



Extra! Extra! Tuacahnâ??s â??Newsiesâ?• Delivers a Pressing Revival

Description

Ivins, UT | July 22, 2025â??*Newsies* roared to life Tuesday night at **Tuacahn Amphitheatre** in a visually stunning, high-octane revival that pulses with contemporary urgency. Set against the red cliffs of Southern Utah, this production offers more than entertainmentâ??itâ??s a call to action. With music by **Alan Menken** and lyrics by **Jack Feldman**, the showâ??s soaring anthems, gritty choreography, and themes of youth-led resistance tap directly into the cultural pulse of 2025.

Set in 1899 **New York City**, *Newsies* follows Jack Kelly, a charismatic teen who leads a ragtag crew of newsboys in a strike against powerful publishers. When paper prices rise, the boysâ??many orphaned or homelessâ??organize, resist, and discover their collective power.

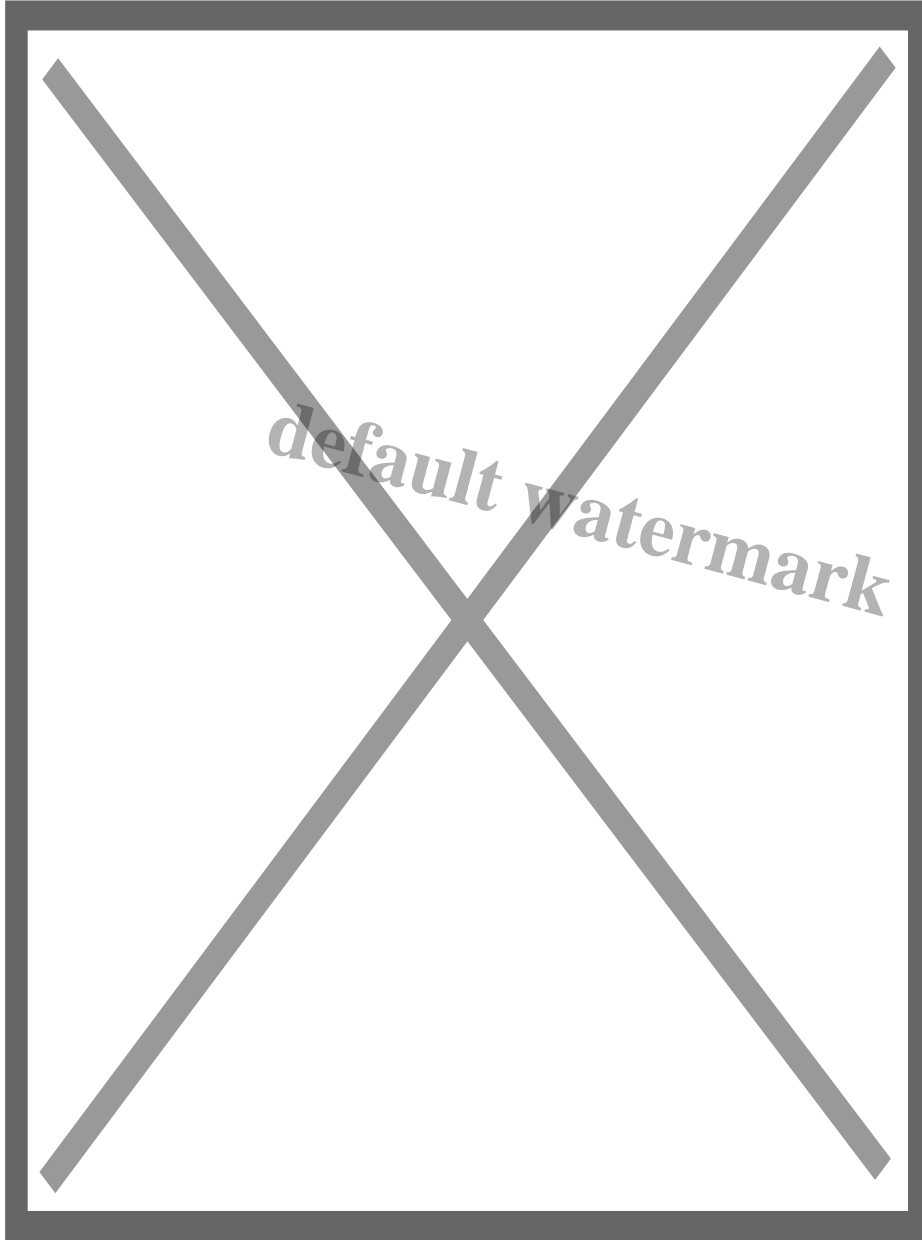
Inspired by real events, the story dramatizes a pivotal moment in American labor historyâ??when the cityâ??s youngest workers sparked a movement for dignity, collective power, and fair treatment. Though not without imperfections, Tuacahnâ??s production reminds us why *Newsies* continues to matter. More than a nostalgic Disney adaptation, itâ??s a musical about rising up, speaking out, and refusing to be ignoredâ??a story that resonates powerfully in a time when press freedoms are threatened, labor rights are under strain, and youth activism is again at the forefront of social change.

Abby Linderman as Katherine Plumber and James Everts as Jack Kelly, Photo Credit: Ben Braten.
Abby Linderman as Katherine Plumber and James Everts as Jack Kelly,
Photo Credit: Ben Braten.

â??Courage cannot erase our fear. Courage is when we face our fear.â?•
â?? *Seize the Day*

From Box Office Flop to Broadway Phenomenon

Newsies began as a 1992 live-action Disney film directed by **Kenny Ortega**, featuring a young **Christian Bale** as Jack Kelly and music by **Alan Menken** with lyrics by **Jack Feldman**. Although it included fewer songs than the later stage adaptation, the film was a commercial flop—critically panned and largely forgotten by mainstream audiences.



And yet, over time, *Newsies* found new life as a cult classic. Its underdog spirit, anthemic songs, and youthful rebellion struck a chord with home audiences, musical theatre fans, and aspiring performers. Despite its rocky start, the film developed a devoted following that would eventually demand something more.

Nearly two decades later, Disney Theatrical Group took a chance on adapting *Newsies* for the stage. With a new book by **Harvey Fierstein** and additional songs added to the original score, the show premiered in September 2011 at **Paper Mill Playhouse** in New Jersey. What was intended as a short

regional run turned into a phenomenon.

Following rave reviews and overwhelming demand, *Newsies* transferred to **Broadway** in March 2012, opening at the **Nederlander Theatre**. Originally scheduled as a limited engagement, the production was extended repeatedly, ultimately running for over **1,000 performances** and earning **eight Tony nominations**—including wins for **Best Original Score** and **Best Choreography**.

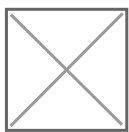
A national tour soon followed, and in 2017 Disney released a filmed version of the stage musical featuring [Jeremy Jordan](#) as Jack Kelly alongside much of the original Broadway cast. Jordan's dynamic performance earned him a Tony nomination and cemented his status as a rising Broadway star. Today, *Newsies* remains one of the most widely produced contemporary musicals across schools, universities, and regional theaters.

Key Changes in the Stage Version:

- **1. New Book by Harvey Fierstein:** Tighter plot and higher emotional stakes.
- **2. Katherine Plumber Replaces Sarah:** A feminist update that adds a standout solo (Watch What Happens).
- **3. New Songs:** Including "Letter from the Refuge" and "Something to Believe In."
- **4. More Dance:** Tony-winning choreography ups the energy and spectacle.
- **5. Streamlined Plot:** Trimmed subplots and tighter arcs improve cohesion.

Local roots at Tuacahn

Tuacahn Amphitheatre first staged *Newsies* in **2017**, earning praise for its scale and energy. Now, in **2025**, the company brings the show back in a revival that feels even more relevant in today's political and cultural climate. Running from **July 12** to **October 24**, this production once again transforms Tuacahn's red-rock amphitheatre into a stage for urban struggle, youthful defiance, and the enduring power of collective voice.



The Set taken at the end of the show 7/22/2025, Photo Credit: Rhetorical Review

Design and Spectacle

Scenic designer **Clayton Dombach** delivers the most immersive element of the show: a towering, three-story set that commands attention. The bottom two levels alone appear to rise over ten feet each, with staircases crisscrossing the structure and allowing for dynamic movement throughout. It's a towering, industrial vision of 1899 New York—gritty, climbable, and alive. A perfect playground for restless newsboys.

Gabe Aronson's projections open with bold newspaper textures—a clever nod to the show's media motif—but ultimately take a back seat to the production's physical spectacle. Here, the set

becomes a character of its own—a climbable, kinetic landscape that animates the stakes.

Tuacahn's outdoor setting amplifies the show's emotional reach. As Jack Kelly dreams of a freer life in Santa Fe, the audience is surrounded by a landscape that might as well be Santa Fe—red rock vistas stretching beyond the stage, desert winds drifting through. This harmony between story and setting creates a natural resonance that no indoor theatre could replicate. It's a rare example of a musical aligning so perfectly with the place it's staged.

Rob Siler's lighting heightens the drama with strategic spotlights and warm transitions seamlessly between street corners and dreamscapes. **Ricky Lurie's** costumes capture the grit and individuality of the ensemble with layered earth tones and cap-brimmed silhouettes, while **Josh Liebert's** sound design brings percussive urgency to every tap and strike. **Jeff Knaggs' hair and makeup** round out the look with character-defining flourishes that feel period-accurate without becoming caricature.



[From Disney's Study Guide](#)

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Direction, Choreography, and Creative Team

Directed by **Sarah Hartmann**, the production leans into scale, using Tuacahn's epic stage to emphasize sweeping movement and crowd momentum. **Mara Newbery Greer's** choreography embraces the high-energy demands of *Newsies*, with standout group numbers like "Seize the Day" and "King of New York." While some sequences lacked the razor-sharp precision the material calls for, the overall energy and intention carried through.

Music supervision and direction by **Christopher Babbage** keeps the show vocally tight, despite a few opening night hiccups—one mic dropped for a soloist during a group number, and a technician had to briefly step onstage mid-show to remove stray props. While noticeable, these understandable opening night stumbles didn't derail the overall momentum of the show.

This is a large and talented cast, and while many are strong dancers, the ensemble didn't always deliver the cohesion needed for a choreography-heavy show like *Newsies*. Still, **Scott Whipple**, who also serves as dance captain, delivered a standout tap solo with crisp, confident flair. It would be thrilling to see Tuacahn fully commit to a dance-centric production in a future season—one where movement itself tells the story.



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Standout Performances

James Everts as **Jack Kelly** is charismatic and emotionally grounded. His rendition of “Santa Fe” turns aspiration into ache. **Everts’** voice is rich, his presence magnetic, and his performance utterly convincing. The other voice that soared for me in this cast is **Andy Richardson**, who plays **Crutchie** and has a stunning solo, “Letter from The Refuge” (which is not on the original Broadway recording because it was added later). It is a beautifully tragic song.

Andy Richardson as Crutchie, Photo Credit: Ben Braten.
Andy Richardson as Crutchie, Photo Credit: Ben Braten.

Abby Linderman brings spark and journalistic drive to **Katherine Plumber**, lighting up “Watch What Happens” with humor and intelligence. **Jackson Hurt** offers a sincere and steady **Davey**, while the alternating **Greyson Nielson** and **Hudson Sullivan** bring charm to **Les** as the younger brother. **Davey Burton Midkiff (Race)**, **Charles Anten (Romeo)**, and **Delaney Gold (Specs)** shine in ensemble moments, and **Ameena McKenzie** belts a joyous “That’s Rich” as **Medda Larkin**. **Randal Keith** brings a commanding presence to Pulitzer, blending menace with measured restraint.

“The World Will Know”: From 1899 Strike to 2025 Struggle

To glimpse the reality behind Newsies, a rare clip filmed on May 1, 1899, and released in 1903 by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, titled *Delivering Newspapers* is a silent short film that

documents a vivid slice of street life in turn-of-the-century New York. Set in Union Square, the scene begins as a horse-drawn newspaper wagon labeled *The World* pulls into view. Instantly, a swarm of roughly fifty preadolescent boys—newsboys or newsies—rushes the vehicle, scrambling to get their hands on a special edition, likely a war extra.

As the boys jostle for position, a fight breaks out, and the crowd forms a rough ring around the scuffle. The camera lingers not on the papers, but on the chaos: boys shouting, pushing, fighting—desperate, determined, and barely in their teens.

Shot by pioneering cinematographers G.W. *Billy* Bitzer and Arthur Marvin, this 53-second actuality film is among the earliest visual records of child labor in urban America. It offers a raw, unscripted look at the social conditions that would inspire labor reform movements—and eventually, stories like *Newsies*.

Source: Archival Footage (1903) American Mutoscope & Biograph Co., Library of Congress.

But censorship and press suppression aren't relics of the past—they're headlines today. Across the globe, the fight for truth and transparency echoes the stakes faced by the newsboys of 1899. In 2025, the themes of *Newsies*—press freedom, protest, and the power of collective voice—feel more urgent than ever.

Across borders, press freedoms are under siege. In Russia, they've eroded dramatically. Independent outlets such as *Novaya Gazeta*—home to Nobel laureate Dmitry Muratov—had their print license revoked in 2022 and were forced to suspend publication under mounting state censorship. Newly enacted fake news laws criminalized reporting critical of the war in Ukraine, prompting platforms like TV Rain and Colta.ru to cease domestic operations (AP News, 2022; Reuters, 2022; Wikipedia, 2024). By contrast, *Newsies* places a young female reporter, Katherine Plumber, at the center of its story—her presence in the newsroom is itself an act of resistance.

In the United States, a different crisis is unfolding. The closure of local newspapers has fueled the rise of news deserts, leaving entire communities without access to reliable, independent journalism. Since 2005, more than a third of U.S. newspapers have shut down, including 127 in the past year alone—leaving nearly 55 million Americans without a local paper (Abernathy & Thorburn, 2024). In this context, *Newsies*' cry of *The world will know* feels less like a theatrical flourish and more like a plea for the return of community-based journalism.

Journalists themselves have become targets. During the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, at least 117 reporters were arrested and more than 200 assaulted in the U.S.—a staggering surge compared to previous years (Committee to Protect Journalists [CPJ], 2020). That violence, like the suppression of dissent abroad, underscores the enduring relevance of *Newsies*: the fight for truth-telling, youth-led resistance, and a free press remains far from over.

International watchdogs sounded the alarm in early May 2025. On May 2, *Reporters Without Borders* published its annual *World Press Freedom Index*, ranking the United States 57th out of 180 countries and citing an alarming deterioration in press freedom, alongside concerns about authoritarian tendencies undermining journalistic independence (Reporters Without Borders 2025). The following day—World Press Freedom Day—Amnesty International issued a statement linking rising media

suppression to a broader **erosion of democratic rights** (Amnesty International 2025). Just weeks earlier, the **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)** issued its first-ever travel advisory for journalists entering or leaving the U.S., citing growing risks for press professionals even within democratic nations (Committee to Protect Journalists 2025).

Tuacahn's 2025 revival casts *Newsies* not just as a nostalgic underdog musical, but as a timely reminder of the stakes: media consolidation, labor justice, and the right to be heard. As strikes ripple across industries—from Hollywood to hospitality—*Newsies* doesn't just feel like a period piece, it feels like a call to arms.

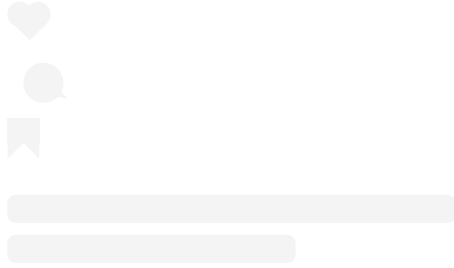
Final Take

Tuacahn's *Newsies* isn't just a high-energy summer musical—it's a mirror held up to our moment. With censorship, division, and disinformation on the rise, this production feels fiercely relevant. Imperfect? Yes. But full of conviction, urgency, and heart.

In an era where truth is contested and young voices are too often dismissed, *Newsies* doesn't just entertain—it empowers. And Tuacahn's revival reminds us that sometimes the most radical thing we can do is listen.



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Show Details

Newsies: The Musical

• **Where:** Tuacahn Amphitheatre • 1100 Tuacahn Drive, Ivins, UT 84738

• **Dates:** July 12 • October 24, 2025 (performance days vary)

• **When:** 8:45 PM

• **Tickets:** \$32-\$132 (dynamic pricing based on date and seating)

• **Box Office:** 800-746-9882

• **Website:** tuacahn.org

• **Note:** Children under 3 not admitted. Tuacahn offers • ShowCare • childcare services during performances.

Parking: Free on-site parking available

Weather Policy: As an outdoor venue, performances are weather-dependent; bring layers for cooler desert evenings

Accessibility: Wheelchair-accessible seating available; assisted listening devices and ASL-interpreted performances offered on select nights

Age Recommendation: Family-friendly and appropriate for most ages

Cast

Cast List • Newsies (2025 Tuacahn Production)

Jack Kelly: JAMES EVERTS*

Crutchie : ANDY RICHARDSON*

Race: DAVEY BURTON MIDKIFF*

Albert: ANTHONY SAVINO

Specs: DELANEY GOLD*

Henry: JACK TAYLOR

Finch: JACOB BEAVER

Romeo: CHARLES ANTENEN

Elmer, Bill: ZAC PRITTS

Mush: DARYN POLZIN

Katherine: ABBY LINDERMAN*

Davey: JACKSON HURT*

Les: GREYSON NIELSON/HUDSON SULLIVAN

Darcy, Bunsen: ANDRE DARNELL MYERS*

Wesel/Mayor: ERIC B. ANTHONY

Josepseh Pulitzer: RANDALL KEITH*

Snyder, Mr. Jacoby: FRED INKLEY*

Medda Larkin: AMEENA MCKENZIE

Hannah: JULIE CARDIA*

Nunzio/Govenor Roosevel: NICK BERNINGER

Morris Delancey/Stage Manager: ADAM LIPSON

Spot Conlon: BELLA DEPAOLA

Nuns: Jillian Buttler, Julie Cardia, Mollie-Claire Matthews, Kelsey Lee Smith

Related Resources



Teaching Activities (Free)

[The Homestead Strike](#)

Teaching Activity. By Bill Bigelow and Norm Diamond. 11 pages.

This role play activity on the famous 1892 Homestead Strike, explores the possibility of solidarity among workers of very different backgrounds and at different levels in the workplace hierarchy.



Teaching Activities (Free)

[Lewis Hine's Photographs](#)

Teaching Activity. By Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson. Rethinking Schools. 4 pages.
Using photographs to spark creative writing and critical thinking about child labor issues and social justice.



Teaching Guides

[The Power in Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States](#)

Teaching Guide. By Bill Bigelow and Norm Diamond. 1988. 184 pages.
Role plays and writing activities project high school students into real-life situations to explore the history and contemporary reality of employment (and unemployment) in the U.S.



Books: Non-Fiction

[Kids on Strike!](#)

Book Non-fiction. By Susan Campbell Bartoletti. 2003. 208 pages.
Describes the conditions and treatment that drove working children to strike, from the mill workers' strike in 1834 and the coal strikes at the turn of the century to the children who marched with Mother Jones in 1903.



Books: Non-Fiction

[Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor](#)

Book ??? Non-fiction. By Russell Freedman. 1998. 112 pages.
Child labor through images and essays, for middle school and above.

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