



▶ LYRIC LOOKING FOR EXECUTIVE MEMBERS 4

○ 33RD SEASON | ○ FEBRUARY | ○ 2010



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Lyric *notes*

REGINA LYRIC MUSICAL THEATRE
WWW.REGINALYRIC.COM

Just in time for Valentine's Day...

I ♥ Broadway

Broadway's greatest love songs

It's not very often that Lyric's musical fundraising brunch falls on Valentine's Day, but that's the case this year--and so what better year to celebrate romance with a program featuring Broadway's greatest love songs?

Tickets are still available for each of the brunches, which run Sunday, February 7, and Sunday, February 14, in the Regency Ballroom of the Hotel Saskatchewan Radisson Plaza. Brunch is at 12 noon,

with the show following at around 1 p.m. All tickets are \$45, and are available only at Bach & Beyond in the Golden Mile Centre (cash or cheque only). A tax receipt will be issued for the donation portion of the ticket price.

The love songs

This year's show, directed by Jane Ursan and accompanied by Bill Sgrazzutti on piano, Mark Lemmerick on bass and Lindsay Hale on drums, includes songs from a plethora

of Broadway musicals, both well-known and lesser-known. There's "My Time of Day" from *Guys & Dolls*, "Till There Was You" from *The Music Man*, "You're Just in Love" from *Call Me Madam* and "This Can't Be Love" from *The Boys from Syracuse*.

But that's not all! (Sorry, that sounds like a KTel commercial.) You'll also hear "Love, Look Away" from *Flower Drum Song*, "When I'm Not Near the Girl I Love" from

Finian's Rainbow, "Night and Day" from *The Gay Divorcee*, and "My Funny Valentine" from *Babes in Arms*.

There are also "Back on Base" from *Closer Than Ever*, "Seasons of Love" from *Rent*, "Once Upon A Time" from *All-American* and "It's Never Too Late to Fall in Love" from *The Boyfriend*.

You'll enjoy "Someone to Watch Over Me" from *Oh,*

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The Pajama Game
May 2004

LYRIC NOTES

Editor: Edward Willett

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Gypsy auditions February 9

Auditions for *Gypsy*, Lyric's spring production, will be held Tuesday, February 9, downstairs at Lakeview United Church, 3200 McCallum Avenue, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Bring a song that shows off your voice; an accompanist will be provided.

The show runs May 26 to 30 at the University Theatre, Riddell Centre.

Gypsy, based on the memoirs of legendary striptease artist Gypsy Rose Lee, has a script by Arthur Laurents, music by Jule Styne (several of the songs were in last year's brunch featuring Styne's music) and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim.

The synopsis

Tams-Witmark, which owns the performance rights for *Gypsy*, calls it "the ultimate story about an aggressive stage mother."

The story starts in Seattle with stage mother Rose pushing her two daughters into Uncle Jocko's Kiddie Show. June, her mother feels, is the most likely

"The ultimate story about an aggressive stage mother...one of the top contenders for the title of Best Musical Ever..."

to become a star. Louise is plainer and quieter; she stands meekly in her sister's shadow. A new act called "Baby June and her Newsboys" is conceived by Rose, and the family is off to the "big time" in Los Angeles. The act, steeped in star-spangled banners, dancing horses (Louise plays the rear end), and screaming newsboys moves to Dallas, Akron, New York, Buffalo and Omaha.

Along the way Rose meets Herbie, a theatrical agent, and hires him as manager. He

makes himself father to the troupe, sharing with them their meals of chow mein, Rose's favorite food. Rose scrimps as she schemes and scrambles for bookings and billings to maintain their hand to mouth existence. She sleeps her charges six in a dingy hotel room and makes their costumes from hotel blankets. Her object is to make her two penniless girls into world stars.

The girls begin to grow up and the act becomes "Dainty June and her Newsboys." Unfortunately its quality does not improve. Bookings are cancelled and the act moves on.



The real Gypsy Rose Lee

"If Momma would marry..." Louise wishes that Momma would marry a plain man so they could settle down. Herbie

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...I ♥ Broadway, continued

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Kay!, "All I Ask of You" from *The Phantom of the Opera*, "She Loves Me" from the musical of the same name, and "My Cup Runneth Over With Love" from *I Do, I Do*.

Rounding out the program: "Take A Chance on Me" from *Mamma Mia!*, "Some Enchanted Evening" from *South Pacific*, "A Little Bit in Love" from *Wonderful Town*, "On the Street Where You Live" from *My Fair Lady*, and "Love Changes Everything" from *Aspects of Love*.

The love singers

Cast members include both veterans of and newcomers to the Lyric stage: Janelle Ben-



A Broadway Valentine daylily

nett, Zane Buchanan, Patrick Cherneski, Amanda Dancsok, Zachary Flis, Michael Hamann, Margaret Anne Hodges, Jenni Hoffman, Norma Lemmerick, Jamie Lemmerick, Darla Middlebrook, Graeme Mitchell, Dwight Muller, Aliah Nelson, Janelle Peters, Elizabeth Popowich, Owen Ricker, Jessica Scheuer, Jamie Senger, Nathan Sgrazzutti and Edward Willett.

A great Hotel Saskatchewan buffet brunch and a fabulous performance of Broadway's greatest love songs. What better way can *you* think of to celebrate the month of Valentine's Day?

Don't miss it!

Tahirih Vejdani: Lyric performer tackles Toronto

In December of 2008, Tahirih Vejdani graduated with a B.A. in Music from the University of Regina. Two weeks later, she says, “I hopped on a plane for Toronto, not knowing what I was going to do.”

She knew what she *wanted* to do: perform. After all, that’s what she’d been doing in Regina for several years, including numerous Regina Lyric Musical Theatre productions.

Started singing as child

Tahirih started singing as a child in Alberta, and that involvement in music carried on after she moved to Regina in Grade 4. She started singing in the Conservatory Children’s Choir, and started voice lessons in Grade 8 or Grade 9. In Grade 10 and 11, she sang with the SaskExpress Musical Studio’s Expressions. She also sang in the Campbell Collegiate jazz ensemble, chamber choir and concert choir, and played in the top band ensembles.

In Grade 11, she also auditioned for Lyric for the first time, taking part in the brunch. She went on to be part of the cast of *Carousel* for Lyric, and *Brigadoon* for Regina Summer Stage. That same year she auditioned for Do It With Class Young People’s Theatre Co., and spent her senior year with that group, performing in *Hair*.

As she moved into university, she continued to perform with Lyric and others. She was part of the cast of *Sweeney Todd*, was one of the leads in *Candide*, and was also one of the *Broadway Divas*; performed in *The Wizard of Oz* and *Anne of Green Gables* with Regina Summer Stage, and played Maria in the Do It With Class alumni concert production of *West Side Story*.

She continued to take voice



lessons (first with Peter Groom, then with Lynn Channing) while she worked on her degree in music (with a second major in music history), and sang in the University of Regina Chamber Singers and played oboe in the Concert Band.

RSO concerts

She also began singing professionally, performing as part of the “Andrews Sisters” in the Regina Symphony Orchestra’s 2007 concert, *Big Bands to Broadway*, and again at the RSO’s 2008 Remembrance Day concert *I’ll Be Seeing You*. That same year she was nominated for the Mayor’s Business and Arts Award for emerging artist. She graduated with distinction (and won the 2009 Luther Medal of Distinction Award from Luther College).

Within a couple of weeks of arriving in Toronto, she was recruited by Wildfire Dance Theatre in Stratford, a Baha’i-inspired troupe that travelled to Arviat, Nunavut to present a storytelling dance about equality, domestic violence and gang violence.

Tahirih spent 20 days in Nunavut. Although brought on board as a musician, she was used more as a dancer than a singer. “This was all volunteer work,” she says, calling it “a very wonderful experience, something that may not happen for the rest of my life—a very rare thing for most people.”

While in Arviat, she did some music workshops at the high school, and wrote a song with the students. “When we came

back to Stratford we were able to record it and send it back to the kids,” she says. “That was really cool.”

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale

Living in Toronto and auditioning, trying to figure out what she wanted to do, wasn’t easy, Tahirih says. She was thinking of moving back to Regina, but then on the recommendation of a friend auditioned for the Nathaniel Dett Chorale, “Canada’s first professional choral group dedicated to Afrocentric music of all styles, including classical, spiritual, gospel, jazz, folk and blues.”

“I did not know anything about them,” she admits. “They only had two openings, a first soprano and a tenor. I auditioned, and got in.”

She returned to Regina to work on *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, then went back to Toronto in September. She’s been singing with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale ever since (and touring with them: the group performed in Regina on February 2). She’s also been singing in other choirs and in churches. “I broke into the choral scene in Toronto very quickly and easily,” she says, but she’d really like to move into musical theatre.

“I’ve had a couple of auditions,” she notes, including one for *Rock of Ages*. “It was a cool experience. It felt like a cattle call, like auditioning for *Canadian Idol* or something.”

“An established performer”

This past November Tahirih put together a cabaret performance with a friend. It was her way of saying, “Toronto, I’m here, I’m performing for you.”

“It took me a while,” she says, “but finally, I feel like I’m an established performer.”

...Gypsy auditions, cont'd.

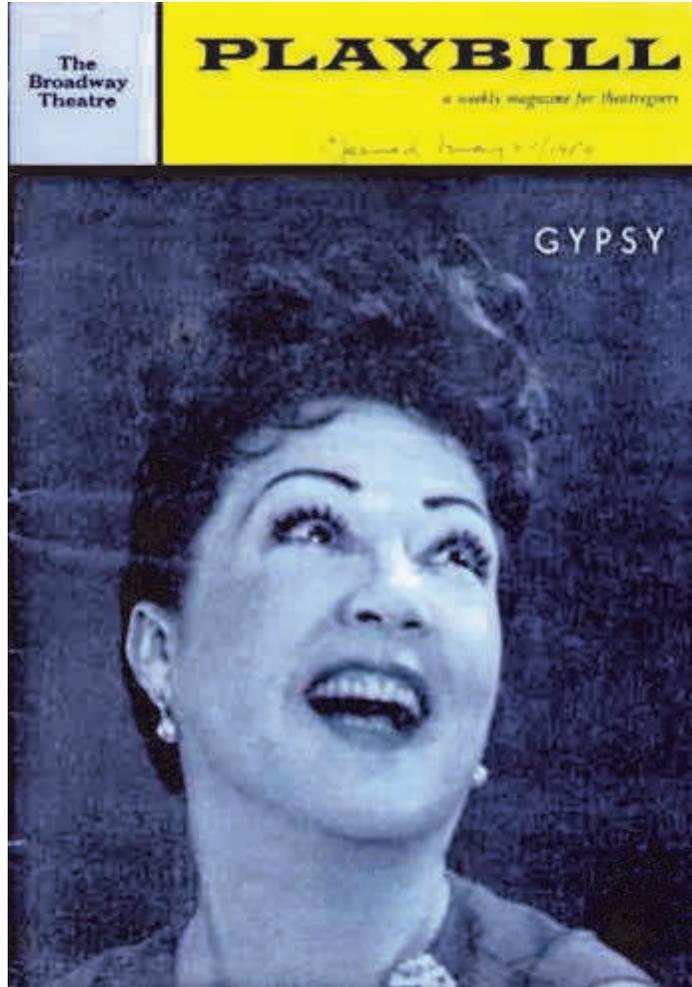
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proposes but is rejected. June elopes with Tulsa, one of the boys in the act. Rose sets out to make Louise into the star. She bursts into new enthusiasm with the rousing number "Everything's Coming Up Roses." Behind Rose lies a worrying sense of doom; a feeling that she never will fulfill her dream of stardom for her girls because it is really a dream of stardom for herself.

"You gotta get a gimmick!"

Finally the troupe reaches the bottom, a burlesque house in Wichita. Rose laments that she would rather starve than perform there. Louise realizes there is no vaudeville left except for burlesque. Here the clumsy Louise shoots into stardom by becoming something different: a ladylike stripper. Three strippers, one with a trumpet, one in a ballet costume, and one wearing well-placed electric light bulbs, are used in a most exaggerated, but very funny number, "You Gotta Get a Gimmick," to indicate the difference between the usual brassy stripper and the very elegant Louise. At last Louise breaks away from her mother and goes out on her own as Gypsy Rose Lee.

Rose bursts into the plaintive "Rose's Turn" in which she sings of her suppressed talents that she has sacrificed to further the careers of her unappreciative daughters.



Cover of the Playbill for the original production of Gypsy in 1959, starring Ethel Merman as Rose.

The show's history

Gypsy originally played for 702 performances on Broadway at the Broadway Theatre, starring Ethel Merman as Rose. It played for 300 performances in London with Angela Lansbury as Rose, and has been revived on Broadway no fewer

than four times: In 1974 with Angela Lansbury (reprising her London performance), in 1989 with Tyne Daly, in 2003 with Bernadette Peters, and in 2008 with Patti LuPone as Rose, winning several Tony Awards along the way.

Critics have long lavished praise on the show, and the latest revival was no exception. Clive Barnes of the *New York Post* said Arthur Laurents's script is "possibly the best book ever for a Broadway musical." Linda Winer of *Newsday* called Stephen Sondheim's lyrics "wrenching and brilliant" and Jule Styne's music "brassy-bravura," and said *Gypsy* "belongs on Broadway for as long as people need musicals."

"Rarely, in musicals, do you see people of such depth and complexity," wrote Michael Kuchwara of the Associated Press. "Absolute perfection may not be within human grasp; but story, lyrics and music... fuse into a more than reasonable facsimile," John Simon wrote for Bloomberg. And Terry Teachout of *The Wall Street Journal* said, "The show itself is a miracle, one of the top contenders for the title of Best Musical Ever."

Be a part of it!

With that pedigree, under the always-innovative direction of Robert Ursan, and with a treasure trove of talented performers to draw on in Regina, Lyric Musical Theatre's production of *Gypsy* promises to be one of its finest shows ever.

Wouldn't you like to be part of it? You would?

Then see you at auditions!

Love musical theatre?

Lyric relies on capable and enthusiastic people to serve on the board of directors. It's a great opportunity to learn about production management and to work closely with a team of people who love musical theatre.

Lyric currently needs a Vice-President, which is a one-year term, followed by a one-year term as President and a one-year term as Past President. Interested? Contact Carolyn Speirs at nandc@sasktel.net or 525-5342.

