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Casting Complete for
The New York City Center *Encores!* production of
Frank Loesser's Musical

The Most Happy Fella

Laura Benanti, Shuler Hensley and Cheyenne Jackson
joined by
Heidi Blickenstaff, Jay Armstrong Johnson and Jessica Molaskey



Directed and Choreographed by Casey Nicholaw

Music Direction by Rob Berman

April 2 – 6, 2014

New York, NY, March 6, 2014 – Casting is complete for the New York City Center *Encores!* production of Frank Loesser's ***The Most Happy Fella***, running for seven performances, April 2 – 6, 2014. Joining the previously announced **Laura Benanti, Shuler Hensley** and **Cheyenne Jackson** will be **Heidi Blickenstaff, Brian Cali, Bradley Dean, Zachary James, Jay Armstrong Johnson, Jessica Molaskey** and **Kevin Vortmann**. *The Most Happy Fella* will be directed and choreographed by **Casey Nicholaw**, with music direction by **Rob Berman**.

The Most Happy Fella, Frank Loesser's most ambitious and romantic musical, tells the heart-stopping story of a love triangle between an aging Napa Valley farmer (Shuler Hensley), a young waitress (Laura Benanti) and a handsome, restless ranch hand (Cheyenne Jackson). It is based on the play *They Knew What They Wanted* by

Sidney Howard, with a book, music and lyrics by Loesser. The score displays an astonishing range – ardent operatic numbers stand side by side with Broadway show-stoppers – and includes “Somebody Somewhere,” “My Heart Is So Full of You,” “Big D” and “Standing on the Corner.” It opened at the Imperial Theatre on May 3, 1956 and ran for 676 performances.

(HISTORICAL NOTE: *The Most Happy Fella* was revived by the New York City Center Light Opera at City Center for a limited run of 16 performances from February 10 – 22, 1959.)

The Most Happy Fella complete cast features Laura Benanti, Heidi Blickenstaff, Brian Cali, Bradley Dean, Shuler Hensley, Cheyenne Jackson, Zachary James, Jay Armstrong Johnson, Jessica Molaskey and Kevin Vortmann, with Ryan Bauer-Walsh, Joseph Beutel, Ward Billeisen, Tanya Birl, Callie Carter, Daniel Curran, Kevin Grace, Steven Trumon Gray, Arlo Hill, Leah Horowitz, Andrea Jones-Sojola, Anne Kanengieser, Lizzie Klemperer, Eloise Kropp, Shina Ann Morris, Patricia Noonan, Lindsay O'Neil, Jessica Lea Patty, Aleks Pevec, Wayne Pretlow, Rachel Rhodes-Devey, Christopher Rice, Daniel Schwait, Manuel Stark, Sam Strasfeld, Kathryn Terza, Clay Thomson and Kathy Voytko.

Laura Benanti (Rosabella) most recently starred in NBC-TV's “The Sound of Music Live!”. She won the Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards for her acclaimed performance as Gypsy Rose Lee in the Broadway revival of *Gypsy*, after playing the role in the *Encores! Summer Stars* production. She garnered Tony nominations for her work in *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Awards), *Into the Woods*, and *Swing*, and also appeared on Broadway in *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play*; *The Wedding Singer*; *Nine*; and *The Sound of Music*. She recently starred in NBC's comedy series “Go On” as well as “The Playboy Club.” She has also appeared on “The Big C” and continues to be seen on “Law and Order: SVU.” Her previous *Encores!* credits also include the role of Eileen in *Wonderful Town*.

Heidi Blickenstaff (Cleo) starred Off-Broadway in *[Title of Show]* and *Now. Here. This.* and has appeared on Broadway in *The Full Monty*, *The Addams Family* and as Ursula in *The Little Mermaid*. Her credits include *Meet John Doe* at the Ford's Theatre (Helen Hayes Award), *First You Dream: The Music of Kander and Ebb* at the Signature Theater and at the Kennedy Center, and as Diana in *Next to Normal* at the Weston Playhouse in Vermont.

Brian Cali (Ciccio) was seen on Broadway in *Master Class* at Manhattan Theatre Club and in the national tour of *Sister Act*.

Bradley Dean (Giuseppe) was seen on Broadway as Count Carl-Magnus in *A Little Night Music* opposite Bernadette Peters. His previous New York credits include *Spamalot*, *Evita*, *The Story of My Life*, *Company*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Jane Eyre*, *Walmartopia* and *The Fantasticks*.

Shuler Hensley (Tony) can currently be seen in the Broadway productions of *No Man's Land/Waiting For Godot* at the Cort Theater. His additional Broadway credits include The Monster in *Young Frankenstein*, Jud in *Oklahoma!* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics, Olivier Awards), Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables* and *Tarzan*. His Off-Broadway credits include in the title role in *The Whale* (Lortel, Obie Awards), Hannibal Lecter in *Silence! The Musical*, and *The Apple Family Plays* (Drama Desk Award). His opera and concert credits include *Carousel* (New York Philharmonic and PBS), *Wozzeck* (Curtis Institute of Music), *Regina* (Kennedy Center), and performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony and Detroit Symphony. His film credits include *Van Helsing* and *The Legend of Zorro*. Mr. Hensley starred as Ben Marino in the *Encores!* production of *Fiorello*.

Zachary James (Pasquale) appeared on Broadway in *The Addams Family* (Lurch), *Coram Boy* and *South Pacific*. His regional credits include the baritone soloist in *Carmina Burana*, Miles Gloriosus in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, Colline in *La Bohème* and Sweeney in *Sweeney Todd*. Zachary created the role of Abraham Lincoln in Philip Glass' opera *The Perfect American* at the Teatro Real in Madrid. He is the founding director of the Metropolis Opera Project, a New York City-based opera company.

Cheyenne Jackson (Joey) previously starred in the *Encores!* productions of *Finian's Rainbow* and *Damn Yankees*. His Broadway credits include *The Performers*, *Finian's Rainbow* (Drama Desk nomination), *Xanadu* (Drama Desk nomination), *All Shook Up* (Theatre World Award, Outer Critics Circle nomination), *Aida* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. Off-Broadway, he has been seen in *The Agony & The Agony*, *Altar Boyz*, *8*, *The 24 Hour Plays* and *On the Twentieth Century*. Mr. Jackson's notable television credits include "Onion News Empire," "30 Rock," "Mockingbird Lane," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Glee," and the upcoming "Full Circle." His film credits include *Behind the Candelabra*, *Lola Versus*, *Price Check*, *The Green*, *Hysteria*, *United 93*, and the upcoming *Love is Strange*, *Beautiful Now*, *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks*, *Opening Night*, *Lucky Stiff* and *Mutual Friends*. His solo album, *I'm Blue, Skies*, has just been released by SONY/ATV.

Jay Armstrong Johnson (Herman)'s Broadway credits include *Hands on a Hardbody* (also at La Jolla Playhouse), *Catch Me If You Can* and *Hair*, and Off-Broadway credits include *Wild Animals You Should Know*. Jay will be playing Anthony in the New York Philharmonic's upcoming concert production of *Sweeney Todd*.

Jessica Molaskey (Marie) is a veteran of over a dozen Broadway shows, including Terrance McNally's *A Man of No Importance*, *Parade*, *Dream*, *Tommy*, *Crazy for You*, *Les Misérables*, *City of Angles*, *Chess*, *Cats* and *Oklahoma!*. Jessica has premiered music written by Ricki Ian Gordan, Larry O'Keefe, Adam Guettel, Jason Robert Brown, Michael John LaChuisa and Stephen Sondheim. Her many recordings include *Pentimento*, *Good Day*, *Make Believe* and *Fred Hersh's Two Hands Ten Fingers*.

Kevin Vortmann (Doctor)'s Broadway and New York credits include *A Little Night Music*, *Death Takes a Holiday* and *Leonard Bernstein's Mass*. He recently played Riff in *West Side Story in Concert* at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco and Herman in *The Most Happy Fella* at Goodspeed. Kevin has appeared in eight *Encores!* productions, including *Fiorello!*, *Face the Music* and *On the Town*.

Casey Nicholaw (Director and Choreographer) is directing the current Broadway production of *Aladdin*. He won the 2011 Tony Award for his work as co-director of *The Book of Mormon*. He directed and choreographed the Broadway productions of *Elf: The Musical* and *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Tony nomination) and choreographed *Monty Python's Spamalot* (Tony nomination). His *Encores!* credits include *Anyone Can Whistle*, *Follies* and *Bye Bye Birdie*.

Support for *The Most Happy Fella* is generously provided by Roz and Jerry Meyer.

The 2014 *Encores!* season is made possible, in part, by the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for *Encores!*, Stacey and Eric Mindich, Newman's Own Foundation, Nathalie and Pablo Salame and The Shubert Foundation.

New York City Center (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO), now in its 70th year, has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. It was Manhattan's first performing arts center, dedicated by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with a mission to make the best in music, theater and dance accessible to all audiences. Today, City Center is home to many distinguished companies, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, City Center's Principal Dance Company, as well as Manhattan Theatre Club and New York City Opera; a roster of renowned national and international visiting artists; and its own critically acclaimed and popular programs. The Tony-honored *Encores!* musical theater series has been hailed as "one of the very best reasons to be alive in New York." This summer City Center launched *Encores! Off-Center*, a new series featuring seminal Off-Broadway musicals filtered through the lens of today's most innovative artists. Dance has been integral to the theater's mission from the start, and dance programs, including the annual *Fall for Dance* Festival, remain central to City Center's identity. Vital partnerships with arts organizations including Jazz at Lincoln Center and London's Sadler's Wells Theatre enhance City Center's programmatic offerings. City Center is dedicated to providing educational opportunities to New York City students and teachers with programs such as *Encores! In Schools* and the Young People's Dance Series. Special workshops cater to families, seniors and other groups, while events such as the *Fall for Dance* DanceTalk series offer learning opportunities to the general public. In October 2011, City Center completed an extensive renovation project to revitalize and modernize its historic theater.

Tickets to *The Most Happy Fella* start at \$30 and can be purchased online at www.NYCityCenter.org, at the New York City Center Box Office West 55th Street between 6th and 7th Avenues), or through CityTix® at 212-581-1212.

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NEW YORK CITY CENTER 2014 ENCORES! SEASON

***The Most Happy Fella* (April 2 – 6, 2014)**

Based on the play *They Knew What They Wanted* by Sidney Howard

Music, Book and Lyrics by Frank Loesser

Directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw

CAST

Laura Benanti	Rosabella
Heidi Blickenstaff	Cleo
Brian Cali	Ciccio
Bradley Dean	Giuseppe
Shuler Hensley	Tony
Cheyenne Jackson	Joe
Zachary James	Pasquale
Jay Armstrong Johnson	Herman
Jessica Molaskey	Marie
Kevin Vortmann	Doctor

ENSEMBLE

Ryan Bauer-Walsh, Joseph Beutel, Ward Billeisen, Tanya Birl, Callie Carter, Daniel Curran, Kevin Grace, Steven Trumon Gray, Arlo Hill, Leah Horowitz, Andrea Jones-Sojola, Anne Kanengieser, Lizzie Klemperer, Eloise Kropp, Shina Ann Morris, Patricia Noonan, Lindsay O'Neil, Jessica Lea Patty, Aleks Pevec, Wayne Pretlow, Rachel Rhodes-Devey, Christopher Rice, Daniel Schwait, Manuel Stark, Sam Strasfeld, Kathryn Terza, Clay Thomson and Kathy Voytko.