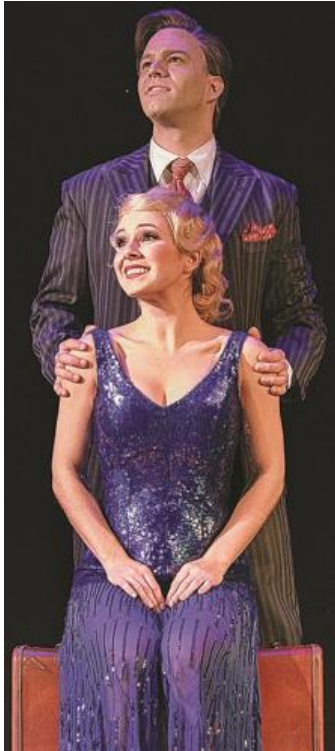


## Marshall Artists Series welcomes in razzle-dazzle of '42nd Street'

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Matthew Taylor portrays J and Clara Cox portrays Peggy in "42nd Street."

Submitted photo

Like the character she portrays, Clara Cox went bright-eyed into New York City with the dream of dancing and singing her way into being the star of the show.

As life has imitated art, the young fireball blonde and the super-sized cast of "42nd Street" is tapping its way across the U.S., sharing the razzle and dazzle American Dream of a story in the quintessential backstage musical comedy classic.

Set for 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18, the national tour of "42nd Street" comes high-stepping and dancing its way into the historic Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center as the Marshall Artists Series continues the celebration of its 80th anniversary season. Tickets are \$94, \$78, \$68 and \$61, available by contacting the Marshall Artists Series Box Office at 304-696-6656, online at Ticketmaster.com and at the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse box office from noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Based on a novel by Bradford Ropes and Busby Berkeley's 1933 movie, "42nd Street" tells the story of a starry-eyed young dancer named Peggy Sawyer (played by Cox) who leaves her Allentown home and goes to New York to audition for the new Broadway musical, "Pretty Lady." When the leading lady breaks her ankle, Peggy takes over and becomes a star.

"I think what '42nd Street' is built for is to give everyone that wow factor," Cox said. "It is filled with the big, classical musical numbers and the big, sparkly costumes and the tap dancing that is so impressive and so thrilling. At the same time, it has a character that relates to every person in a very universal way, which makes it even more thrilling as you are able to watch the whole thing and feel like you are looking in a mirror."

With music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dublin, the musical includes some of the greatest songs ever written, such as "We're In The Money," "Lullaby of Broadway," "Shuffle Off To Buffalo," "Dames," "I Only Have Eyes For You" and, of course, "42nd Street."

The original production of "42nd Street" was produced in 1980 on Broadway by David Merrick and featured direction and dances by Gower Champion. It played on Broadway for 3,486 performances, winning 1981 Tony

Awards for Best Musical and Best Choreography. The Broadway revival, which opened in 2001, played for 1,524 performances and earned two Tony Awards, including Best Revival of a Musical.

Cox, a Southern California native who was educated at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, began dancing at age 5. When she moved to New York City after graduation, she knew she was destined to play Peggy Sawyer, whose story is not unlike hers.

"When I saw a posting online that it was open call, which means that anybody could show up, I knew I was the right person for the role," Cox said. "I was the right age, I have been tap dancing since I was 5 and it calls for some pretty serious tap dancing. I knew it was right for me, and so I went to the open call and through a lot of callbacks and auditions with different people."

Being a lifelong dancer, Cox said she loves the choreography of Randy Skinner, who was part of the team that staged the Tony Award-winning Best Musical Revival.

Skinner has also received many other Tony Award nominations for his choreography of Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" and "Ain't Broadway Grand."

About a month and a half into their national tour, Cox said her favorite number is the amazing dance-off number, "Go Into Your Dance."

"It is one of the first numbers and it is when the audience first realizes that Peggy can tap," Cox said. "It is me and three other girls. They do something to see if I can do it, and it is some of the best choreography by Randy Skinner that is thrilling and difficult and super fast. It is so fast-paced the audience is on the edge of their seat. Can Peggy do all the steps? She does them and then some. It is so thrilling. It is a thrilling number to perform, and people love it. People love a dance-off and they love the underdog."



Cox said those kind of wild, energetic numbers have caused her to focus on making sure she is resting and stage-ready every night when the curtains go up.

"It's my first professional tour, so I have had to learn about taking care of myself because it is such a taxing show on my muscles and joints," Cox said. "Having to be on physical lockdown was an important skill for me to learn so I could make sure my dream is coming true and that I am my best every single night."

Cox said that part of what enables her to really give the role her all is the story beyond the dazzling show of lights, costumes and dancing. "42nd Street" sheds light on Peggy Sawyer's life, and when she comes face to face with adversity from all directions, the young but talented performer learns about show business and discovers which relationships are most important in life. With highs and lows in her early career, Peggy experiences growth as both a performer and young woman.

"It definitely has a great story to tell — especially as we are touring so many college cities — about perseverance and being true to yourself," Cox said. "As you see in the show, she is very different and is not from New York. She is from Allentown, Pennsylvania, and she has a sweet demeanor that gets mocked in sort of a friendly way. Of course, at the end of the show, she remains true to who she is and what she believes is right, and that is what the story is really about, about a dream coming true, as mall-town girl moving to New York City and making it big time."

With newspapers such as The Salt Lake Tribune saying "42nd Street is so chock full of entertainment that it barely fits on the stage," Cox said the immensity of the show and its sets and costumes is truly amazing to behold.

"This is a really big show and we are traveling with a lot of backdrops, a lot of moving set pieces ... one of the largest parts of the production is the costumes. Every ensemble member has like 13 costumes and I have 12," Cox said. "The most impressive part of the production, I think, is those beautiful, beautiful costumes that we are traveling around with. That is like its own show backstage coordinating the changes, figuring out where to go, and that is crazy."

While the show has had **Everyday!** several multiple-night stands (including a six-night run in Dayton, Ohio) and several two-and three-night stands in such cities as Key West, Florida, and Huntsville, Alabama, many shows on the tour are one-night stops, such as the one in Huntington.

"It's challenging. We are usually there about three hours before the show at any given venue, and our set and crew and tech side of the show is getting there at like 8 a.m. so they have all day to set up. It is definitely a learning experience, walking into a new theater and seeing everyone and seeing the show in an entirely new venue," Cox said. "It is kind of cool in that at the end of the day, the curtain goes up on the front number and there is only one world and it is the world that you see, and it is a world that is really magical, and you have forgotten what happened backstage or what happened in rehearsal. We step out on that stage and you're transported to '42nd Street,' and that is pretty magical."

**IF YOU GO:**

**WHAT:** The national tour of the quintessential Broadway backstage musical comedy classic, "42nd Street"

**WHERE:** Historic Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, 925 4th Ave., Huntington

**WHEN:** 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18

**ABOUT THE SHOW:** Based on a novel by Bradford Ropes and Busby Berkeley's 1933 movie, "42nd Street" tells the story of a starry-eyed young dancer named Peggy Sawyer who leaves her Allentown home and goes to New York to audition for the new Broadway musical, "Pretty Lady." When the leading lady breaks her ankle, Peggy takes over and becomes a star.



**ABOUT THE SONGS:** With music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dublin, the musical includes some of the greatest songs ever written, such as "We're In The Money," "Lullaby of Broadway," "Shuffle Off To Buffalo," "Dames," "I Only Have Eyes For You" and, of course "42nd Street."

**THE AWARDS:** "42nd Street" won the 1981 Tony Awards for Best Musical and Best Choreography. The Broadway revival, which opened in 2001, played for 1,524 performances and earned two Tony Awards, including Best Revival of a Musical.

**GET TICKETS:** \$94.95 / \$78.90 / \$68.20 / \$61.78. To see this performance at the Keith-Albee, contact the Marshall Artists Series Box Office at 304-696-6656 or order tickets online at Ticketmaster.com. You may also visit the box office located in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse on the Marshall University campus from noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**SPONSORS:** "42nd Street" is sponsored by St. Mary's Medical Center, HIMG, First Sentry Bank, Dinsmore, Neighborgall Construction, Air Systems Inc., Boggs Roofing, KEE 100, B97, WSAZ, The Herald-Dispatch, Marshall University and the Marshall Artists Series.

**ON DECK AT THE ARTISTS SERIES:** Spring International Film Festival — The Spring International Film Festival will take place March 2-5 at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center. Featured films include: "Dheepan" (France), "The Second Mother" (Brazil), "Truman" (Spain/Argentina), "Sweet Bean" (Japan), "The Dark Horse" (New Zealand) and "Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World" (USA).

"Pippin" — The high-flying hit circus-themed musical is back on Broadway for the first time since it thrilled audiences 40 years ago. Written by Stephen Schwartz ("Wicked" and "Godspell"), "Pippin" took home four Tonys in 2013 when it was revived on Broadway. Since then the revamped show has hit the road on a national tour and stops by the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 4. "Pippin" tells the story of a young prince on a death-defying journey to find meaning in his existence. Will he choose a happy but simple life? Or will he risk everything for a singular flash of glory?

## Welcome to the discussion.

**Keep it Clean.** Please avoid obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language.

**PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CAPS LOCK.**

**Don't Threaten.** Threats of harming another person will not be tolerated.

**Be Truthful.** Don't knowingly lie about anyone or anything.

**Be Nice.** No racism, sexism or any sort of -ism that is degrading to another person.

**Be Proactive.** Use the 'Report' link on each comment to let us know of abusive posts.

**Share with Us.** We'd love to hear eyewitness accounts, the history behind an article.

