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THE MORNING LINE

DATE: Friday, August 14, 2015

FROM: Melissa Cohen, Michelle Farabaugh

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The New York Times

August 14, 2015

Arts, Briefly

'Waitress,' a Musical, To Hit Broadway

The singer-songwriter **Sara Bareilles** has sold more than two million albums and served as a celebrity judge on the NBC a cappella competition show "The Sing-Off." Next spring, she will add Broadway composer to her list of credits when the new show "Waitress" opens at the Brooks Atkinson Theater.

Based on the 2007 film of the same title by Adrienne Shelly, and featuring music and lyrics by Ms. Bareilles, below, the show focuses on Jenna, a waitress in a small-town diner who's mired in a marriage to a man she can't stand, and pregnant with his child. Her solace comes from making pies, and when a baking contest in a nearby county offers a possible escape, she has to weigh that against the pull of family, her co-workers and her town's new doctor.



"Waitress" is currently playing through Sept. 27 at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Mass., with **Jessie Mueller** (who won a Tony for "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical") as Jenna. The musical's book is by **Jessie Nelson** (the writer and director of the film "I Am Sam"), and **Diane Paulus**, the artistic director of the American Repertory Theater, is the director. Previews will begin in March, with opening night in April. Exact dates and casting have yet to be determined.

LORNE MANLY



The New York Times



ArtsBeat The Culture at Large

August 14, 2015

Wayne Brady Will Step Into ‘Kinky Boots’

By Michael Paulson

Billy Porter, who won a Tony Award for playing Lola in Cyndi Lauper and Harvey Fierstein’s hit musical “[Kinky Boots](#),” will leave the production on Nov. 20, and be succeeded by the actor and comedian Wayne Brady, producers announced Thursday.

Mr. Brady, 43, has one previous Broadway credit: He played the manipulative lawyer Billy Flynn in “Chicago” for three months in 2004. He has won Emmy Awards for “Whose Line Is It Anyway” and “The Wayne Brady Show,” and he currently hosts the game show “Let’s Make a Deal.”

The role of Lola, a drag queen who helps save a British shoe factory from extinction, is a high-energy song-and-dance showcase. Mr. Porter has been in the part since the show’s 2013 opening, a long time for a Broadway headliner these days. He did take time away to direct another show, and [he worked on “While I Yet Live,” an autobiographical play](#), which had an Off Broadway run last year.

Mr. Porter is leaving for another solid opportunity: He has been cast alongside Audra McDonald in “Shuffle Along, Or, The Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed,” which is scheduled to open on Broadway in April.



The New York Times

August 14, 2015

Biff Liff, Broadway Manager and Powerhouse Agent, Dies at 96

By James Barron

When “My Fair Lady” opened on Broadway in 1956, there was Alan Jay Lerner’s book, and there was Biff Liff’s book. Mr. Liff’s book, the log he kept as the production stage manager, swelled to several volumes over the show’s long run, and the entries were not just about each performance.

“Rex insisted on shower in his dressing room,” Mr. Liff wrote in one entry, referring to Rex Harrison. “Never uses it.”

In another entry, Mr. Liff wrote: “Pickpocket Julie Andrews clipped my tie clip while talking to me. Returned it after the performance. This girl has a future.”

And when Mr. Harrison left the cast in 1957, Mr. Liff declared, “Harrison never did use that shower.”

Mr. Liff — whose given name was Samuel, and who died on Monday at his home in Yorktown Heights, N.Y., at 96 — went on to become an associate producer in the 1960s under Broadway showmen like David Merrick. Then, in the 1970s, he became a theatrical agent whose clients included Ms. Andrews, Jane Alexander, Angela Lansbury, Agnes de Mille and Chita Rivera. But it was backstage, with titles like production stage manager, that he first made his mark.

“If the producers and the directors were the kings of Broadway, the production stage managers were the princes,” said the veteran producer Emanuel Azenberg, who worked for Mr. Liff on “Oliver!” The production stage manager’s job involved being the eyes and ears of the producer and the director when the producers were showmen like Merrick and the directors were Broadway titans like Gower Champion and Joshua Logan.

Mr. Liff was a towering presence in the theater — literally. A barrel-chested man with an enormous head, he also had a voice that, at least in the good-natured imitations of friends, could project the absolute authority of a bass-baritone. He could be the deep, reassuring source of calm in the frenzied, cutthroat world of Broadway, where powerhouses like Merrick considered actors “unruly children.”

“He could move mountains,” Ms. Rivera said on Wednesday. “I was never in any of those rooms where he probably roared like a lion, but I always felt as though my reputation would be O.K. as long as he handled me.”

She added: “He would say, ‘Don’t worry, I’ll take care of it.’ And he did.”

Mr. Liff apparently acquired the nickname Biff as a child, and most theater people called him that. But Mickey Rolfe, who was his assistant in the late 1980s before becoming a theatrical agent on his own, said at least one client called him Sam because “Biff Liff” sounded too much like “Topsy Turvy.”

Mr. Liff was born on April 14, 1919, in Boston, the youngest child of Morris Liff, a restaurateur, and Rose Liff. He graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology, now Carnegie Mellon University, in Pittsburgh in 1939 with a degree in theater.

As an Army officer during World War II in Chicago, he oversaw what amounted to the opposite of an assembly line: a disassembly line, whose purpose was to examine damaged gear sent back from the front and salvage parts or materials, like tubes in radios. He had been promoted to captain by the end of the war.

Peter Webb, a playwright and director who interviewed Mr. Liff for a potential biography, said he worked for the producers Herman Levin and Melvyn Douglas on a national tour of “Call Me Mister,” a musical that was about what Mr. Liff was at that moment in his life, a veteran. The troupe included Bob Fosse and Carl Reiner.

Mr. Liff’s first show as a stage manager was “Along Fifth Avenue,” which ran 180 performances from January to June 1949. It overlapped with “Admiral Broadway Revue,” a show on the new medium of television that originated from a converted theater in Columbus Circle.

Mr. Liff was also the stage manager on that show, broadcast live on Friday evenings with Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca as the stars and Mel Brooks as one of the writers. Mr. Webb said Mr. Liff had to cut it close, week after week. He had a taxi waiting outside the studio so that he could dash to the theater where “Along Fifth Avenue” was playing.

Caesar, Coca and the director Max Liebman, who created “Admiral Broadway Revue,” went on to work on the groundbreaking “Your Show of Shows” in 1950. But by then, Mr. Liff was working as the stage manager on “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,” produced by Mr. Levin and Oliver Smith. It starred Carol Channing, who later became a client of Mr. Liff’s.

For “By the Beautiful Sea” in 1954, Mr. Levin was given a better title: production stage manager. And it was that title that he held on “My Fair Lady,” which opened on March 15, 1956.

In the 1960s, he was listed as associate producer when Merrick introduced Woody Allen to Broadway as a playwright in “Don’t Drink the Water” and as an actor in “Play It Again, Sam.” Mr. Liff held the same title on “Promises, Promises,” “Cactus Flower” and “The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd.”

His last credit was as associate producer on “Tricks,” a musical comedy produced by Mr. Levin that ran for five previews and eight performances in January 1973. He then joined the William Morris Agency as the head of its legitimate theater department.

He is survived by his wife, Lisette.

Mr. Liff was a longtime member of the Tony Awards nominating committee and received a 2006 Tony honor for excellence in theater. The marquees of Broadway theaters will be dimmed in his memory for one minute at 7:45 p.m. Friday.

“What Biff was known to do was figure out ways to cut through the problems and get the show on,” Mr. Webb said. “He could recognize the emotions of these people — he was an emotional guy himself — but he was able to detach himself from all the emotions and figure out a way to get the show on.”

Or keep a performance from falling apart.

Mr. Webb said Mr. Liff was rehearsing a road company of “My Fair Lady” one afternoon while a matinee performance was going on in the Mark Hellinger Theater, several blocks away. Jerry Adler, the stage manager,

called from the Mark Hellinger at intermission and said that Rex Harrison was so angry, he might not go on with Act II.

It seemed there had been a problem at the end of Act I. The chandeliers on the set were supposed to fly up as Mr. Harrison and Ms. Andrews made their exit. But a stagehand made a mistake and sent the chandeliers down. The stagehand quickly reversed course, but as the chandeliers rose, one of them took Mr. Harrison's toupee along for the ride.

Mr. Liff left the road-company rehearsal and raced to the theater, Mr. Webb said. Mr. Liff, who usually worked to smooth things over, stormed into Mr. Harrison's dressing room and thundered that the stagehand would never work in the theater again.

"Rex says, 'Biff, old boy, wait, it's not that serious,' " Mr. Webb said

August 14, 2015

LIFELINE

BROADWAY BOUND



PHOTOS BY
GETTY IMAGES

Pop singer/songwriter **Sara Bareilles** has landed a gig as a Broadway composer. 'Waitress,' a new musical with music and lyrics by Bareilles (who also has a new album and book due this fall), will begin previews in March at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre for an opening in April. Based on the 2007 film written by Adrienne Shelly, 'Waitress' is playing now at Cambridge's American Repertory Theatre.

Wayne Brady is about to step into some 'Kinky Boots.' This fall, he'll replace Tony Award winner Billy Porter, who has played more than 800 performances in the role of drag queen Lola. Brady last appeared on Broadway in 2004 in 'Chicago.' Brady will join 'Kinky Boots' Nov. 21, the night after Porter's final performance.

Compiled by Cindy Clark

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Newsday

August 14, 2015

flash!

'Waitress' musical coming to Broadway

The musical "Waitress" has found a Broadway home, The Associated Press reports. Producers **Barry** and **Fran Weissler** said yesterday the adaptation of the 2007 film starring **Keri Russell**, featuring a score and original songs by Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter **Sara Bareilles**, will play the Brooks Atkinson Theatre beginning in April. The show is currently playing at the American Repertory Theater outside Boston and starring **Jessie Mueller**. She won the Tony Award for best leading actress in "Beautiful: The **Carole King** Musical" in 2014. No casting was announced for the Broadway run. It will be directed by **Diane Paulus**, the artistic director, who has also helmed the recent revival of "Pippin" and the new "Finding Neverland." Bareilles is behind such hits as "King of Anything" and "Love Song." "Waitress" tells the story of a waitress trapped in a small-town diner and a loveless marriage.



Sara Bareilles

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August 14, 2015



'Waitress' musical Broadway-bound

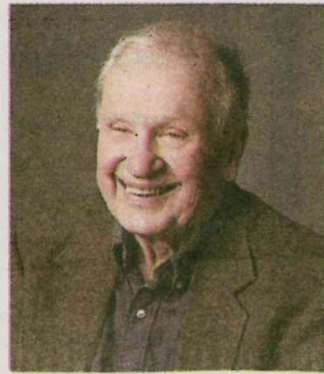
The new musical "Waitress," based on the 2007 film of the same name with songs by **Sara Bareilles**, is set to come to Broadway next spring. It is currently playing at the American Repertory Theater at Harvard. No casting has been announced, but Tony winner **Jessie Mueller** ("Beautiful") is in the ART production.

August 14, 2015

nycpicks » **10** **BEST THINGS TO DO THIS WEEKEND**

THEATER

6 **'LOVE AND MONEY'**
A wealthy widow learns that it's not so easy to give away all her money in this new play by the outlandishly prolific veteran playwright A.R. Gurney, pictured.
WHEN | WHERE Tomorrow-Sept. 27 at the Pershing Square Signature Theatre Center, 480 W. 42nd St., Manhattan
INFO \$25; 212-244-7529; signaturetheatre.org



GREGORY COSTANZO

— LINDA WINER

August 14, 2015

RISING STAR

Kidman boosts Anna Ziegler's career

BY JOE DZIEMIANOWICZ
THEATER CRITIC

WHAT'S NICOLE Kidman doing in a play starting Sept. 5 in London that's by Anna Ziegler, a writer nobody's heard of?

The drama coming to the West End is "Photograph 51," about overlooked British DNA scientist Rosalind Franklin. The play ran Off-Broadway to warmish reviews in 2010.

The director of another Ziegler play, "A Delicate Ship," which launches its New York premiere Tuesday, has her own take on what makes the writer's work attractive.

"What struck me about Anna's writing is the theatricality and poetic language," says Margot Bordelon. "She's been writing for years and years. She deserves the attention."

Thanks to Kidman, she's got it — and it crosses stages and continents.

After all, the Oscar-winning actress had her pick of plays. It's been 16 years since her buzz-worthy work in David Hare's sexy drama "The Blue Room." That play, based on "La Ronde," was famously described as "pure theatrical Viagra."

Now Kidman's involvement in London's

"Photograph 51" has piqued interest in New York's "A Delicate Ship."

Set on Christmas Eve, the show presented by the Playwrights Realm concerns a young urban couple, Sam and Sarah (Matt Dellapina and Miriam Silverman). Flirty revelry and celebration is disrupted by the arrival of Nate (Nick Westrate), an old friend of Sarah's.

Cue the buzzkill, press notes hint about the Off-Broadway play.

Ziegler (inset), 35, was interested in "the idea of a character who on the surface really seems like the person you most want in the room ... sort of the life of the party and the demons that that kind of person can sometimes harbor," she told Bordelon in a YouTube talk.

The story traces a single evening. "And," she adds, "a kind of major event occurring."

Sort of like an international star choosing your play.

"Anna's having a moment," says the director. A couple of them.

"A Delicate Ship" runs Tues.-Sept. 12 at Peter Jay Sharp Theater, 416 W. 42nd St. Go to PlaywrightsRealm.org for info.

jdziemianowicz@nydailynews.com



Check out "The Joe D Show" podcast on Friday on iTunes.

Nicole Kidman will star in Anna Ziegler's "Photograph 51" in London's West End starting next month.



DAILY NEWS

August 14, 2015

IN THE NOW!

The Daily News' Guide to where to go & what to do

NIFTY SHADES OF TAYE

Like his Broadway predecessors who donned the big hair and high heels, Taye Diggs is making the title role as the gender-bending rocker in "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" his own.

It's all about little things.

Like when Taye's Hedwig licks the stage and says it tastes a little like Darren Criss, sweet on the outside but just a little cheesy.

Or when Hedwig quips that James Franco has all the privileges of homosexuality, but none of the responsibility.

Best of all is when a profusely sweaty Hedwig towels off and looks to her sisters in the audience for a little support. Call it Taye and sympathy. Tickets at HedwigBroadway.com.

Raakhee Mirchandani



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AP

Plenty of emotion backstage as 'Mamma Mia!' nears the end

August 31, 2015
By Mark Kennedy



Judy McLane appears during a performance of the musical "Mamma Mia!" On Sept. 12, 2015, the 14-year run of "Mamma Mia!" ends, marking the final dance party for the ABBA-fueled feel-good musical and 8th longest-running show in Broadway history. (Joan Marcus/Boneau/Boneau-Brown via AP) Photo: Joan Marcus, AP

NEW YORK (AP) - The end is near. Every day it's a little closer: The day the disco beat goes silent on Broadway.

On Sept. 12, the 14-year run of "Mamma Mia!" ends, marking the final dance party for the ABBA-fueled, feel-good musical and eighth longest-running show in Broadway history.

Few are feeling the bittersweet emotions as hard as actress Judy McLane, the show's super trouper. She's been in it for some 11 years, the last three years playing the heroine, Donna.

"I'm not sure what life will be like after 'Mamma Mia!'" she says in her dressing room. "I'm sure that I'm going to have to have a grieving period. I don't doubt it."

"Mamma Mia!" has endured plenty during its long life - wars, hurricanes, the 2008 financial meltdown, the move to a smaller theater and critics, who never warmed to the show's high-energy sweetness.

A hit in London, it opened in New York just a few weeks after the 2001 terror attacks and there was anxiety. But New Yorkers turned out to be like everyone else. The show featuring more than 20 classic ABBA hits, including "Dancing Queen" and "Waterloo," has been a smash in dozens of countries, including South Korea, Italy, Denmark, South Africa and Spain.

"When everybody says, 'Why does this show work?' I say, 'It's an antidepressant,'" says McLane. "Don't take Zoloft. Come see our show."

Over the years, couples backstage have formed, married and had kids. The wardrobe supervisor was able to send her child to college thanks to the stability of the job.

The cast and crew have marked the time with baby showers, birthdays and parties. During the Olympics, they host their own competitions backstage, and every year there's a door decorating contest with a celebrity judge.

"This show is not like any other show I've ever done. It's more of a family than I've very had in any other show," says McLane. "It's the day-to-day stuff that I'm going to miss."

McLane's dressing room at the Broadhurst Theatre features a humming espresso machine, family photos and a letter board sign with the slogan "Love what is ahead by loving what has come before." Over her mirror are three photos she took in Africa of a hippo, a red-winged blue-billed crane and lion.

Before every performance she helps hand out little cards with one-word inspirational messages to everyone backstage. "It's my way as a leader of this company to touch base with everybody," she says.

McLane initially came to the show in 2004 at a low point personally. She had to miss her first rehearsal because she was needed downtown at divorce court. But the musical helped her buy her ex-husband out of her apartment and spread her wings.

"Because of this job I started a new life," she says, choking up. "Honestly, I'm so grateful for it for that reason. I got back on my feet and found out who I was again."

She started as the character Tanya, a wealthy friend of the heroine, and played her for 7 1/2 years. Three years ago, she took over the principle role of Donna. Altogether, she's done over 4,000 shows.

"I have always prided myself on going out there and making every night feel like it's the first show," she says. "I have become a better actress because of it."

Nina Lannan, the show's general manager, attributes the show's success to the joy it gives audiences, a killer soundtrack, its embrace of second chances and its setting on a Greek island.

"I think the most successful musicals always take an audience member out of their daily world and into a kind of fantasy place," she says. "'Phantom' is definitely a fantasy place. 'Wicked' is that. 'The Lion King' certainly is that. To a certain extent, 'Mamma Mia!' is that, too."

After the show closes, McLane has plans for a long-overdue vacation. She also wants to reconnect with friends and family. "I need to go out and have dinner at 8 o'clock and have a glass of red wine," she says, laughing.

The punishing Broadway schedule has taken its toll. McLane gets weekly physical therapy, goes to pilates classes and stretches after every show. She's also discovered the power of a 20-minute nap. "I'm a napper. I didn't know I was one," she says.

Though she doesn't have her next job lined up yet, McLane is hoping to put together a CD of new songs and standards: "I'm looking forward to being able to sing other music for a little bit."

But first she and the cast are preparing for the final "Mamma Mia!" show, a mostly private affair for alumnus that promises to be an emotional roller coaster.

"I can't even imagine the energy that's going to be in this theater," she says. "I don't know how we're all going to handle it without our heads popping off."

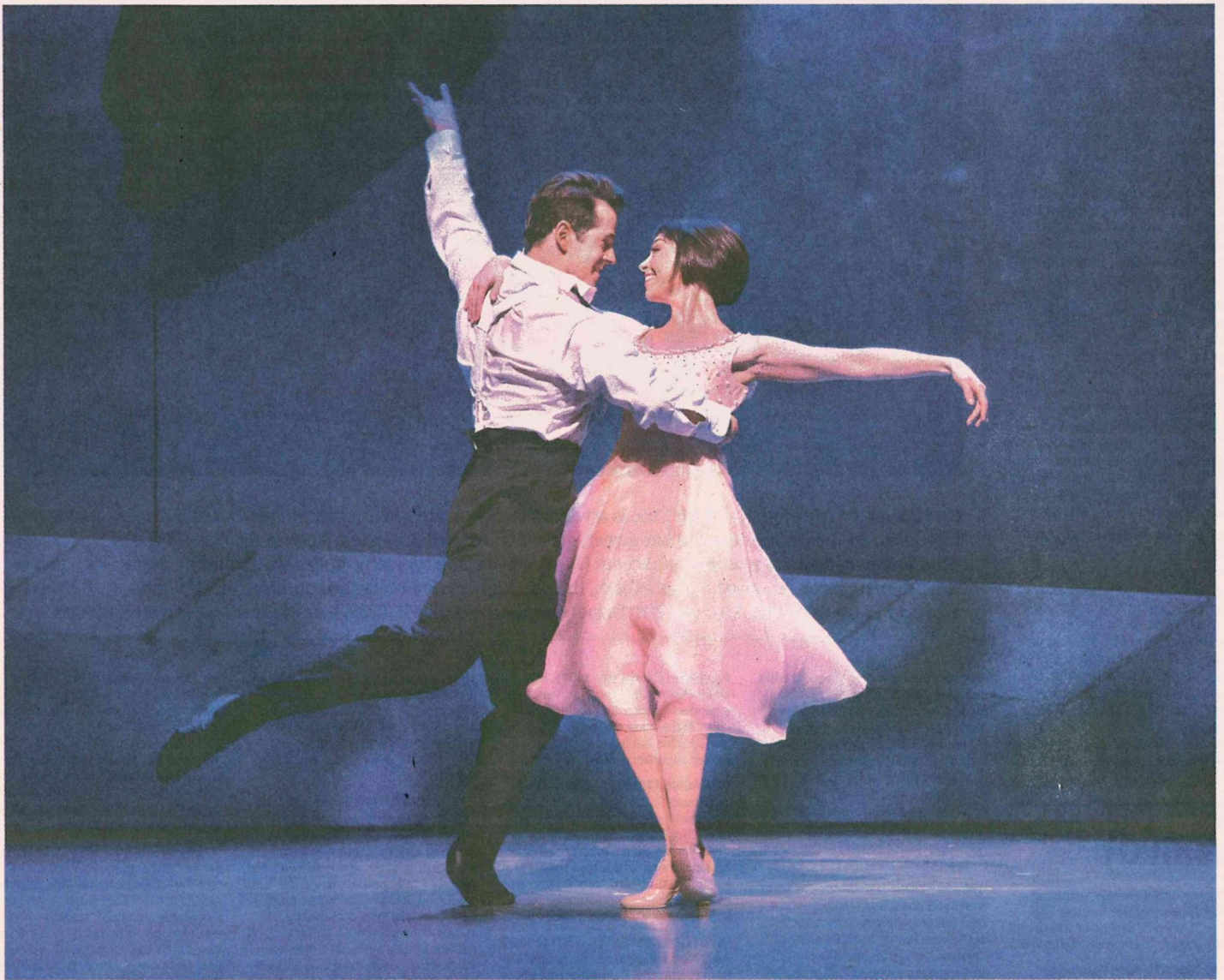
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The New York Times

August 14, 2015

THE Listings

Aug. 14-20



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

★ **'AN AMERICAN IN PARIS'** The ballet luminary Christopher Wheeldon makes a triumphant debut as a Broadway director with this rhapsodic stage adaptation of a classic musical with a heavenly Gershwin score. The ballet dancers Robert Fairchild and Leanne Cope, above, are radiant as the semi-star-crossed lovers, and Max von Essen sings like a dream as an heir who aspires to a nightclub career. Pure joy (2:30). Palace Theater, 1564 Broadway, at 47th Street, Manhattan, 877-250-2929, ticketmaster.com. (Charles Isherwood)