

# BBB

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## THE MORNING LINE

**DATE:** Monday, March 16, 2015

**FROM:** Emily Meagher, Michelle Farabaugh, Jennie Mamary  
Cameron Draper, Lucie Sorel

**PAGES:** 17, *including this page.*

# The New York Times



March 10, 2015

## ‘Honeymooners’ Musical Pulled From Regional Run, Eyes Broadway

By Michael Paulson

Forget Connecticut. Ralph and Alice Kramden look as if they’ve decided to stay in New York.

The producer of a new musical adaptation of “The Honeymooners,” the short-lived but much-imitated 1950s Jackie Gleason sitcom, has abruptly canceled a run of the show that had been slated to begin in September at Goodspeed Musicals in East Haddam, Conn.

“Goodspeed has been told that the show is ready for Broadway,” the theater said in a statement Tuesday.

The lead producer of the musical, Jeffrey Finn, directed questions to a spokesman, Matt Polk, who said, “We are not making an official announcement at this time but are very excited about the future prospects of ‘The Honeymooners.’”

The musical adaptation of the TV show, which centers on the lives of two working-class couples living in the same building in Brooklyn, is being directed by John Rando, who won a Tony in 2002 for directing “Urinetown” and is currently represented on Broadway with “On the Town.”

The show has a book written by Dusty Kay and Bill Nuss, music by Stephen Weiner and lyrics by Peter Mills. A workshop in November featured Michael McGrath and Leslie Kritzer as Ralph and Alice Kramden, and Hank Azaria and Megan Hilty as Ed and Trixie Norton, and the same actors were expected to play the roles at Goodspeed.

The Goodspeed cancellation marks the second time a production of “The Honeymooners” musical has been scrapped. In 2013, the show was pulled from schedule at the The Old Globe in San Diego.

# The New York Times



March 11, 2015

## Simon Callow Will Be Part of Brits Off Broadway Festival

By Steven Mcelroy

Nearly four years after Simon Callow donned a wig and skirt at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the respected British actor will do so again to play Pauline, formerly Paul, in the New York premiere of “Tuesdays at Tesco’s,” translated and adapted by Matthew Hurt and Sarah Vermande from the French play “Le Mardi à Monoprix,” by Emmanuel Darley.

The solo show (May 14-June 7), directed by Simon Stokes, is about a man who chooses to live his life as a woman despite many obstacles. The title refers to a weekly shopping trip Pauline regularly takes with her ailing father, who is accepting of the help but not the helper and cannot keep from commenting on Pauline’s razor stubble.

It is one of more than a half dozen works in the annual Brits Off Broadway festival at 59E59 Theaters, which will run April 14 through June 28. The full lineup, to be announced Wednesday, also includes “My Perfect Mind” (June 10-28), by Kathryn Hunter, Paul Hunter (no relation) and Edward Petherbridge. The show centers on Mr. Petherbridge’s experience when, during rehearsals for the title role in a 2007 production of “King Lear,” he suffered a stroke and was barely able to move, but still remembered the entire part. Directed by Ms. Hunter and featuring Mr. Petherbridge and Mr. Hunter, the piece looks at his recovery alongside aspects of the “Lear” story.

Other festival highlights include an adaptation of Anthony Burgess’s 1961 novel “One Hand Clapping” (May 5-31), adapted and directed by Lucia Cox, and “The Tailor of Inverness” (April 14-May 3), written and performed by Matthew Zajac, about his father’s hidden past during World War II.

# The New York Times

MARCH 14, 2015

## Hedwig And Sally: New Faces, New Ideas

The things a girl has to endure to get ahead in show business. The humiliation, the rejection, the objectification, the manhandling and —

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**CRITIC'S  
NOTEBOOK**

worst of all — the being treated as if you didn't even exist. It's enough to make even the sunniest chorine feel burned out

by the end of a working night.

If you don't believe me, ask one of those jaded ladies from Berlin who are currently plying their trade on Broadway: Sally Bowles and her sister in showbiz suffering, Hedwig. They know the score so well they can sing it in their sleep (or on their backs, anyway). While you may think you've heard quite enough of what they have to say, you might want to take another listen.

That's because Sally, the coked-up, ginned-up heroine of "Cabaret," at Studio 54, and Hedwig, the German-born wig wearer and rock singer from "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," at the Belasco Theater, have been given new lives in their respective hit shows. And while they've never looked wearier, they've also rarely seemed more fully alive.

The movie actress Sienna Miller ("Factory Girl," "American Sniper") has shrugged on Sally's hard-won fur coat in "Cabaret," while Hedwig, the transgender rock demi-semi-star of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," has been reincarnated by the man who created her back in 1998, the writer and actor John Cameron Mitchell. Each is the latest in a succession of starry names to have inhabited the parts.

But while you're watching them, Ms. Miller and Mr. Mitchell make you believe that they have exclusive rights to their roles. They have both brought additional grit to shows set in seedy environments, a sense of souls who have lived hard, fast and self-destructively. But these are tough gals, too. You just know that they're going to survive the next car crash, the next failure, the next runaway lover.

That this should be the case with Mr. Mitchell is hardly a surprise. After all, he originated Hedwig, the East Berlin boy who became (almost) a woman and (almost) a rock idol, in the Off Broadway show he created with the songwriter Stephen Trask. And he committed the part to eternity in the 2001 movie version he directed.

For the Broadway "Hedwig," which opened last spring under Michael Mayer's direction, the show was scaled up and glammed up, to become an appropriate frame for its big-name star, Neil Patrick Harris, who deservedly won a Tony. Mr. Harris brought a master crowd-pleaser's smoothness, flamboyance and comic timing to the role, as well as an energy that left the audience feeling highly caffeinated.

Mr. Mitchell's Hedwig appears more bruised and battered by life, and on the verge of all-out exhaustion. This is partly because, at 51, this actor is 16 years older than the first time he played Hedwig. And, oh yes, last month he injured his knee, which forced him to leave the show for a few weeks. (Michael C. Hall, one of Mr. Harris's replacements, took over.)

Now he's back, with a leg brace and a crutch (which glitters like Hedwig's eye shadow) and a

crate on which to prop his leg. The inventive uses to which Mr. Mitchell and his Tony-winning co-star, the fabulous Lena Hall

(who plays Hedwig's put-upon boyfriend, Yitzhak), put said crate make this production worth revisiting all by themselves.

But there's a deeper sense of mortal shadows and ruefulness about this hobbling Hedwig, now transplanted to America. She's still a sublime zinger of one-liners. But as Mr. Mitchell plays her, she seems to care a little less about what we think of her than when Mr. Harris had the role. "Take me or leave me," she seems to say, with a Dietrich-worthy languor, her voice dropping into a gutter of bitterness.

She can be roused, too, to rage and to competitive rock-star fire power. And when Mr. Mitchell — whose appearance and song stylings often bring to mind a dilapidated David Bowie — turns on the anger, Hedwig stirs and scathes everyone around her. There's no way this one's staying down for the count.

Nor is Ms. Miller's Sally Bowles, who is on view only through March 29, when this revival of the Roundabout Theater Company's 1998 revival of "Cabaret" closes. I hate to keep telling people to go back to the cabaret, old chum, but Ms. Miller is a revelation here, the most realistic Sally since Natasha Richardson won a Tony for the part 17 years ago.

Yes, Emma Stone, Ms. Miller's immediate predecessor in the role, was sensational, an immolating fireball of neurosis and vanity. But Ms. Miller brings something more subtle and pathetic to Sally. She looks gorgeous, but in the tense, artificial



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

John Cameron Mitchell in "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," at the Belasco.

way of someone trying too hard to be attractive.

She's more sexually predatory than most Sallys I've seen, and more easily deflated when the erotic charm doesn't work. And in Ms. Miller's body language, you can read an entire history of abuse, self-inflicted and otherwise. Watch how she reflexively cowers whenever a man raises a hand. She's been hit before; she expects it.

There's anger in her as well, which Ms. Miller channels most effectively in the man-stomping "Mein Herr." And though you don't doubt that she loves her American boyfriend (Bill Heck) as much as she is able to, she knows that men are not to be relied on.

This Sally is a pragmatist, with a calloused core. When she sings

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Monthly Online Readership — 30,000,000

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the climactic title song, shortly after having an abortion, she makes it clear that while she may be shaken, she's going to soldier on.

I've seen Ms. Miller onstage before twice, as Celia in "As You Like It" (in London) and in the Roundabout's production "After Miss Julie," Patrick Marber's riff on Strindberg, and both times she seemed rather ill at ease. Any anxiety she displays here is strictly Sally's. Who'd have thought she'd find her comfort zone in Weimar Berlin on the eve of destruction?

Ms. Miller and Mr. Mitchell might want to swap war stories at some point. After catching Ms. Miller at last Saturday's matinee of "Cabaret" (which still stars the unquenchable Alan Cumming as the happily creepy M.C.), I learned that she injured herself that very night during the performance, sustaining a black eye and a wound that required stitches. Such are the dangers of life in the theater.

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### **Older, Grittier, Wearier**

Sienna Miller in "Cabaret," right, and John Cameron Mitchell in "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" have toughened the roles they play.

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# The New York Times

March 15, 2015

## Review: ‘On the Twentieth Century,’ With Kristin Chenoweth, Opens on Broadway

By Ben Brantley

In the theater, there is overacting, which is common and painful to watch. Then there’s over-the-moon acting, which is rare and occupies its own special cloud land in heaven. I am delighted to report that this latter art is being practiced in altitudinous-high style at the American Airlines Theater, where Kristin Chenoweth and Peter Gallagher are surfing the stratosphere in “On the Twentieth Century.”

Scott Ellis’s ripping, lavishly appointed revival of this 1978 musical about dueling giant egos on a train between Chicago and New York — which opened on Sunday night in a Roundabout Theater Company production — knows that when it comes to being hyperbolic, there’s no people like show people. No, not even excitable reviewers like me on the morning after a show like this one.

There are so many reasons to celebrate this “On the Twentieth Century,” which features a score by Cy Coleman, with a book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. For starters, it’s that rare revival of a musical that isn’t trucked out every few years, like a wedding dress routinely repurposed as prom wear. (I love “Gypsy” too, but come on, guys.)

It is also a production that not only retains but also amps up what was good about the original (memorably directed by Harold Prince, and starring John Cullum and Madeline Kahn), which I saw when I first moved to New York. It may not make a complete case for “On the Twentieth Century” as a top-of-the-heap musical, but Mr. Ellis’s version shines a spotlight on the shrewd silliness and alchemical fizz of Coleman’s operetta-style melodies and Comden and Green’s giddy gift for showbiz satire.

Perhaps best of all, this “Century” brings Ms. Chenoweth and Mr. Gallagher back to Broadway, where they can demonstrate the subtleties of being larger than life. These fine performers have been largely confined to television screens in recent years. And they grab the chance to chew (and devour) some real live scenery — and in Ms. Chenoweth’s case, hit pretty much every note on the scale, musical and otherwise — with the ecstatic vengeance of genies let out of their bottles.

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Such exquisite frenzy is required for the portrayal of Oscar Jaffee (Mr. Gallagher), a megalomaniacal theater impresario, and his former protégée Lily Garland (Ms. Chenoweth), who walked out on her mentor (and lover) to become a gold-lamé movie goddess. It's the sense of narcissism as a biting, kicking, scratching kinetic force that makes Howard Hawks's 1934 film "Twentieth Century" — based on the plays by Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur and Charles Bruce Millholland that inspired this musical, and starring John Barrymore and Carole Lombard — such an enduring adrenaline rush.

The same propulsive energy infuses this revival, which also hilariously features Andy Karl as a young Hollywood he-man in Lily's thrall, and Mary Louise Wilson as a crazy old lady with a checkbook. The show's title refers not to an era but to the great American supertrain of the 1930s, on which Lily and Oscar meet again after a long estrangement. (David Rockwell is the Deco deluxe designer of the onstage train set, with mouthwatering costumes to match by William Ivey Long.)

Oscar, coming off his fourth flop in a row (it closed in Chicago after its first act), is determined to win Lily back. He needs her name to bankroll his next show. Besides, they still love each other, or as much as the terminally self-infatuated can love somebody else.

So Oscar and his trusty, boozy sidekicks (Mark Linn-Baker and Michael McGrath, both terrific) must coax, cajole or hoodwink Lily into signing a contract before the train reaches Grand Central Terminal. Obstacles to the accomplishment of this goal include Bruce Granit (Mr. Karl), Lily's possessive boy toy; a rival producer at the top of his game (James Moyer); and a rich philanthropist named Letitia Primrose (Ms. Wilson, who brings devilish understatement to a certifiably insane character).

The play's shape and rhythms are determined by its plot's built-in deadline. "New York in 16 hours," the excellent chorus sings, excitedly. "Anything can happen in those 16 hours." And Coleman's score has a matching locomotive urgency, most charmingly embodied by the tap-dancing, philosophizing quartet of railway porters played by Rick Faugno, Richard Riaz Yoder, Phillip Attmore and Drew King.

But here's the original genius of the music: Instead of borrowing from the fast jazz rhythms of the 1930s, Coleman looks to the fragrantly ripe operettas of the likes of Sigmund Romberg and Victor Herbert.

That's because Lily and Oscar are, at heart, old-school theater people. They're sincerely and opulently affected in a way that only purple, ornate song can do justice to. Mr. Gallagher, eyes feverishly aglitter and teeth flashing in an illuminated shark's smile,

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sings with robust self-importance in a trans-Atlantic accent that feels all the more authentic for being so palpably phony.

As for Ms. Chenoweth, rebounding brilliantly after having to dampen her natural star fire in a strained revival of “Promises, Promises” five years ago, she uses Lily’s histrionics to create one of the most virtuosic portraits in song ever on Broadway. The vocal vocabulary she deploys here ranges from jazz-baby brass to operatic silver, often in a single number, and she switches among them with jaw-dropping ease.

Leading the big fantasy production number “Babette,” in which Lily ponders her divergent choices in art and love, Ms. Chenoweth seems to become an entire epic cast of divided selves. And every perfectly weighted note is set off by an impeccably exaggerated gesture. When Cecil B. DeMille-style shafts from heaven (it’s Donald Holder’s lighting) frame Lily as she contemplates playing Mary Magdalene, the apotheosis is entirely suitable.

The choreographer here is Warren Carlyle. And he (and Mr. Ellis) have steered the cast into precisely overblown postures and dance moves that suggest hieroglyphs made animate by steroids. Mr. Karl (who played the title lug in the musical “Rocky” last year) expertly preens his pumped-up muscles, the better to collapse into pratfalls.

Mr. Gallagher and Ms. Chenoweth are of course the show’s leading practitioners of the ridiculously sublime stance. Yet we can’t help detecting both the calculation and the infernal hunger behind those poses. Swooning, kneeling, leaping, clawing and kissing with the rococo grandeur of silent-movie idols, they always exude a feral heat that makes it clear that these two masterworks of self-invention are made for each other.

Since this is established from the moment they first share a scene (a flashback, in which Lily is a scrappy, frowzy young thing named Mildred Plotka), we know from the beginning that this prize fight is fixed. That means we can sit back, relax and savor the blissfully bumpy ride in luxury accommodations.

## On the Twentieth Century

Book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green; music by Cy Coleman; based on plays by Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur and Bruce Millholland; original Broadway production directed by Harold Prince; directed by Scott Ellis; choreography by Warren Carlyle; music direction by Kevin Stites; sets by David Rockwell; costumes by William Ivey Long; lighting by Donald Holder; sound by Jon Weston; orchestrations by Larry

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Hochman; dance arrangements and incidental music by David Krane; music coordinator, John Miller; hair and wig design by Paul Huntley; additional material by Marco Pennette; additional lyrics by Amanda Green; makeup design, Anne Ford-Coates; associate director, Kasey R T Graham; associate choreographer, Angie Canuel; production stage manager, Scott Taylor Rollison; stage manager, Matthew Lacey; production management, Aurora Productions; general manager, Denise Cooper; associate managing director, Steve Dow; associate artistic director, Mr. Ellis; executive producer, Ms. Beers. Presented by Roundabout Theater Company, Todd Haines, artistic director; Harold Wolpert, managing director; Julia C. Levy, executive director; Sydney Beers, general manager. At the American Airlines Theater, 227 West 42nd Street, Manhattan; 212-719-1300, roundabouttheatre.org. Through July 5. Running time: 2 hours 30 minutes.

WITH: Kristin Chenoweth (Mildred Plotka/Lily Garland), Peter Gallagher (Oscar Jaffee), Andy Karl (Bruce Granit), Mark Linn-Baker (Oliver Webb), Michael McGrath (Owen O'Malley), Mary Louise Wilson (Letitia Peabody Primrose), James Moyer (ensemble), Rick Faugno (ensemble), Richard Riaz Yoder (ensemble), Phillip Attmore (ensemble) and Drew King (ensemble).

# The New York Times

March 13, 2015

## Review: 'C.O.A.L (Confessions of a Liar)' Opens at 59E59 Theaters

By Anita Gates

When Tommy Maloney, a cocky first grader, mentions his \$10-a-week allowance, Coal announces that he gets \$100. And not only that, little Coal adds: “My dad is a pirate.”

You have to wonder at first whether the story in David Brian Colbert’s “C.O.A.L. (Confessions of a Liar),” at 59E59 Theaters, is going to be told on a juvenile level. But it turns out to be quite grown-up. And Tommy Maloney plays a sad, crucial role.

It’s all too familiar a story in its essence. Boy is raised by a falling-down alcoholic father who considers his welfare checks his right, and a timid, churchgoing mother who can’t explain how Jesus can be hurt by Coal’s bad behavior if he died a long, long time ago. Boy becomes a chronic liar, expressing his rationale, as if addressing whoever has just caught him in the deception: “I was convinced I knew what you wanted me to say.” Boy finds something he can do well — he becomes a star on the school swim team — but during his first out-of-town competition, the nice-guy coach, a respected husband and father in the community, shows his affection in unwanted ways. The abuse goes on for years.

The four highly personable cast members — Lisa Bostnar, Mirirai Sithole, Jackson Tanner and Mr. Colbert (filling in for an actor who dropped out during previews and is still listed in the program) — do a laudable job under Craig Baldwin’s direction.

What doesn’t work as well is Mr. Colbert’s conceit that all four actors — male and female, black and white — are Coal. When they huddle together and share dialogue, the effect is more self-conscious than universalizing. The same is true of making the play’s title a character name; an acronym for the theme; and a reference to the setting, West Virginia coal country.

If it would shed such affectations, “C.O.A.L.,” a coming-of-age story about approving of lies because they “cover up all the ugly stuff,” would feel a lot more truthful.

“C.O.A.L. (Confessions of a Liar)” continues through March 22 at 59E59 Theaters, 59 East 59th Street, Manhattan; 212-279-4200, 59e59.org.

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MARCH 16, 2015

# 'Hedwig' originator dons the wig again

**BY MATT WINDMAN**  
amNewYork theater critic

It's the rare opportunity to see actors in the roles they originated — think Yul Brynner in "The King and I" or Carol Channing in "Hello, Dolly!" But now, theatergoers have another chance.

John Cameron Mitchell, who originated the character of Hedwig — a transsexual, German, glam singer-songwriter — when "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" premiered at a small theater in Greenwich Village in 1998, has taken over the rock musical's Tony-winning Broadway revival.

He co-conceived the character of Hedwig, wrote the musical's book and directed its 2001 film version, in which he played Hedwig.

The Broadway revival opened a year ago with a dynamic performance by Neil Patrick Harris, who was then followed by Andrew Rannells and

**Michael C. Hall.**

Soon after joining the revival, Mitchell, 51, suffered a knee injury midperformance. After taking a week off to rest, Mitchell is back, sporting a brace. He even came up with a backstory for the injury, in which Hedwig was attacked by a masked assailant.

Mitchell's performance represents the difference



John Cameron Mitchell returns to "Hedwig and the Angry Inch."

JOAN MARCUS

between merely playing a character and being a character. With raw spontaneity, he embodies all of Hedwig's anger, self-pity, bravery and wit.

Halfway into the performance, he looks exhausted. He also struggles vocally. But strangely enough, all that adds a realistic edge to the character, who is supposed to be on the verge of a complete breakdown. That also creates a clear contrast between Hedwig and his young protégé, Yitzhak (Lena Hall), who is ready

to step out of Hedwig's shadow and shine.

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# Newsday

MARCH 15, 2015

## 'Gigi' for a modern age

The Broadway musical's producers took care with the story of a young woman groomed for prostitution

Vanessa Hudgens as 'Gigi' in the new Broadway show. Below, Leslie Caron in the 1958 best picture musical.



JOAN MARCUS



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### ON THEATER

Linda Winer

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In 1958, "Gigi" won nine Oscars, including best picture, and has earned a respected — if not exactly revered — place on lists of iconic movie musicals.

So I guess we shouldn't be surprised that Broadway, which can't resist a brand-name Hollywood adaptation, is preparing a new version of one of the last big MGM song-and-dance extravaganzas.

And yet, it is hard not initially to think, "Gigi"? Really? The romantic comedy in which the lovely young heroine is raised by her granny to be sold as a high-priced French prostitute? The one in which Maurice Chevalier plays an aging roué who leers at youngsters while singing, "Thank Heaven for Little Girls"? That "Gigi"?

Well, not quite that one. The "Gigi" that begins previews Thursday for an April 8 opening still has that romantic score by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, plus a few songs they wrote for their own failed 1973 attempt to adapt their hit film for the stage. The new version is still set in turn-of-the-20th-century Paris.

But the musical, budgeted at \$12 million to include lavish sets and costumes, has been rethought for modern sensibilities by two women with a lifelong love for the movie and no experience on Broadway. Vanessa Hudgens, late of the "High School Musical" franchise, makes her Broadway debut in the role made forever adorable by Leslie Caron.

Jenna Segal, lead producer,

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has been crazy for the movie since she was 6 years old and has been working on the refashioning for seven years. "Bringing 'Gigi' to the stage was something I have always wanted to do," she told me in a recent phone interview. "I grew up in New Jersey with a theater-loving mother. I went into development [at MTV and Nickelodeon], but always had this in the back of my head."

Also on the conference call was Heidi Thomas, the British creator and writer of BBC series "Call the Midwife." Her attachment to the film happened even earlier. "My parents went to it on their first date," she said. "When I was a child, whenever it was on TV, they would say, 'Quick! Quick! 'Gigi' is on!'"

"But I fell in love with it on my own, drawn back again and again by the story, the costumes, the music, everything," she added.

Segal had interviewed several American writers for her dream production, but felt they didn't understand the limited options for women in 1900. She watched several episodes that Thomas had written for "Cranford," a BBC series set in the mid-18th century, and was struck by Thomas' knowing representation of the women.

So these two strangers from different countries, neither one from the theater world, forged this bond over a story that hasn't exactly worn well with women of independent spirit, not to mention people for whom the slightest suggestion of pedophilia is, at the very least, creepy.

They went back to the original 1944 novella by Colette for more insight on Gigi and her relationship with Gaston (Louis Jourdan in the film), the dashing sugar baron she has known and adored since childhood.

Looking again at the movie and the 1973 Broadway script, Thomas began to think "they could have called it 'Gaston.' He makes the decisions. We had to redress the balance. Gigi is a young woman with a life that's her own. Decisions she makes, questions she asks, choices she makes. We restored it to her story . . . to make sure her voice was heard loud and clear."

In fact, Honoré (the Chevalier character) didn't even exist in the novella. In the new version

directed by Eric Schaeffer, he no longer gets to admire little girls while singing "Thank Heaven." Instead, it is a duet for Gigi's grandmother and her aging courtesan aunt, who are played by two Broadway treasures, Victoria Clark and Dee Hoty.

Segal is still a little shocked that anyone considered that song "tawdry in any way. But I came to realize more people thought that way than we had imagined." Taking the song away from Honoré, Thomas added, "wasn't a decision we took lightly."

The age difference between Gigi and Gaston has been greatly reduced. In the movie, he was in his 30s, she was 15. Hudgens plays her as 18 and her Gaston (Corey Cott) is not a generation older.

Then there is the whole issue of Gigi's training to be a courtesan. As Segal explains it, patiently but firmly, women at that time, especially in France, didn't have the option of just working hard and getting ahead.

"She wasn't going to go to the bank and get a small-business loan to open a store," Segal half-joked. A privileged courtesan was a prized position for a girl of her class.

The estate of Lerner and Loewe has given them the freedom to reimagine Gigi's character. "They knew I was going to keep the period, I wasn't looking to modernize it," said Segal. "But we wanted to make a story that would work for today."

Thomas added, "I wanted to share this gorgeous show with a new audience." Tween girls can't keep buying seats to "Wicked" forever.

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# The Record

03.15.15

## Theatrical neophyte is behind the new 'Gigi'

It's too early to speculate if "Gigi," which begins previews Thursday on its way to an April 8 opening at the Neil Simon Theatre, will contend for a Tony Award.

But if there's a prize out there for true grit, the musical's producer, Jenna Segal, is a prime candidate.



**ROBERT  
FELDBERG**

ONSTAGE

With no theater experience but inspired by her affection for the 1958 film, Segal set out seven years ago to create a Broadway revival of the show. She secured the rights, hired a writer to revise the original stage version, which bombed in 1973, found a director and raised the \$12 million production cost — all while being a mother to three children under the age of 10.

"I first saw the movie when I was 6," said the 38-year-old Segal, who grew up in North Brunswick. "Every little girl has a movie that she loves, and that was mine. Gigi is a young woman who knew who she was, and what she wanted her life to be."

The petite, dark-haired Segal is open and expansive, and notably confident and determined.

"I never bought into the idea that theater is a different kind of arena (in which) to produce, with its own particular qualities," she said in a recent conversation at a theater-district restaurant.

Segal felt her background in television, which included being MTV's director of program development, gave her the creative and financial know-how to put together a show in any medium.



It took seven years for Jenna Segal to bring the musical "Gigi," with changes, back to the Broadway stage.

The original Broadway production of "Gigi" was an attempt by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe to repeat the success of their movie. But the result was, reportedly, charmless, lacking the high spirits that would make palatable the story of the teenaged Gigi being groomed by her grandmother and great-aunt to be a courtesan in turn-of-20th-century Paris.

The story "was taken over" by the male characters, said Segal, including the urbane, elderly Honoré and his playboy nephew Gaston, who falls in love with Gigi. She wanted to go back to the movie as her source, especially

since she intended to aim the show at young girls and their mothers and grandmothers.

### Getting the rights

Segal's first step was to approach the estates of Lerner and Loewe for the rights. She explained, successfully, that she felt revisions were needed.

"I told them, 'Nobody loves "Gigi" more than me, and I'll take good care of it.'"

In searching for a book writer, she said, "I wanted more of a European sense of the period and style, and then when I looked at films and TV shows with strong female protagonists, I found it's something the Brits do really well."

That led to the hiring of Heidi Thomas, a British writer best known here for her TV series "Call the Midwife," which is on PBS.

Seeing the Broadway revival of "Follies," Segal was impressed by director Eric Schaeffer's ability to bring elements of joy to a sometimes mournful show, and he was brought in to stage the production.

The show's Gigi, Vanessa Hudgens, best-known for Disney's "High School Musical" trilogy, came to Segal.

"We were not looking for a star to play Gigi," she said. "But Vanessa heard about the show and asked to audition, and she's amazing. She's a real triple-threat performer, and a consummate professional." (Apropos of nothing except the passage of time: Teen star Hudgens is now 26.)

As the musical began to take

Total Daily Circulation — 144,897  
Total Sunday Circulation — 176,985  
Monthly Online Circulation — 1,700,000

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MARGOT SCHULMAN

Vanessa Hudgens auditioned for the lead role in "Gigi," impressing producer Jenna Segal as a "triple-threat performer and a consummate professional."

shape, Segal realized it wouldn't be possible to simply put the movie on the stage. Times had changed.

Gigi had to be more assertive,

Gaston less of an idler, and one of the most famous songs needed to be reassigned.

The opening number was Honoré singing "Thank Heaven for Little Girls."

"You can't have an old man singing that in a park with children," said Segal. "It becomes really icky now." Instead, the song will be performed by the two older women.

Segal said the toughest part of putting the show together was raising the money, which she eventually obtained from a mix of experienced theater investors and newcomers.

There were several times over the years, she said, when she was ready to chuck the whole thing, and her husband Paul, an engineer, would say, "All right, then

just don't do it," which he knew would re-stir the juices.

"That just made me more determined," she said. "I'm from New Jersey, and we don't quit."

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March 15, 2015

# CONFIDENTIAL

with Molly Friedman

## Hudgens' career at big stage

**H**IGH SCHOOL MUSICAL' star **Vanessa Hudgens** was dreaming about Broadway at the age most girls dream about getting a driver's license.

The fresh-faced, wide-eyed 26-year-old starlet debuts on the Great White Way on Thursday, when she begins performances in the title role of a \$12 million revival of "Gigi."

"Broadway was always on my bucket list. One



MARGOT SCHULMAN

of my best friends made me put a list together when I was 15 and Broadway was at the very top of the list," Hudgens (l.) tells Daily News theater critic **Joe Dziemianowicz**. "Gigi," about a courtesan-in-training, is famous from the 1958 film starring Leslie Caron. The 1973 Broadway musical version ran for just 103 performances. The new version has gone through rewrites, including one that boosts

Gigi's age from 16 to 18.

"I've always loved doing musicals, and my past experiences have definitely helped prep me for this," says Hudgens, who is deep into rehearsals at the Neil Simon Theatre. "But this is unlike anything I've ever done."

Hudgens' favorite tune in the show could turn into a metaphor for her time on Broadway.

"My favorite song is 'I Never Want to Go

Home Again.' It takes place on a beach and it feels young and exciting and free," she says.

Total Daily Circulation – 516,165  
Total Sunday Circulation – 644,879  
Monthly Online Readership – 16,793,000

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# NEW YORK POST

March 15, 2015

**LOOK WHO'S TALKING**  
**THIS WEEK'S GUESTS**  
**KELLY & MICHAEL**  
▶ 9 a.m., Ch. 7  
**Monday:** Taraji P. Henson; Shailene Woodley; Jerry O'Connell

Total Daily Circulation – 576,711  
Monthly Online Readership – 12,000,000

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