

NEW YORK CITY CENTER  
EDUCATION

**WORKING**

A MUSICAL

NOVEMBER 2020

**BEHIND THE CURTAIN:  
WORKING: A MUSICAL**

Your personal guide to the production.

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# MEET THE CREATORS



**STEPHEN SCHWARTZ** (Composer, Book) wrote the music and lyrics for the current Broadway hit *Wicked*, and has also contributed music and/or lyrics to *Godspell*, *Pippin*, *The Magic Show*, *The Baker's Wife*, *Working*, *Rags*, and *Children of Eden*. For film, he collaborated with Alan Menken on the songs for Disney's *Pocahontas*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *Enchanted*, and wrote the songs for the DreamWorks animated feature *The Prince of Egypt*. Schwartz has been inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame, the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and has been given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Awards include three Academy Awards, four Grammy Awards, and the Isabelle Stevenson Tony Award. For his direction of the original Broadway production of *Working*, he received a Drama Desk Award for best direction of a musical.

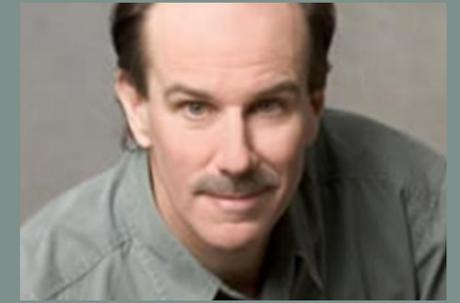


**NINA FASO** (Book) made her directorial debut with Peter Ustinov's *The Unknown Soldier and His Wife*. Following a stint with the improvisational comedy group, The Committee, she became one of the creators of *Godspell* and directed most major productions of the show in America and Europe. She then took *The*

*Rocky Horror Show* from Los Angeles to Broadway. She co-adapted and co-directed the musical *Working*, based on Studs Terkel's book, for the Goodman Theater in Chicago and for Broadway. She co-wrote the teleplay for *Working* for the PBS series *American Playhouse*. She is the author and director of the children's television special, *The Fable Company*, and the co-producer and co-director of a short film called *Sing for Your Life*. Among her other directing credits are the musicals *Just Once* and *Is It Just Me, Or Is It Hot in Here?* which enjoyed long runs in New York and Los Angeles, respectively.



**SUSAN BIRKENHEAD** (Composer) received a Tony Nomination, a Grammy nomination, and a Drama Desk Award for her lyrics for *Jelly's Last Jam*. She was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for *Triumph of Love* and won a Drama Desk Award and a Tony nomination for *Working*. She won an Outer Critics Circle award for *What About Luv* and an L.A. Drama Critics Award for *Minsky's*. She wrote additional lyrics and new songs for the Broadway version of *High Society* and wrote songs for the Off-Broadway *Stars of David* and *My Name Is Alice*. Her latest musical, written with Lynn Nottage and Duncan Sheik, *The Secret Life of Bees* played at the Atlantic Theater in Summer 2019. She is also working on *Black Orpheus* with Lynn Nottage and George C. Wolfe and *Betty Boop* with Bob Martin, David Foster, and Jerry Mitchell.



**CRAIG CARNELIA** (Composer) For Broadway he wrote the lyrics for *Sweet Smell of Success* (music by Marvin Hamlisch, book by John Guare) and *Imaginary Friends* (with Hamlisch and Nora Ephron) as well as the score for *Is There Life After High School?* and he contributed four songs to *Working: A Musical*. Off-Broadway, he wrote the music and lyrics for *3 Postcards* at Playwrights Horizons (book by Craig Lucas) and contributed the classic baseball song "What You'd Call a Dream" for *Diamonds*. His new musical *Poster Boy* (book by Joe Tracz) premiered at Williamstown Theatre Festival and is en route to The Public Theater. Craig has received two Tony Award nominations, two Drama Desk nominations, two "Best Plays" citations, the Johnny Mercer Award, the Gilman and Gonzalez-Falla Award, and the Kleban Award for distinguished lyric writing. He has been on the council of the Dramatists Guild since 1995 and is married to actress/educator Lisa Brescia.



**MICKI GRANT** (Composer) has performed on and off Broadway and has created an extensive body of musical composition and poetry. Her Broad-

## MEET THE CREATORS (CONTINUED)

way musicals *Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope*—in which Grant also starred—and *Your Arms Are Too Short to Box with God* garnered multiple awards including a Grammy and five Tony nominations. Grant composed a musical based on the life of George Washington Carver entitled *Don't Underestimate a Nut*, provided the English lyrics for 20 songs in *Jacques Brel Blues*, was composer/lyricist for J.E. Franklin's *Prodigal Sister*, contributed additional lyrics to Broadway's *Eubie*, and has written songs for educational TV's *Infinity Factory*. Grant's work has been celebrated in two Off-Broadway musical retrospectives. For the national tour of *Having Our Say*, she won the Helen Hayes Award for her portrayal of Sadie Delany. Some of her numerous other awards include the Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, NAACP Image, Obie, and the Paul Robeson.



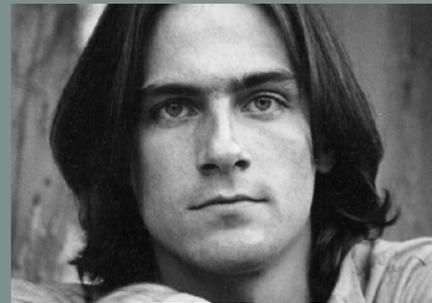
**LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA** (Composer) is a Pulitzer Prize, Grammy, Emmy, and Tony award-winning composer, lyricist, and actor. He is the creator and original star of Broadway's Tony-winning *Hamilton* and *In the Heights*. Other Broadway credits include *Bring It On: The Musical* (co-composer/co-lyricist, Tony nomination for Best Musical), and *West Side Story* (2009 revival, Spanish translations). Miranda is the recipient of the 2015 MacArthur Foundation Award and the 2018 Kennedy Center Honors. He received an Emmy with Tom Kitt for their song, "Bigger" from the 67th Annual Tony Awards. Miranda has actively supported relief efforts in

Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria in September 2017, creating "Almost Like Praying" in support of the Hispanic Federation's UNIDOS Disaster Relief and Recovery Program. In honor of the 2019 run of *Hamilton* in Puerto Rico, the Miranda family, the producers of *Hamilton*, and the Flamboyant Foundation created the Flamboyant Arts Fund, raising \$15 million for arts and culture on the island. TV/Film credits include *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2018 Emmy Nomination, Guest Actor), *Saturday Night Live* (2017 Emmy Nomination, Guest Actor), *Sesame Street*, *DuckTales*, *Moana* (2017 Oscar and Golden Globe nominations, Grammy Award for Best Original Song), and *Mary Poppins Returns* (2019 Golden Globe Nomination, Best Actor). Miranda received his B.A. from Wesleyan University in 2002.



**MARY RODGERS** (Composer) credits as a composer began with the Broadway production of *Once Upon a Mattress* in 1959 and continued with *Hot Spot*, *The Mad Show*, *Working*, *The Griffin and the Minor Canon*, and scores for the Bill Baird Marionettes and Theatreworks/USA. Her musicals have also been celebrated in a revue, *Hey, Love*. She is a popular author of fiction for young people, most notably the 1972 novel *Freaky Friday*, which was made into a Disney Studios motion picture (with a screenplay by Rodgers), a Theatre Works/USA musical (composed by Rodgers), and an ABC TV remake. Mary Rodgers was Chairman of the Board of the Juil-

iard School, on the Board of ASCAP, and on the Council of the Dramatists Guild.



**JAMES TAYLOR** (Composer) As a recording and touring artist, James Taylor has touched people with his warm baritone voice and distinctive style of guitar-playing for more than 40 years, while setting a precedent to which countless young musicians have aspired. Over the course of his celebrated songwriting and performing career, Taylor has sold more than 100 million albums, earning gold, platinum, and multi-platinum awards for classics ranging from *Sweet Baby James* in 1970 to *October Road* in 2002. In 2015, Taylor released *Before This World*, his first new studio album in thirteen years, which earned him his first ever #1 album. He has won multiple Grammy awards and has been inducted into both the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the Songwriters Hall of Fame. In 2012, Taylor was awarded the distinguished Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French government and the National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama. In November 2015, Taylor was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. In December 2016, Taylor received the Kennedy Center Honors, which are presented annually to individuals who have enriched American culture by distinguished achievement in the performing arts.

## MEET THE CREATORS (CONTINUED)



**GORDON GREENBERG** (Additional Material) revised and directed *Working: A Musical for The Old Globe*, Broadway in Chicago, Asolo Rep, and 59 E 59. He directed the acclaimed West End revival of *Guys and Dolls*, which starred Rebel Wilson; received six Olivier Award nominations (Savoy Theatre, Chichester Festival Theatre); and directed/co-wrote the Broadway stage adaptation of Irving Berlin's *Holiday Inn* (Roundabout /Universal, PBS Great Performances.) Recent/current work includes *The Heart of Rock and Roll* (Old Globe); *Barnum* (Menier Chocolate Factory, London); *Terms of Endearment* starring Alfred Molina, Calista Flockhart, and Constance Wu (Geffen); *The Secret of My Success* (also co-writer, Universal Stage Productions); *Piaf: Dietrich* (Mirvish, Toronto); writing the new book for *Meet Me in St. Louis* (St. Louis Muny); co-writing/directing *Mystic Pizza* with Melissa Etheridge and Sas Goldberg for MGM; co-writing *Port Au Prince* (New Group); co-writing/directing *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big (Your Town Here) Christmas Show* (Old Globe, Bucks County); *The Curious Case of the Curse of Count Dracula* (Chicago Shakes, Maltz); and co-writing original movie musicals for Disney Channel and Nickelodeon. Other credits: *Jacques Brel...* (Drama Desk, Drama League, Outer Critics nominations); Disney's *Tangled*; and regional work at Williamstown, Paper Mill, Huntington, Signature, Dallas Theatre Center, New York Stage and Film, Philadelphia Theatre Company, St. Louis MUNY, Goodspeed, Capital Rep. Education: Stanford, NYU, RADA. Member, SDC, WGA, and The Dramatists Guild.



**ALEX LACAMOIRE** (Original Orchestrations) has three Tonys and three Grammys for his work on the Broadway musicals *Hamilton*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and *In The Heights*. He won his fourth Grammy producing the soundtrack to *The Greatest Showman* and received a Kennedy Center Honors in 2018 for his work on *Hamilton*. Broadway credits include *Bring It On*, *Wicked*, *High Fidelity*, *Annie* (2011 Broadway revival), *9 to 5* (Drama Desk and Grammy noms.), *Legally Blonde*, and *Bat Boy*. Film/television: FX's *Fosse* (Supervising Music Producer), *The Greatest Showman* (Executive Music Producer), *Incredibles 2* (Arranger/Orchestrator), and *Sesame Street* (Emmy-nominated composer). Other: *Godspell* (2001 National Tour); orchestrations for The Rockettes and the Oscars; recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from his alma mater, Berklee College of Music.



**ANNE KAUFFMAN** (Director, Encores! Off-Center Artistic Director) New York: *Fire in My Mouth* (NY Philharmonic); *The Lucky Ones* (Ars Nova); *Hundred Days* (NYTW, Z Space, The Know Theater); *Mary Jane* (Lortel Award for Direction, NYTW, Yale

Rep); *Marvin's Room* (Roundabout Theatre Company); *Assassins* (Encores! Off-Center); *Sundown*; *Yellow Moon* (Women's Project/Ars Nova); *A Life* (Lortel nomination, Drama League Nomination); *Marjorie Prime* (Lortel Nomination, Drama League Nomination); *Detroit, Your Mother's Copy of the Kama Sutra*, and *Maple and Vine* (Playwrights Horizons); *The Nether*, *Smokefall* (MCC); *Buzzer* (The Public); *Belleville* (Lortel Nomination, NYTW, Yale Rep); *You Got Older* (Drama Desk Nomination, P73 Productions); *The Muscles in Our Toes* (Labyrinth Theater Company); *Somewhere Fun*, *God's Ear* (New Georges and Vineyard Theater); *Stunning*, *Slowgirl* (LCT3). Regional: *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*, *Smokefall* (Goodman Theatre); *And No More Shall We Part*, *You Better Sit Down: Tales from My Parents' Divorce*, *Six Degrees of Separation* (Williamstown Theater Festival); *Belleville* (Yale Rep, Steppenwolf). Resident Director Roundabout Theater, Artistic Associate and founding member of The Civilians, Clubbed Thumb Associate Artist, and co-creator of the CT Directing Fellowship, New Georges Associate Artist, Artistic Council of Soho Rep, SDC Executive Board Member. Three OBIES, the Joan and Joseph Cullman Award for Exceptional Creativity from Lincoln Center, the Alan Schneider Director Award.

# MEET THE CAST



**ANDRÉA  
BURNS AS  
WOMAN 2**

ANDRÉA BURNS is a Drama Desk award winner, who recently garnered rave reviews for her portrayal of the legendary Judy Holliday in *Smart Blonde*. Broadway: *In the Heights*, *On Your Feet!*, *The Nance*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Full Monty*, *The Ritz*. Off-Broadway: Jason Robert Brown's *Songs for a New World*, Stephen Sondheim's *Saturday Night*. TV/Film: *Blue Bloods*, *Kevin Can Wait*, *Jessica Jones*, *Akron*, *The Electric Company*, *Law & Order*. Solo album: *A Deeper Shade of Red*. @psclassics.



**MATEO  
FERRO  
AS MAN 3**

MATEO FERRO is best known for his portrayal of Sonny in Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights* at The Kennedy Center where he played opposite Anthony Ramos and Vanessa Hudgens. Mateo won a National Capital Area Cappie Award for this performance. In the short time he has been in NYC, teenage Ferro has gone on to be guest star on *Manifest* for NBC and the Spike Jordan indie *Bars*. Mateo currently resides in Brooklyn.



**DAVID  
GARRISON  
AS MAN 2**

DAVID GARRISON Encores!: *Little Me*, *Strike Up the Band*. On/Off-Broadway: *Hollywood/Ukraine* (Tony nomination), *Wicked*, *Titanic*, *The Visit*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Torch Song Trilogy*, *I Do! I Do!* (Drama Desk nomination), *Silence! The Musical*, *New Jerusalem*, *Dead Poets Society*, *Middletown*, *Geniuses*, *It's Only a Play*. Regional: *Merrily We Roll Along* (Arena Stage, Helen Hayes Award), Randy Newman's *Faust* (La Jolla/Goodman), *Travesties* (Williamstown), *Die Fledermaus* (Santa Fe Opera), *Candide* (Glimmerglass). TV: Steve Rhoades on *Married with Children*.



**HELEN  
HUNT AS  
WOMAN 1**

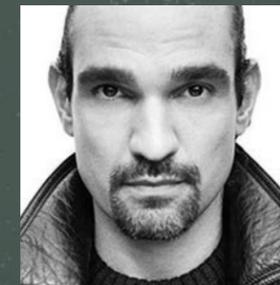
HELEN HUNT is an actor, director, and screenwriter. She is well known for her character Jamie Buchman in the sitcom *Mad About You*, for which she won four Golden Globe Awards and four Primetime Emmy Awards. Hunt won the Academy Award for Best Actress for starring as Carol Connelly in the romantic comedy *As Good as It Gets*, while her portrayal of Cheryl Cohen-Greene in *The Sessions* garnered her an additional nomination for Best Supporting Actress. Hunt made her directorial film debut with *Then She Found Me* and has since directed the film *Ride* and episodes of many television series.

# MEET THE CAST (CONTINUED)



**CHRISTOPHER  
JACKSON  
AS MAN 1**

Tony nominee, Grammy and Emmy Award winner starred as George Washington in the award-winning musical, *Hamilton*. Stars in CBS' *Bull* and Ava DuVernay's Netflix series *When They See Us*. Featured on the latest #Hamildrop alongside President Obama. Sold out concerts include Carnegie Hall and The Kennedy Center. Broadway: *Holla If Ya Hear Me*, *Bronx Bombers*, *After Midnight*, *In the Heights*, *Memphis*, *The Lion King*. Film/TV: *Tracers*, *Afterlife*, *Freestyle Love Supreme*, *The Good Wife*, *Nurse Jackie*, *White Collar*.



**JAVIER  
MUÑOZ  
AS MAN 4**

Broadway: *In the Heights* (Usnavi), *Hamilton* (Alexander Hamilton). Regional & Off-Broadway: *The Porch* (Ziad) at Altered Stage, *Venice* (Venice) at Center Theatre Group, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Proteus) at Shakespeare Theatre of DC, *Richard III* (Dorset), and *Into the Woods* (The Baker) at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Film: *The House That Jack Built* (Hector), *Papa's Prince* (Javier/Prince), *Monuments* (Howl). TV: *Odd Mom Out*, *Quantico*, *Blindspot*, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*. Currently, he can be seen on Freeform in *Shadowhunters* as Lorenzo Rey. Muñoz currently resides in NYC.



**TRACIE  
THOMS AS  
WOMAN 3**

Broadway: *Falsettos*, *Stick Fly*, *Rent*, *Drowning Crow*. Off-Broadway: *The Antigone Project*, *Lost Lake*, *The Exonerated*, *Up Against the Wind*. Regional: *The Oedipus Plays* (DC Shakespeare Theatre), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Center Stage), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Missouri Rep), *Hair* (Helen Hayes nomination). Film: *Back to Lyla*, *Emmett*, *The Watcher*, *Equity*, *Annie*, *McCanick*, *Raze*, *Looper*, *Safe House*, *Rent*, *Death Proof*, *The Devil Wears Prada*. TV: *Truth Be Told*, *The First*, *9-1-1*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Criminal Minds*, *Wisdom of the Crowd*, *Gone*, *UnReal*, *Send Me* (Emmy nom.), *The Mindy Project*, *Love*, *Veep*, *Suits*, *Private Practice*, *Cold Case* (series regular), *Law & Order*, *Wonderfalls*, *The Shield*. Education: B.F.A. from Howard University; Juilliard Drama Division.

# AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNE KAUFFMAN

In the summer of 2019, Encores-Off Center Artistic Director Anne Kauffman decided to pay homage to City Center and its employees for the organization's 75th anniversary. In her production of *Working: A Musical*, Kauffman shared some of the stories of the employees who keep City Center running. We spoke with Kauffman about her favorite memories from the production and why the show is more relevant now than ever.



## HOW DID YOU COME TO BE A DIRECTOR?

**ANNE KAUFFMAN:** Well, I started out wanting to be a musical theater star! I did some acting in grade school, high school and college...but it turned out I couldn't sing or dance...OR ACT! Plus I noticed after a while, I was less interested in acting and more interested in looking at the whole picture: the acting, the staging, the design, and how to communicate the story utilizing those tools.

## WHAT DREW YOU TO DIRECT WORKING?

**AK:** So much theater focuses on people who are out of the ordinary in some way. And I've come to be much more interested in the particularities, quirks, and features of folks who most people might see as ordinary. As it turns out, nobody is ordinary, but lots of people are overlooked because they are doing work that isn't always visible. During this pandemic we're realizing just how crucial our essential workers are...those who deliver food, who build things, who answer our calls when things don't work, who take care of us. And Studs Terkel went around Chicago and interviewed real people about their jobs. *Working* celebrates those people and their work. Remember early in the pandemic when people would hang out their windows at 7pm and clap for the essential workers? Wouldn't it be nice if we still did that and never stopped doing it? I think *Working* is a musical expression of that applause.

## DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE MEMORY FROM THE PRODUCTION?

**AK:** I have SOOOOO many great memories from the production. I loved having the actors meet the City Center employees that they were portraying. I think it really inspired them to excel at their performances in order to honor those folks. Another thing that happened was after the show had closed, my stage managers sent a video that was made backstage during one of the performances. It was INCREDIBLE! It was the whole cast wildly dancing to one of their co-stars singing "Cleanin' Women." You know, we rehearsed and put *Working* up in 10 days! So it's all work work work...an ensemble has to get tight really quickly if a show is going to come together. And that video proved to me that we had succeeded; that we had created a tight-knit group of extremely talented actors full of integrity and community!

## WHAT KEEPS YOU INSPIRED AS A DIRECTOR?

**AK:** I think work that is grappling with our contemporary issues and that seeks to dig deeply into them without feeling the need to supply simple answers. Because our world is complex, and simple answers don't really exist. I think theater can bring that to light. I also love working with playwrights and composers who are trying to do new things with the artform. To break the rules and discover different ways of storytelling. I like trying to figure that out with them. And I love working in the theater because even though I'm sort of technically the leader, I'm collaborating with so many different artists with different talents and expertise. I love the team aspect of that. All of us striving to make something work... to make something that moves people emotionally and inspires people to take action.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE ROLE OF ART AND ART-MAKING IN THIS MOMENT?

**AK:** To help people. I think it's important right now to make art that catches people's attention so that they can be introduced to ways of helping folks out, whether that's feeding people, providing forums for people to talk, or raising up voices that aren't traditionally lifted up. In this moment when nobody can go to the theater, how can we use our talents as theater artists to substantively support people who are struggling? To be honest, I'm in the middle of creating a strategy to understand my role! All I know is that we need to express the inexpressible, and to be a voice to those who don't have one right now.



Stephen Schwartz, Anne Kauffman and Alvin Hough, Jr.; Photo by Shanel Resto

# THE WORKERS BEHIND WORKING

by Ryan Wenzel

*Working: A Musical*—a theatrical celebration of the working class—was originally unveiled in Chicago, 1977. It is based on 1974’s *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*, a series of interviews collected by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and radio host Studs Terkel.

This article was published in *Playbill* in June 2019

Terkel’s book was adapted by composer Stephen Schwartz and librettist Nina Faso into a tapestry of songs and monologues by songwriters such as Craig Carnelia, Micki Grant, Mary Rodgers and Susan Birkenhead, and James Taylor. *Working* has evolved in its several subsequent productions since the ’70s—with Schwartz’s enthusiastic support—to speak compellingly to new settings and to capture the unique personalities of the performers involved. Two numbers, by Lin-Manuel Miranda, were officially added in 2012 and New York City Center’s upcoming production—on stage from June 26 to 29 as part of the 2019 Encores! Off-Center season—will continue the trend of morphing the work to fit the settings in which it is performed.

According to Anne Kauffman, the production’s director and artistic director of the Off-Center series, songs for a range of characters—including a waitress, a mill-worker, a trucker, and a deliveryman—will be complemented by new monologues based on the experiences of City Center’s own staff. “The spirit of *Working* is about the people who really make this country run, who are not necessarily the most visible people—people who support others’ efforts, execute other people’s plans, and who make our lives easier,” said Kauffman. “In this new production, we will celebrate the dedicated staff who work in our building, including those who greet our audiences as they come into the house.”

In preparation for City Center’s 75th Anniversary Season, interviews were conducted with several employees. “This musical says a great deal about legacy and family—the hopes and dreams that we have for our children and how work is passed down from one generation to the next,” Kauffman noted, and the recollections of City Center staff have reinforced that theme. Stories collected within City Center include those of a mother and daughter who serve as ticket taker and head usher, a father who introduced his son to employment in the box office, and a security guard whose daughter one day took on the same position. The lush oral histories City Center’s staff have provided will prompt audiences to interpret the songs that surround the new monologues in new ways—and they will form a time capsule of sorts, to mark this important anniversary for City Center.

Simultaneously, *Working*’s message is being explored by Brooklyn-based theater troupe The Civilians, which will return during Encores! Off-Center for The Lobby Project—a series of pre-show performances, conversations, and readings that provide context for the main stage productions. Through City Center’s **On the Move**—a brand-new initiative that brings free world-class performances to New Yorkers in their own neighborhoods—The Civilians were able to tag along and interview local workers in various community centers throughout the five boroughs.

Before each performance of *Working* this summer, The Civilians will present an original work based on these stories, set to music by the next generation of musical theater songwriters. “*Working* is, at its core, about democracy, and I wanted to extend that democracy—to let it spill outside of the theater and into the lobby,” said Kauffman. “The Civilians will create a real conversation. The piece will reflect what is seen on the main stage, but with a contemporary, local focus.”

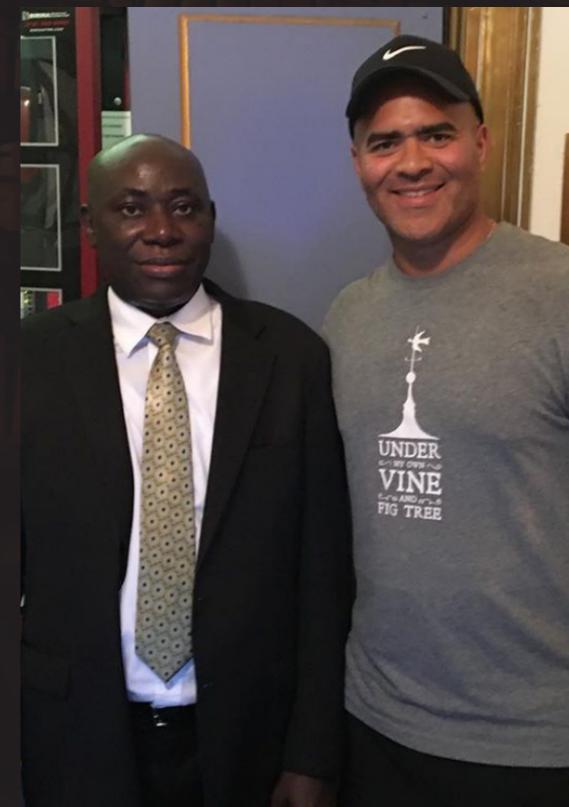
At a later date, The Lobby Project production will travel back to the community centers where its stories originated, in an effort to celebrate the spirit of *Working* and to close the geographical gap between City Center and the diverse communities of New York City. (The volunteers who shared their stories with The Civilians will be invited to see *Working*, as well, in order to encourage further dialogue with the musical.)

Since its inaugural season in 2013, Encores! Off-Center has revived works to prove that they are not static creations bound to a particular era, but living and vital art that can speak to new and seasoned theater audiences alike. Kauffman said with pride that her new production of *Working*—and the companion piece by The Civilians—will embody that philosophy perfectly: “We are looking at something from the past and presenting it anew for this generation. It’s an important interplay, and that’s what we do here.”

*Ryan Wenzel is a New York-based writer and editor. His writing has appeared in Time Out New York, The Advocate, The Brooklyn Rail, Dance Magazine, and Pointe.*

# THE FACES OF WORKING AT CITY CENTER

Abdou Sillah is City Center's Fire and Life Safety Director. He has worked in the building for 15 years and is often referred to as "the face of City Center" because he greets everyone who comes into the building. Actor Christopher Jackson portrayed him in *Working* and we spoke to Abdou about what it was like to see his story told onstage.



## WHAT DID IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE FEATURED IN THE PRODUCTION OF WORKING?

**Abdou Sillah:** I am one of the lucky people who was featured in the production of *Working*. This meant to me that my story and job performance, which put me as the face of New York City Center is recognized. Featuring it on stage may have benefited and inspired many people to be dedicated and sincere in carrying out their responsibilities at work.

## WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO SEE YOURSELF PORTRAYED ONSTAGE AT THE PLACE THAT YOU WORK?

**AS:** As human beings, we are so close to ourselves that sometimes we may not notice all of our own actions, but other people we interact with can. And seeing myself portrayed onstage, in the presence of my family and the whole world, made me humbled. Indeed, I was very happy and emotional and wished that my mother and father were present that day.

Abdou Sillah and Christopher Jackson

Actress Tracie Thoms portrayed Fatou Sillah, a Security Officer at City Center. We spoke to Tracie about her process of developing Fatou's character for *Working*.



## WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO PORTRAY SOMEONE WHO WORKS AT CITY CENTER AND WHO YOU INTERACTED WITH?

**Tracie Thoms:** I loved working on *Working*. It was such a wonderful experience. It's funny playing a real person because you have this responsibility to get it right in a way that you don't really have when you are playing an imaginary person. And Fatou is so lovely and wonderful, and so is her father, Abdou. I'm so grateful to Fatou for letting me play her.

## AS AN ACTOR, WHAT DO YOU PAY ATTENTION TO WHEN PREPARING TO PORTRAY A REAL PERSON?

**TT:** First, because she is not American, my focus was her accent. We recorded Fatou and I listened to her over and over again. The way she spoke was so beautiful and had such a music to it. So I really hooked into that recording because that's what I had access to 24 hours a day. And then when I finally met Fatou, I looked at her mannerisms, like how she held her hands. Little details like that really help me get into a character. Fatou was just a joy to play and I just loved every minute of it.



(Top): Traci Thomas and Fatou Sillah  
(Bottom): Angie White and Helen Hunt; Jon Ferreira and Matteo Ferro

# ACTIVITY

*Working* premiered in 1977 and the musical has undergone many updates in the past 43 years. City Center's 2019 production included new careers and characters based on City Center employees. In this activity, participants will envision careers of the future and take on the role of costume designer to create a design for a future production of *Working*.

**IMAGINE** What is a job that doesn't exist today but will in 10 years and could be featured in a 2030 production of *Working*? Answer the questions below to describe the position:

**WHAT IS THE JOB TITLE?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WHAT ARE THE JOB RESPONSIBILITIES?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WHERE DOES THE WORK TAKE PLACE?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WHAT ARE THE WORK HOURS?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WHY IS THIS WORK IMPORTANT?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WHAT WOULD SOMEONE WITH THIS JOB WEAR TO WORK?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**DESIGN** With this job description in mind, design a costume for a character with this job in the 2030 *Working* production. Consider the following factors:

**STYLE:** Can the employee choose what they wear to work or is there a uniform? Is there a color associated with the job?

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**PRACTICALITY:** What does the outfit need to help the employee do their job?

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**COMFORT:** How many hours a day will the employee wear their work attire? How active is the job?

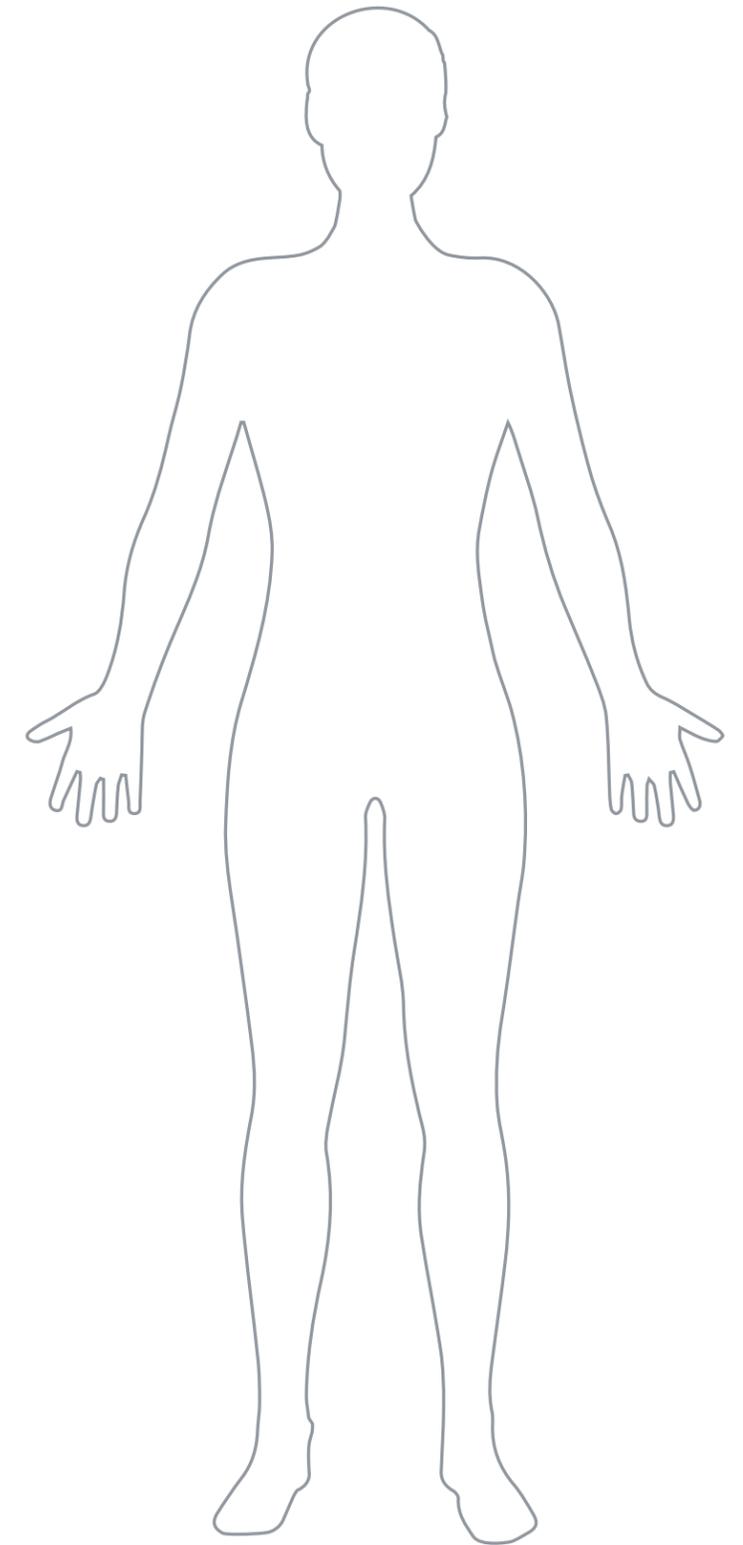
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# UP NEXT FOR CITY CENTER

ENJOY **ALL-NEW** DIGITAL CONTENT WITH DANCE AND MUSICAL THEATER PROGRAMS YOU'LL LOVE—FOR FREE!

## ENCORES! INSIDE THE REVIVAL

STARTING NOV 18 AT 2PM

Go behind the scenes with this new digital five-part mini documentary series that takes you inside the next chapter of the beloved Tony-honored Encores! where the unique creative process of musical theater productions in development is led by Encores! Artistic Director **Lear deBessonet** and newly announced Producing Creative Director **Clint Ramos**. Enjoy live performances and hear one-on-one conversations with directors and artists like **Billy Porter**, **Kenny Leon**, and **Ashley Park** who are invested in bringing these productions to you as soon as it is safe to do so. [Learn More.](#)



## AYODELE CASEL'S DIARY OF A TAP DANCER V.6: US

ON VIEW NOW

Internationally acclaimed tap artist **Ayodele Casel** and frequent collaborator **Torya Beard** conceived and curated this City Center-commissioned video series to bring you a mesmerizing mix of rhythm and movement and share the stories that shape the artistry of a multigenerational and multicultural group of tap trailblazers from around the world. Watch all seven episodes on demand on our website or [YouTube channel](#) now, and [click here to learn more.](#)



# NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION

## VISION STATEMENT

The mission of New York City Center Education is to ignite an appreciation of the performing arts, cultivate the creative mind, and create a culture of inquiry and exploration. Committed to drawing inspiration from works on the mainstage, New York City Center Education strives to provide innovative, accessible arts education to schools and communities across New York City.

## ABOUT NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION

Each year City Center reaches over 11,000 students from NYC public and private schools, kindergarten to grade 12, through dance and musical theater performances and in-school workshops. In-depth residencies engage young people in building technical and expressive skills, personal voice, and collaborative spirit. Innovative workshops are crafted for families, seniors, and other special groups that express an interest in collaborating with City Center.

Through the Introduction to Performing Arts program, students have the opportunity to view live performing arts at City Center. At the Workshop level, students receive two in-school workshops in addition to attending a live performance. Residencies provide in-depth multi-week study around one of the productions presented during the season. During the 2020-2021 Season, City Center Education offers students the opportunity to study dance and musical theater productions from City Center's mainstage.

