

CHEZ JOEY

IN THE KREEGER THEATER
JANUARY 30 – MARCH 15, 2026

Music by **RICHARD RODGERS** Lyrics by **LORENZ HART** New Book by **RICHARD LAGRAVENESE**

Inspired by John O'Hara's novel,
based on the 'Pal Joey' stories published in *The New Yorker*

Choreographed by **SAVION GLOVER**
Co-Directed by **TONY GOLDWYN** and **SAVION GLOVER**

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Welcome to CHEZ JOEY

Arena Stage's production of *Chez Joey* is a reimagining of the classic 1940 musical *Pal Joey* and the short stories of the same name. Now titled *Chez Joey*, the musical features a new script written by screenwriter Richard Lagravenese. The script is accompanied by *Pal Joey* classic songs like "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" and "What Is a Man?" as well as songs from other Rodgers and Hart musicals like "My Funny Valentine" and "I Wish I Were in Love Again."

The Play

Set in 1940s Chicago, the jazz scene is sizzling. **Joey Evans** is a smooth-talking performer at Lucille's, a nightclub run by **Lucille Wallace**. Talented and ambitious, Joey is striving for recognition on the Chicago club circuit. **Linda English**, a new performer at Lucille's, immediately catches Joey's attention, and the two bond over their shared passion for music.

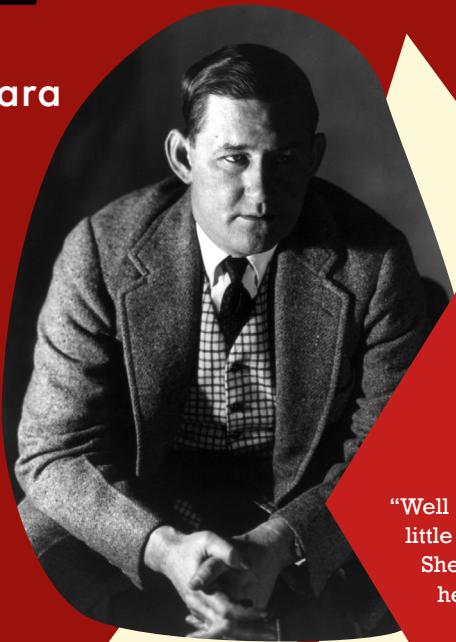
When Joey learns that Lucille's is running out of money, he makes a plan to save it. He teams up with former tap dancer **Melvin Snyder** to bring the wealthy building owner's wife, **Vera Simpson**, into the club. With her husband's money, Vera can make Joey's dreams come true—however, it comes at a price. Meanwhile, Joey's relationship with Linda grows as they continue to perform together. Torn between integrity and ambition, Joey is faced with a decision that will determine his future, both as a performer and a lover.

John O'Hara

Meet the Original Creators

Pal Joey began as a collection of short stories by John O'Hara published in *The New Yorker* magazine. Told in the form of letters from Joey to his friend Ted, the stories follow Joey, a Chicago nightclub singer, who chases after women, money, and fame. Readers of the stories were attracted to Joey's blunt and distinct voice, which is filled with spelling and grammatical errors. O'Hara was a 20th century American short story writer and novelist. When he was in high school, O'Hara's father unexpectedly passed away, leaving the once wealthy family without any money. O'Hara's experience with money and social class influenced his writing on America in the 1920s to 1940s. His gravestone writes, "Better than anyone else, he told the truth about his time."

O'Hara approached composer Richard Rodgers about adapting his "Pal Joey" stories into a musical. The musical *Pal Joey* premiered on Broadway in 1940 with a book by O'Hara, music by Rodgers, and lyrics by Rodgers' collaborator Lorenz Hart. Rodgers and Hart wrote songs for over 30 musicals during their partnership, including classics like *Babes in Arms* and *On Your Toes*.



(above and below) Source: Wikimedia Commons

O'Hara's Joey

"Well I heard about this spot through a little mouse I got to know up in Michigan. She told me about this spot as it is her home town altho spending her vacation every year in Michigan. I was to a party one nite (private) and they finely got me to sing a few numbers for them and the mouse couldn't take her eyes off me."

— Excerpt from "Pal Joey" by John O'Hara, published in *The New Yorker* in October 1938



Richard Rodgers (left)
and Lorenz Hart (right)

Meet the New Creatives

Around a decade ago, Tony Goldwyn and his longtime collaborator, screenwriter Richard Lagravenese, began to reimagine the world of *Pal Joey* for modern audiences. Savion Glover later joined the creative team, using his experience as a hoofer to bring a new rhythm to the reimagined musical. *Chez Joey* features the collaboration between Goldwyn and Glover as co-directors.

“What if Joey’s ... an artist who’s really got something to say, and his frustration and ambition comes from the fact that he is truly gifted and has genius in him?”

– Tony Goldwyn



Source: InnocenceProject.org

Tony Goldwyn

Goldwyn (*Chez Joey* Co-Director) is an actor, producer, and director. He starred in the ABC drama *Scandal* as President Fitzgerald Grant III. Goldwyn has directed four feature films as well as episodes for TV series like *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal*. On Broadway, he starred in shows such as *Holiday* and *The Inheritance*.

Glossary

Chez Joey features language that reflects the setting of the 1940s Chicago jazz scene.

Here are a few terms that are helpful to know:

Cats

The musicians, dancers, and singers

Chez Joey

French for “Joey’s Place”

Hoofer

A master jazz/rhythm tapper who embodies the deep, percussive, improvisational spirit of the art form

“We’re entertaining a different personality that is in the *Pal Joey* that we all know. This version of *Pal Joey* is my story. I know cats who still live that life.”

– Savion Glover



Photograph by Richard Avedon for The New Yorker

Savion Glover

Glover (*Chez Joey* Co-Director, Choreographer, and Orchestrologist) is a hoofer, choreographer, and actor who has been performing since childhood. In 1996, he won the Tony Award for Best Choreography for *Bring in 'da Noise*, *Bring in 'da Funk*. In addition to his Broadway career, Glover has created tap repertoires that have toured worldwide. He also choreographed and performed the tap dances for the penguin character Mumble in the *Happy Feet* film series.



Watch Glover and the cast of *Bring in 'da Noise* perform during the 2002 MDA Labor Day Telethon!

Tramp

A scandalous woman (derogatory)

The song “The Lady Is a Tramp” pokes fun at how typical actions are seen as scandalous when a woman does them

Vaudeville

A type of entertainment popular from the late 1800s and early 1900s that contains a mix of comedy, dance, magic, and music

THE GREAT MIGRATION OF JAZZ

The origins of jazz were in the vibrant musical community of New Orleans in the early 1900s. The city's diverse population of African Americans, Creoles, and European immigrants birthed the distinctive rhythm, harmonies, and syncopation of jazz.

When World War I erupted in Europe in 1914, the U.S. kicked into war production mode, resulting in an increased need for industrial workers in the North, Midwest, and West. African Americans, most of whom lived in the South, continued to face harsh realities after the Civil War ended in 1865 through legislation like the Jim Crow Laws. These laws enforced racial segregation in the South, permitting racially prejudiced practices against Black people.



One effect of the laws was limited employment options for African Americans, who were confined to low-paying domestic and labor jobs. The availability of jobs and possibility of a better life led Black Southerners to move North to cities like Chicago, New York City, and Kansas City. From 1916 to 1970, over six million African Americans headed North, a move which was named the Great Migration.

The Great Migration not only changed the demographics but also the cultural makeup of America. As Black Southerners moved to new cities, they brought jazz with them. Cities like Chicago and New York City became major jazz hubs, each city forming its own distinctive style.



The Hoofers Club

The Hoofers Club served as the inspiration for the nightclub in *Chez Joey*. The Hoofers Club was an African American club in Harlem, New York, active between 1920 and 1940. The club was located in a small backroom of the Comedy Club next to the Lafayette Theatre on Seventh Avenue. There was a piano in the corner and dancing throughout the day and night. The club featured some of the best jazz and tap performers like Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and served as a casual space for new and experienced performers to share and compete with each other.



BILL 'BOJANGLES'
ROBINSON

Photo by James Kriegsmann
via Wikimedia Commons

MAKING IT in the CHICAGO JAZZ SCENE

Chez Joey is set in the jazz capital of the U.S., where legends like Louis Armstrong and King Oliver pioneered a smoother, more dramatic style that featured sparkling solos and incorporated saxophones and guitars. In addition to his trumpet, Armstrong used his voice as an instrument by singing random syllables, birthing a new technique called scatting. While New York City dominated the music publishing business and attracted professional songwriters, Chicago attracted performers who thrived in its nightclubs, dance halls, and cabarets. The lively nightlife provided opportunities for tap dancers, who developed a vibrant tap scene known for hoofing, which focuses on improvisation. The tap community grew from an alliance between an older generation of African American tap dancers and a younger generation of hoofers. Like the character Joey, Chicago hoofers were striving for recognition, as tap dance was mainly spotlighted in New York and California.

FROM MARYLAND TO BROADWAY AND BACK

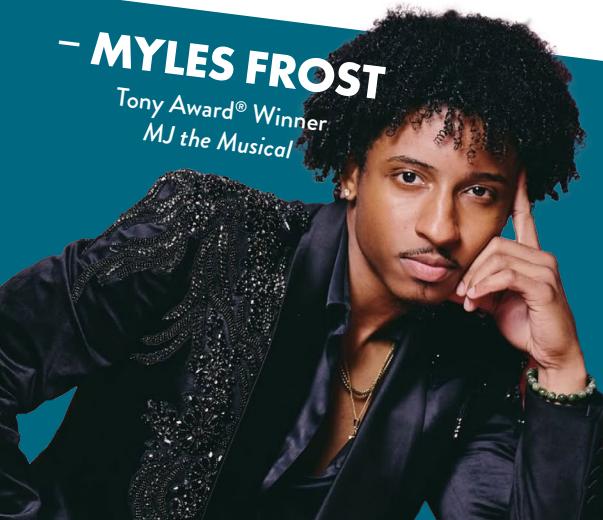
An alumnus of Wootton High School in Rockville, Maryland, Myles Frost returns home to the DC area after his celebrated Broadway debut to star as Joey Evans in *Chez Joey*. In an interview with hometown radio station WTOP, Frost shared how he was introduced to theater in high school when he landed the role of Seaweed in *Hairspray*, making him the first freshman to get a lead role in the school musical. Frost developed his vocal and performance skills through school productions, local talent shows, and church performances. After high school, Frost pursued music at Belmont University, then Bowie State University.

In 2021, his future acting coach stumbled upon a YouTube video of Frost performing Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" at his school talent show, which was filmed on his mom's iPad. He made a call to Frost and after a whirl of auditions, Frost was offered the role of Michael Jackson in *MJ the Musical* on Broadway. His performance won him the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical in 2022, becoming the youngest male solo winner. The record was previously held by Ben Platt for his performance in the musical *Dear Evan Hansen*, which had its world premiere at Arena Stage in 2015.

"It's an honor to bring this story to life alongside industry legends like Tony Goldwyn and Savion Glover. I'm truly grateful for this opportunity and can't wait to share this beautiful work with everyone. I don't think the people are ready!"

— MYLES FROST

Tony Award® Winner
MJ the Musical



THE SOUND

The character Joey Evans' passion for music and dance is expressed in his enthusiastic speech about "the Sound." Here at Arena, GW Rodriguez, our Sound and Video Supervisor, has the same passion. Rodriguez joined Arena with 25 years of experience in sound design, composition, and engineering through theater, live entertainment, and film. His current role emphasizes sound design, bringing each production to life.

As Rodriguez prepares for *Chez Joey* with sound designer Dan Moses Schreier, we sat down to learn about his preparation.

1

Reimagining a Musical Through Sound

The Sound team plays a major role in shaping a musical's character through careful decisions such as microphone selection and speaker placement throughout the theater, which help create a specific experience for the audience. New musicals and revivals demand different strategies from the sound designer. Where new musicals offer complete creative control, revivals require the creative team to decide how they want their version to be different or similar to previous interpretations. *Chez Joey* is unique because it is a new musical that is reimagining an existing musical.

2

The Orchestra

The orchestra refers to the musicians, led by a conductor, that play for a musical. The Sound team takes into account both the number of musicians and instruments, as well as the specific make-up. For example, they might ask: "Is each musician playing their own instrument, or is there someone alternating between multiple instruments throughout the show?" As the team in charge of making sure everyone is heard—from the actors to the musicians—these details are crucial for their preparation process. Traditionally, the orchestra is held beneath the stage in what is called the "pit". For *Chez Joey*, the jazz band performs on stage instead, which means that the audience will hear a lot of acoustic sound that is not amplified through the sound system. The challenge is to make sure that both sounds—acoustic and amplified—are in time with each other, so there isn't a delay in what the audience hears.

3

Amplifying the Sound

The Sound team also crafts the experience of how sound is heard—the sonic experience. For example, the sonic experience of a rock musical is very different from that of an opera. The type of musical influences decisions around where to put mics on instruments, which speakers to use, and how to mix the show. All these factors play into creating a unique sonic experience for the audience.

"Sound is the second sense tied to memory. We can hear the outside world before we can see it, taste it, touch it . . . Sound is so part of our subconscious that we don't realize how much we actually rely on sound in our day to day lives."

— GW Rodriguez

THREE BIG QUESTIONS

1

How can music and
dance deepen how
stories are told?

2

What does it mean to
have a dream?

3

What does it take to follow
your dreams while staying
true to who you are?

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HELPFUL HINTS FOR THEATER AUDIENCES

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience.

To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

- Arrive early.
- Visit the restroom before the show starts.
- Sit in the seat indicated on your ticket.
- Ushers are there to help you!
- Before the show begins, turn off your phone, watch alarms, and any other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, turn it off immediately.
- Do not use your phone for texts, calls, games, pictures, or recording.
- Respond to the show! You can laugh, cry, and gasp. However, don't distract the performers onstage.
- There is no food allowed in the theater.
- Intermission is the best time to discuss the show and visit the restroom.
- If you must leave during the show, wait for a scene change and exit quietly and quickly.
- Be sure to applaud at the end! During a musical, audiences sometimes clap after a song or dance.
- If you love the show or a performer, you can give a standing ovation. The actors bow to thank you.

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(Back Cover) Awa Sal Secka for Chez Joey. Photo by Ambe J. Williams.



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