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Little Theatre of Alexandria *Chicago*

By [Betsy Marks Delaney](#) • Mar 4th, 2010 • Category: [Reviews](#)

[Chicago: A Musical Vaudeville](#)

[Little Theatre of Alexandria](#)

[Little Theatre of Alexandria](#), Alexandria, VA

[Through March 20th](#)

\$18-\$21

2:30 with one intermission

Reviewed February 27th, 2010

The musical play *Chicago: A Musical Vaudeville*, with book by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse, music by John Kander and lyrics by Fred Ebb, opened in 1975. It is based on the play *Chicago* by Maurine Dallas Watkins, originally produced in 1926.

I will freely admit I'm a Bob Fosse fanatic. The man had a style and perspective all his own, unique in musical theatre. Attempting his works is, at best, a tricky proposition, considering his demanding choreography. I was so obsessed with his work that I watched *All That Jazz* on HBO when it originally aired, getting to know the movie so well I could tell where I was in it at any given moment. I'd pick up and watch again, even if it was halfway through.

Why am I starting with this in a review of *Chicago* at LTA? Fast forward to last night's performance. Razzle-dazzle indeed! Susan Devine's production at Little Theatre of Alexandria is so awesome it rivals some pro productions I've seen. From Paul Nasto's musical direction (music, perfectly timed and tuned), to Amy Carson's tight choreography that pulls no punches, to the rare triple threats of actors who can sing AND dance, this production has it all right.

Chicago, based on real life murderesses in the roaring 20s, is billed and presented as a musical review. The set is sparse, designed as a simple big band era bandstand with flashy lights and a knock out fringe curtain, some representative bars for the jail scenes and a few moving platforms, and it does its job exactly the way it should. This show is all about the actors, the costumes and make-up, and the lights.

As Roxie Hart, Jordan Hougham could give Renee Zellweger a run for her money, with pizzazz, vocal chops and moves that belong on a pro stage. As Velma Kelly, Bethany Blakey's smoky voice and hot jazz moves sizzle. Together with the extraordinary talents of Andy Izquierdo's Billy Flynn, the sleazy lawyer who'll get you off the hook for a simple 5k

fee, Jon Keeling's Amos Hart, Mr. Cellophane (who all but steals the show in his final moment on stage), Melissa E. Stamp's Mary Sunshine (fabulous singing and comic timing) and Jennifer Strand's Matron, undeniable queen of the cell block, you'll definitely get your money's worth.

The ensemble includes a terrific line-up of voices, but the dancing. Oh, the dancing! See this show for the dancing! The ensemble cast has worked it hard and the results are nothing short of phenomenal. They make this stuff look easy! In particular the ensemble numbers "We Both Reached for the Gun, Cell Block Tango," and "All I Care About" are simply stunning to watch. By the time we get to the final numbers, we've come to expect (and receive in abundance) a professional-caliber conclusion to this show that goes out with a bang!

After nearly 40 years of theatre going, it's a rare gem to which I'll give a standing "O" but this performance totally deserved it. If LTA doesn't sell out its entire run, then there's something wrong with the world.

Director's Notes

I'll admit to passing the time at the grocery store checkout by reading the tabloids. But I wouldn't buy them – oh no, not me – not those rags that celebrate the scandalous and salacious. I've tuned in to scholars debating how some celebrities are famous for just being famous and agreed it's ridiculous. But I don't really participate. I don't have to. Popular culture surrounds us, and we participate just by performing the mundane tasks of daily living like grocery shopping and watching TV.

In Chicago in 1924, two women who couldn't have looked guiltier were tried and acquitted of murder. Belva Gaertner, the inspiration for Velma Kelly, stated that she couldn't possibly know how her husband was shot dead in her car or why her clothes were covered with blood because she had been drunk. Beulah Annan, the basis for Roxie Hart, shot her lover and defended herself by inventing a series of stories that altered every facet of the case. Finally, nearing trial, she proclaimed herself pregnant.

The Chicago Tribune assigned reporter Maurine Dallas Watkins to cover Belva's and Beulah's murder trials. Smart and sensible, Ms. Watkins became an unwilling participant in the rising celebrity of the murderesses as Chicago's citizens followed the unfolding events the way we followed the O.J. Simpson trial. Her satirical articles are filled with disbelief that two obviously guilty women could literally get away with murder simply because they were so interesting to follow.

After the trials, Ms. Watkins left journalism and wrote the stage play *Chicago* that opened in 1926 with Belva Gaertner in the audience. Bob Fosse tried for years to obtain the rights to create a musical, but Ms. Watkins refused. Upon her death, Fosse obtained the rights from her estate and, along with John Kander and Fred Ebb, created the show that celebrates that part of ourselves that can't help but glance at the tabloids or watch reality TV. It's fascinating to see the power of celebrity at work.

Photo Gallery



Chicago's Merry Murderesses featuring Bethany Blakey as Velma Kelly



Andy Izquierdo (Billy Flynn) and Ensemble



Jordan Hougham (Roxie Hart)



Daniel McKay, Jordan Hougham (Roxie Hart), and Ivan Davila

Photos by Shane Canfield for the Little Theatre of Alexandria

Cast

- Velma Kelly: Bethany Blakey
- Roxie Hart: Jordan Hougham
- Fred Casely: Keith J. Miller
- Sergeant Fogarty: Iván Dávila
- Amos Hart: Jon Keeling
- Liz: Jacqui Farkas
- Annie: Akiyo Dunetz

- June: Angela Norris
- Hunyak: Kristen Magee
- Mona: Danielle Y. Eure
- Martin Harrison: Daniel McKay
- Matron: Jennifer Strand
- Billy Flynn: Andy Izquierdo
- Mary Sunshine: Melissa E. Stamps
- Go-to-Hell Kitty: Lauren Palmer
- Harry: Iván Dávila
- Aaron: Iván Dávila
- Masters of Ceremonies: Iván Dávila, Daniel McKay, Keith Miller

The Chicago Band

- Conductor: Paul Nasto
- Reeds: Mitch Bassman, Randy Dahlberg, Dana Gardner, Blake Rose, Mila Weiss
- Trumpets: Terry Bradley, Scott Firestone, Curt Nette, Paul Weiss
- Trombones: Chris Bradley, Scott Fridy, Harold Rhoads, Rick Schutz
- Tubas: Dan Bradley, Tom Holtz, Don Hornbuckle, Rob Ross
- Keyboards: Francine Krasowska
- Percussion: Bill Wolski
- Guitar, Bass Guitar, Banjo, Ukulele, Mandolin: Eric Oganessoff
- Violin: Danill Davydoff

Production Staff

- Producers: Marian Holmes and Eddie Page
- Assistant Producer: Rachel Alberts
- Director: Susan Devine
- Musical Director: Paul Nasto
- Choreographer: Amy Carson
- Stage Managers: Joan A. S. Lada and Mary Beth Smith-Toomey
- Assistant Stage Managers: Steve Lada and Adrian L. Steel
- Assisted by: Marshall Smith, Luke Yu
- Set Design and Construction: Chris Feldmann
- Assisted by: Bob King, Paul Nasto, Jeff Nesmmeyer, Dan Remmers, Jack Schaeffer, Al Thompson
- Set Painting: Kevin O'Dowd
- Assisted by: Meri Cole and Leslie Reed
- Set Decoration: Nancyanne Burton, Jean Stuhl and Allen Stuhl
- Lighting Design: Ken and Patti Crowley
- Master Electrician: Nancy Owens
- Assisted by: Casey Brusnahan, Eileen Doherty, Heather Franklin, Kira Simon Hogan, Rachel Lau, Pam Leonowich, Jennifer Lyman, Elizabeth Owens, Donna Reynolds, Dick Schwab
- Sound Design: David Correia and David Hale
- Assisted by: Margaret Evans-Joyce, Anna Hawkins, Robin Parker, Bill Rinehuls, Alan Wray

- Costume Design and Construction: Chris Macey
- Assisted by: Beverley Benda, Bobbie Herbst, Annie Vroom
- Wardrobe: Barbara Helsing and Margaret Snow
- Assisted by: Pat Bradford, Margaret Evans-Joyce, Patricia Greksouk, Nancy Klebanoff, Sherry Singer, Nicole Zuchetto
- Makeup and Hair Design: Chris Macey
- Properties: Betty Dolan and Leslie Reed
- Assisted by: Sharon Dove, Jean Downey, Sharon Edwards, Bobbie Herbst, Carol Hutchinson, Rebecca Johnson
- Rigging: Russell Wyland
- Photographer: Shane Canfield
- Auditions: Amanda Helms, Joanna Henry, Bobbie Herbst, Laura Nemecek, Marshall Smith, Margaret Snow, Adrian Steel
- Audition and Rehearsal Pianist: Francine Krasowska
- Dance Captains: Iván Dávila and Kristen Magee
- Double Tech Dinner: Jean Stuhl
- Assisted by: Don Burton, Nancyanne Burton, Allen Stuhl
- Opening Night Party: Russell Wyland
- Assisted by: Lloyd Bittinger, Jean and Allen Stuhl
- Publicity: Rachel Fischer Alberts
- Graphics: Simmons Design
- Playbill Editor: Carol Hutchinson

Tagged as: **Little Theatre of Alexandria**

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Betsy Marks Delaney Betsy Marks Delaney is founder and Artistic Director of OutOftheBlackBox Theatre Company (O2B2). She has also worked with Washington Revels, Arena Stage, the now-defunct Harlequin Dinner Theatre and with community theatre companies both in Maryland and in upstate New York. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Technical Theatre, with an emphasis on Scenic Design from the State University of New York, College at New Paltz. Betsy is directing a staged reading of her one-act *Busted* for O2B2's next project, on March 5th at the Greenbelt Arts Center (GAC). Her last set design was seen in O2B2's very successful *Catch-22* at GAC. She recently produced the videos for *Catch-22* and several Revels' projects through Hawkeswood Productions.

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