her bookish counterpart, Bertie White. The two theater veterans chatted with Broadway.com Editor-in-Chief Paul Wontorek about bringing the beloved story of sisterhood to the stage. "That film, for me, was a part of my youth and growing up and realizing what friendship is, what heartbreak is, what soulmates are," says Vosk, referring to the famed 1988 adaptation of *Beaches* starring Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey. "You don't get stories like this, especially on Broadway, of two women from childhood through their thirties and forties who remain steadfast connections in each other's lives through everything that you can possibly think of." Speaking to the nature of working from pre-existing material, Barrett says, "This feels like a reimagining, how do we take this story and make it for the stage? It feels like it's meant for the stage and I really appreciate that as a stage actress, that I understand what I'm in. I'm not just trying to recreate something from a different mode on the stage." "This is the first time I've ever created a role on Broadway. This is the first leading role that I get to create from beginning to end. That includes the music being fit on the two of us in a way that I've not had before. For it to be a new musical, I'm hoping that people will open up their minds to the fact that you're going to come in and see a piece that you might have seen already, but you've never seen it like this," says Vosk, echoing Barrett's sentiments. She continues, "We fit these roles very well. There's a lot about Cee Cee that I grew up with. As Jessica, there's a lot about my showmanship that is Cee Cee-based. There's a lot about my imposter syndrome that's Cee Cee Bloom based. She wears her heart on her sleeve. She does not have a filter. She does not know when to turn it off. If she's angry, she's real angry, and she's going to let you know." Vosk became a fan favorite amongst theatergoers for playing Elphaba in *WICKED* on Broadway and its national tour. "When you play Elphaba a bunch of times, people think, 'She's just a singer.' But this has really been one of those things where we've been able to stretch the acting muscle." As far as the type of music audiences can expect to hear in *Beaches*, the creative team has released songs from the production, including the duet "Wish I Could Be Like You". Grammy winner Mike Stoller composed the music, while author Dart wrote lyrics and co-penned the libretto with the late Thom Thomas. Barrett praises Stoller's contributions, saying, "He writes a melody you can't forget and I think that this score is true in that way as well. It's got a lot of different styles, but I think the jazzy, big brassy stuff really comes forward and it's all very tuneful." For Vosk and Barrett, the friendship at the heart of *Beaches* is not just for show.

"I've had the great fortune of doing Broadway shows opposite leading men and I'm married, and there's just always a level of removal that has to be there in order for it to be appropriate," explains Barrett. "Jess and I can go further with that. Women don't get to do that very often, where they get to have each other." You can experience this real-life friendship onstage at the Majestic Theatre beginning March 27.

## Corbin Bleu and John Behlmann to Join *The Great Gatsby* on Broadway

by Jonah de Forest

New money, new cast members! Corbin Blue and John Behlmann will join the Broadway company of *The Great Gatsby* on March 30. Bleu is stepping into the role of Nick Carraway after originating the part in the European premiere of the production in the West End. Behlmann is joining Bleu onstage as Tom Buchanan. Current cast members Michael Maliakel and Austin Colby will play their final performances as Nick Carraway and Tom Buchanan, respectively, on March 29. Bleu rose to fame in Disney's *High School Musical* franchise and has appeared on Broadway in *In the Heights*, *Godspell*, *Holiday Inn* and *Kiss Me, Kate*. New York audiences most recently saw Bleu as Seymour Krelborn in *Little Shop of Horrors* off-Broadway. Theater veteran Behlmann returned to Broadway last season in *Smash* and has also performed in *Shucked*, *Tootsie*, *Significant Other* and *Journey's End*. As previously announced, Tony nominee Eva Noblezada returns to the Jazz Age musical as Daisy Buchanan on March 4, starring opposite her husband Reeve Carney in the show's title role when he joins the company on March 30. In preceding weeks, Noblezada will reunite with her original co-star, Tony nominee Jeremy Jordan (who plays his final performance as Jay Gatsby on March 7) and Ryan McCartan (who steps back into the role from March 8-29). Through March 2, the role of Daisy will be shared by Traci Elaine Lee, Elena Ricardo and Kyla Stone.



## YOUR NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is compiled bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September and November each year. If you would like to request that a notice be included in the next **STAGE RAGE**, please e-mail [admin@actthree.co.nz](mailto:admin@actthree.co.nz) and your request will be passed on to the newsletter team.

