

PIONEER THEATRE COMPANY



# CAGNEY

Book by  
Peter Colley

Music and Lyrics by  
Robert Creighton and  
Christopher McGovern

Arrangements by  
Christopher McGovern

## Spotlight on Learning

a Pioneer Theatre Company  
Classroom Companion

Pioneer Theatre Company's Student Matinee Program is made possible through the support of Salt Lake County's Zoo, Arts and Parks Program, Salt Lake City Arts Council/Arts Learning Program, The Simmons Family Foundation, The Meldrum Foundation Endowment Fund, George Q. Morris Foundation, and R. Harold Burton Foundation.



Approx. running time:  
2:30 hours, which includes one  
fifteen-minute intermission.

Student Talk-Back:  
There will be a Student Talk-  
Back directly after the  
performance.

September 20 - October 5, 2019

*Cagney follows the life of the 20th-century movie star James Cagney—from the streets of New York to his song-and-dance vaudeville tour; from his time as a Hollywood tough guy to his testimony before the House Committee of Un-American Activities; from his USO tours to accepting a Lifetime Achievement award from the Screen Actors Guild.*

## Director's Note

By Bill Castellino

It was not a dark and stormy night, it was a dark and stormy, soaked-to-the-bone mid-morning.

We—Bobby [Creighton], Peter [Colley], Chris [McGovern] and I—had an outline and an empty white board. I picked up a dry marker and asked, "What is this play about?" Pause. Discussion. I wrote on the board: Self-identity v. public-identity. We spent a rainy week digging into James Cagney's past, union organizers, last century New York, politics, corny jokes, idol makers, movie stars, the studio system, tap shoes, gangsters, facts, guesses and George M. Cohan.

Provocative... especially when talking about a humble vaudevillian (who shoulda been a boxer) turned world-renowned Oscar winner. Attending this brainstorm (it was raining outside): a gifted actor obsessed with an ambitious idea, an experienced playwright committed to thorough research, a theatre composer devoted to solid structure and true rhymes, and a director/dramaturg specialized in new musicals.

Location? Palm Beach where Lou Tyrell asked us to be part of the 2009 Florida Stage Season. *Cagney* played to sold out houses and won the Carbonelle Award for Best New Work. Rewrite. On to Drayton (a circuit of seasonal

theatres outside of Toronto). New dances (Josh). Riverside Theatre in Vero Beach, Florida (2010). With each opportunity, we rethought, reimagined, restaged, rewrote, rewrote, rewrote.

I asked Jim Morgan to have a look: *Cagney* premiered off-Broadway (2015) at the York Theatre. Rewrite. Riki Kane Larimer moved us across town to the West Side Theater (2016); there, we played for 15 months. In 2017: four weeks in Los Angeles (half a mile from Warner Brothers Studios).

For a decade, the audience appreciated, applauded, and awarded our efforts.

Then we dared to consider our idea worthy of the Broadway stage.

Karen Azenberg invited us to Pioneer Theatre Company to explore that notion... our lucky day! Here, we double our cast (from six to twelve), grow our physical production (to suit this formidable stage), and continue to refine (more rewrites!) our uniquely American story of an underdog, patriot, singing-and-dancing, tough guy.

There is no way to measure my gratitude for the many miracles that bring *Cagney* to Salt Lake City. From rain-soaked Florida to dry-mountained Utah, I heartily exclaim thanks to all our miracle workers!



# Biography of James Cagney

James Francis Cagney Jr. (July 17, 1899 – March 30, 1986) was an American actor and dancer, both on stage and in film. Known for his consistently energetic performances, distinctive vocal style, and deadpan comic timing, he won acclaim and major awards for a wide variety of performances. He is best remembered for playing tough guys in films such as *The Public Enemy* (1931), *Taxi!* (1932), *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938), *The Roaring Twenties* (1939) and *White Heat* (1949), finding himself typecast or limited by this reputation earlier in his career. In 1999, the American Film Institute ranked him eighth among its list of greatest male stars of the Golden Age of Hollywood.

In his first professional acting performance in 1919, Cagney was costumed as a woman when he danced in the chorus line of the revue “Every Sailor.” He spent several years in vaudeville as a dancer and comedian, until he got his first major acting part in 1925. He landed several

other roles, and received good reviews, before getting the lead in the 1929 play *Penny Arcade*. After rave reviews, Jack Warner—of Warner Brothers—signed him for an initial \$500-a-week, three-week contract to reprise his role; this was quickly extended to a seven-year contract.

Cagney’s seventh film, *The Public Enemy*, became one of the most influential gangster movies of the period. Notable for a famous scene in which Cagney pushes a grapefruit against Mae Clarke’s face, the film thrust him into the spotlight. He became one of Hollywood’s leading stars and one of Warner Brothers’ biggest contracts. In 1938, he received his first Academy Award for Best Actor nomination for his subtle portrayal of the tough guy/man-child Rocky Sullivan in *Angels with Dirty Faces*. In 1942, Cagney won the Oscar for his energetic portrayal of George M. Cohan in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. He was nominated a third time in 1955 for *Love Me or Leave Me*. Cagney retired from acting and dancing in 1961 to spend time on his farm with his family. He came out of retirement 20 years later for a part in the movie *Ragtime* (1981), mainly to aid his recovery from a stroke.

# Tap Terms

## **Ball Change:**

Weight alternates on the balls of the feet.

## **Ball Heel:**

The ball strikes the floor and the heel is dropped.

## **Barrel Roll:**

This is a 360-degree turn of the body while the arms are extended in a “windmill.”

## **Brush:**

Standing on one leg, sweep the opposite leg forward or backward from the hip striking the ball of the foot.

## **Double Irish:**

A shuffle-hop-step then a shuffle-ball-change—done in that particular order.

## **Flap:**

A quick brush step to the front. Strike forward to the floor, then step forward and put weight on the working foot. Usually done forward but can be done in other directions as well.

## **Heel (drop):**

Standing on the balls of one or both feet, “drop” the heel on the floor, with or without change of weight.

## **Hop:**

Standing on one foot, jump up and land on the same foot.

## **Shuffle:**

Combine two brushes, one forward and one backward.

## **Step:**

Place the ball of the foot on the floor with a change of weight.

# The House Committee on Un-American Activities

In 1938, the HCUA was created to investigate alleged disloyalty and rebellion on the part of private citizens, public employees, and organizations suspected of having communist ties. It was chaired by Martin Dies, Jr., a Senator from Texas. Under him, the HCUA was known as the Dies Committee. (Pronounced “deez.”)

The HCUA is recognized mainly for the hundreds of subpoenas issued to Americans during the Second Red Scare. At that time—the 1950s—the committee was led by Senator Joseph McCarthy. The term “McCarthyism” came out of this era, a word meaning “the practice of making accusations of subversion or treason without proper regard for evidence.” A historical drama called *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller, was inspired by McCarthy and the HCUA.

Cagney was accused of supporting communism in 1934 and again in 1940, and was called before the Dies Committee. The accusations stemmed from his donation to striking cotton workers in California. No criminal charges were brought against Cagney.



## The Golden Age of Hollywood

The “Golden Age” of American film refers roughly to the period between 1930 and 1960, or a span of time in which movies were the most popular form of entertainment and studios produced dozens of movies per year.

Major figures of the “Golden Age” include Charlie Chaplin, James Cagney, Bettie Davis, and Marilyn Monroe. Famous directors from the era are D.W. Griffiths, Orson Welles (who wrote, directed, and starred in *Citizen Kane* at age 25), and the master of thriller Alfred Hitchcock.

In 1999, the American Film Institute ranked James Cagney eighth among its list of greatest male stars of the Golden Age of Hollywood. Orson Welles said of Cagney, “[he was] maybe the greatest actor who ever appeared in front of a camera.”

## Vaudeville

Vaudeville was a form of variety entertainment born in France in the late 18th century and remaining popular through the early 20th century. A typical American vaudeville show consisted of music, dance, comedy, trained animals, magicians, ventriloquists, strongmen, male and female impersonators, acrobats, jugglers, and one-act plays or scenes from plays, athletes, lecturing celebrities (such as Mark Twain), minstrels, and movies. A vaudeville performer is referred to as a “vaudevillian.”

For decades, vaudeville was regarded as the heart of American entertainment.

A few of the best known vaudevillians are: the magician Harry Houdini; the comedy duo Abbot and Costello (who famously performed the act “Who’s on First?”); the dancer and actress Gypsy Rose Lee; the Marx Brothers comedy team; and the actor/singer/comedian/social commentator Will Rogers.



# OUR EQUITY CAST



Darrin Baker

**BILL CASTELLINO** (Director) has directed world premieres of *Cagney*, *Soulmates*, *Great Divorce*, *Grumpy Old Men*, *Christmas in Hell*, *Jolson*, *Dr. Radio*, *Lizzie Borden*, *Heartbeats*, *I Spy a Spy*, *Presidents*, and more. He has been with *Cagney* since the beginning.

**DARRIN BAKER** (Jack Warner) Broadway credits include: *Sunset Boulevard* (with Glenn Close), *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Footloose*, *Wonderful Town* (with Brooke Shields), *Laughing Room Only* (opposite Jackie Mason) and Disney's *Tarzan*.

**DARIEN CRAGO** (Jane and others) made her Broadway debut in *Holiday Inn* and has tap danced alongside Tommy Tune in New York City Center's *Lady, Be Good*. Additionally, she's toured with *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* and was recently seen on TV in FX's "Fosse/Verdon."



Darien Crago

**ROBERT CREIGHTON** (James Cagney) joins us at PTC while on leave from starring as the Duke of Weselton in Disney's new Broadway musical *Frozen*. Other Broadway credits include: *The Lion King* (Timon), *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Durdles), *Anything Goes* (Purser/Moonface), *Chicago* (Amos), *The Little Mermaid* (Chef Louis), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Jackie Mason's Laughing Room Only*. For his role as Cagney off-Broadway in New York City, he won the Fred Astaire Award for Outstanding Male Dancer and was nominated for the Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards as best Lead Actor in a Musical.



Robert Creighton

**MATT CROWLE** (Bob Hope and others) Pioneer Theatre Company debut. Broadway/ National Tour: *Doctor Dolittle* (starring Tommy Tune), *Monty Python's Spamalot*. Television: "The Chi," "Empire."

**KRISTEN SMITH DAVIS** (Shirley Temple and others) Pioneer Theatre Company debut. Broadway: *Anastasia*. National Tours: *South Pacific*, *Evita*, *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* and *Anastasia*. Film: *Ted 2*.



Matt Crowle

**JEFFRY DENMAN** (Foreman, Wellman, and others) returns to PTC where he played Zach in *A Chorus Line*. Broadway: *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* (Astaire Award nomination), *The Producers*, *Cats*, *How To Succeed...* and *Dream*. He is the Founding Artistic Director of *Denman Theatre & Dance Co.*, as well as the Director of New Works at Tuacahn Center for the Arts.

**ROBERT ANTHONY JONES** (Schlotzki, Yussie, and others) returns to PTC after *A Christmas Carol – The Musical* and *The Music Man*. Broadway: *Finding Neverland* (Mr. Cromer-Final Broadway Company-Lunt-Fontanne Theater).



Kristen Smith Davis

**CHARIS LEOS** (Ma Cagney, Ma Jarrett, and others) makes her Pioneer Theatre Company debut. Most recently she appeared as Dolly in *Hello, Dolly!* (Maine State Music Theatre) and Rosie in *Mamma Mia!* She was a featured performer in Broadway Backwards for four years in a row and has been a proud member of Actors Equity for over 25 years.

**DANIEL PLIMPTON** (Bill Cagney, Eddie Woods, and others) makes his debut with Pioneer Theatre Company. Daniel performed in the Salt Lake City premieres of *The Book of Mormon* and *Spring Awakening* with the National Tours. Other tours: *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*.



Jeffrey Denman

**MELISSA SCHOTT** (Mae Clarke and others) makes her Pioneer Theatre Company. National: Cirque du Soleil's *Banana Shpeel* (Magic Girl/Ensemble), *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* (Ensemble/Judy u/s) and U.S./Canada touring Symphony Pops Concert *Classic FM*. TV: "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" (Diner Waitress).

**EDWARD TOLVE** (Lefty McRae and others) Pioneer Theatre Company Debut. Off-Broadway: *Funny Face*, *Sayonara*. National: *Teacher from The Black Lagoon...*, *Hooray for Hollywood*. Tolve could be seen dancing on TV on VICELAND's "The Untitled Action Bronson Show."

**JESSICA WOCKENFUSS** (Willie Cagney and others) is thrilled to be at PTC with this wonderful show. National Tour: *Jersey Boys*, *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Monty Python's Spamalot*.



Robert Anthony Jones



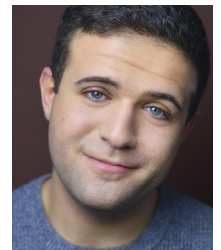
Charis Leos



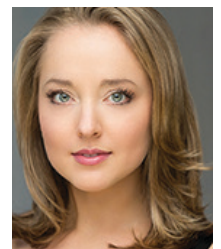
Daniel Plimpton



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