



Natural Woman, Timeless Story: Beautiful Brings Carole King's Legacy to Life

Description

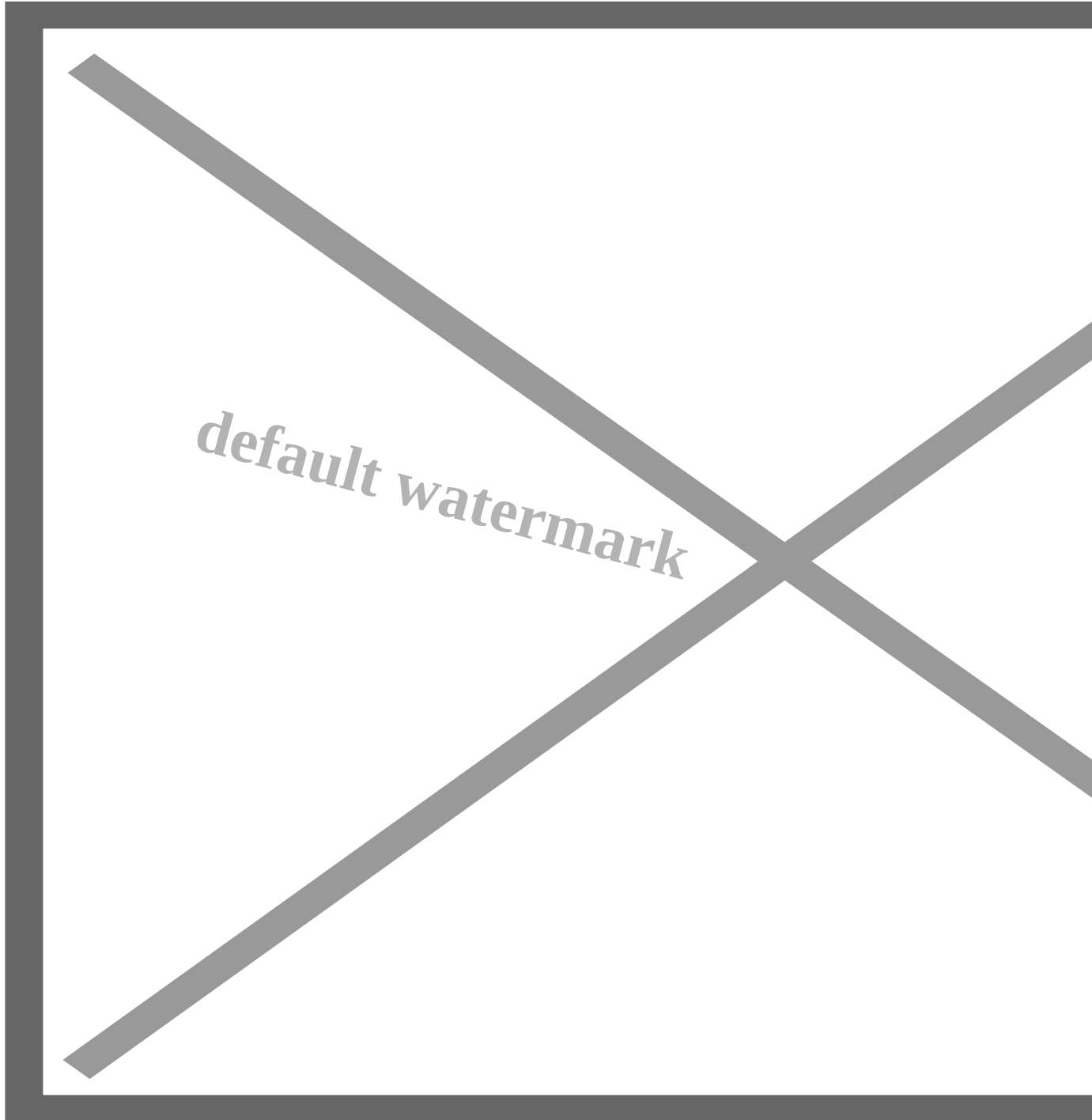
SALT LAKE CITY A Musical Tribute to a Legend

Few musicals manage to capture the spirit and resilience of an artist quite like *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Running from February 14 to March 1, 2025, at the **Simmons Pioneer Memorial Theatre** in collaboration with **Geva Theatre**, this production is an ode to one of America's most beloved singer-songwriters. With a book by **Douglas McGrath** and music by **Gerry Goffin, Carole King, Barry Mann, and Cynthia Weil**, the musical delivers an emotionally charged journey through King's early struggles, professional triumphs, and personal heartbreaks.

The musical opens with Carole King singing *So Far Away* at Carnegie Hall in 1971, with King saying, "Sometimes life goes the way you want, and sometimes it doesn't. And sometimes, when it doesn't, you find something beautiful." Then, it flashes back to 1958 Brooklyn, where a 16-year-old Carole, determined to be a songwriter, tells her mother she's going to Manhattan to try and sell a song. This marks the start of her journey, where she soon collaborates with lyricist Gerry Goffin, both romantically and professionally. Their partnership led to hits like *Some Kind of Wonderful* with competition arising between them and a new songwriting duo, Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann. As the couples battle for success, their iconic songs fill the airwaves, from *Will You Love Me Tomorrow* to *Up on the Roof*. The musical culminates in a triumphant full circle moment, back at Carnegie Hall, where Carole reflects on her journey and sings *Beautiful*, a song embodying the strength and resilience that defined her.

At the heart of this production is Sara Sheperd as Carole King, whose voice seamlessly embodies King's signature warmth and raw emotionality. Sheperd is the perfect choice for the role, bringing the same depth, emotion, and authenticity as King herself, with every note and lyric serving as a testament to her remarkable talent.

~Rhetorical Review~

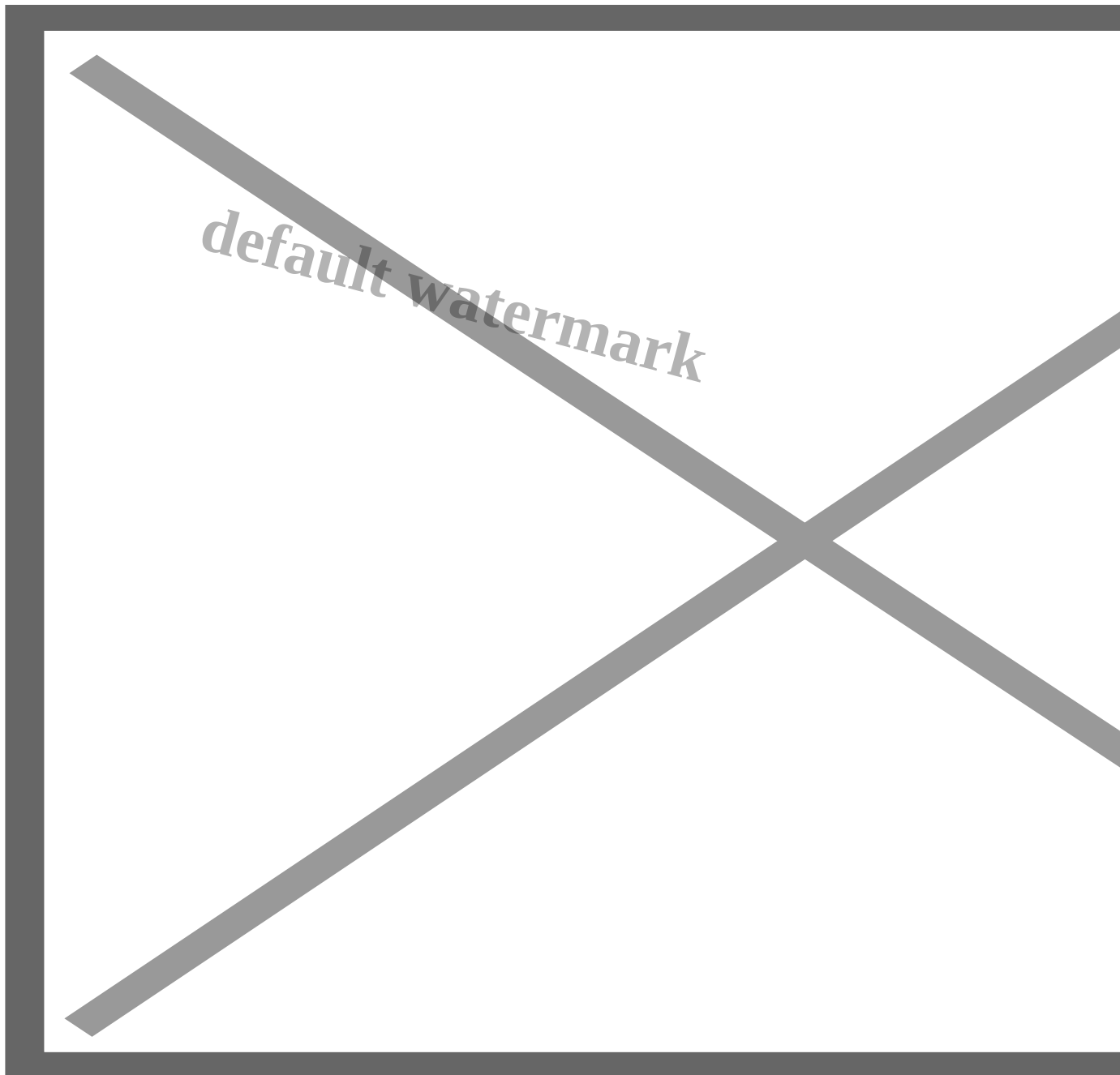


Sara Sheperd | Credit: BW Productions

At the heart of this production is [Sara Sheperd](#) as **Carole King** (*Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*), whose voice seamlessly embodies King’s signature warmth and raw emotionality. Sheperd is the perfect choice for the role, bringing the same depth, emotion, and authenticity as King herself, with every note and lyric serving as a testament to her remarkable talent. She expertly navigates the highs of King’s early success with songs like “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” and “Some Kind of

Wonderfulâ and the poignant lows of her tumultuous marriage with **Gerry Goffin**, played by [Anthony Sagaria](#) ([Frozen](#), [American Psycho](#)).

Sagaria brings complexity to his role, depicting both the passion and the personal demons that strained their relationship. One of the most moving moments comes when King sings â*Itâs Too Late*,â encapsulating the bittersweet reality of love lost: âSomething inside has died, and I canât hide, and I just canât fake it.â Talk about a poignant moment that hits you right in the feels on Valentineâs Day.



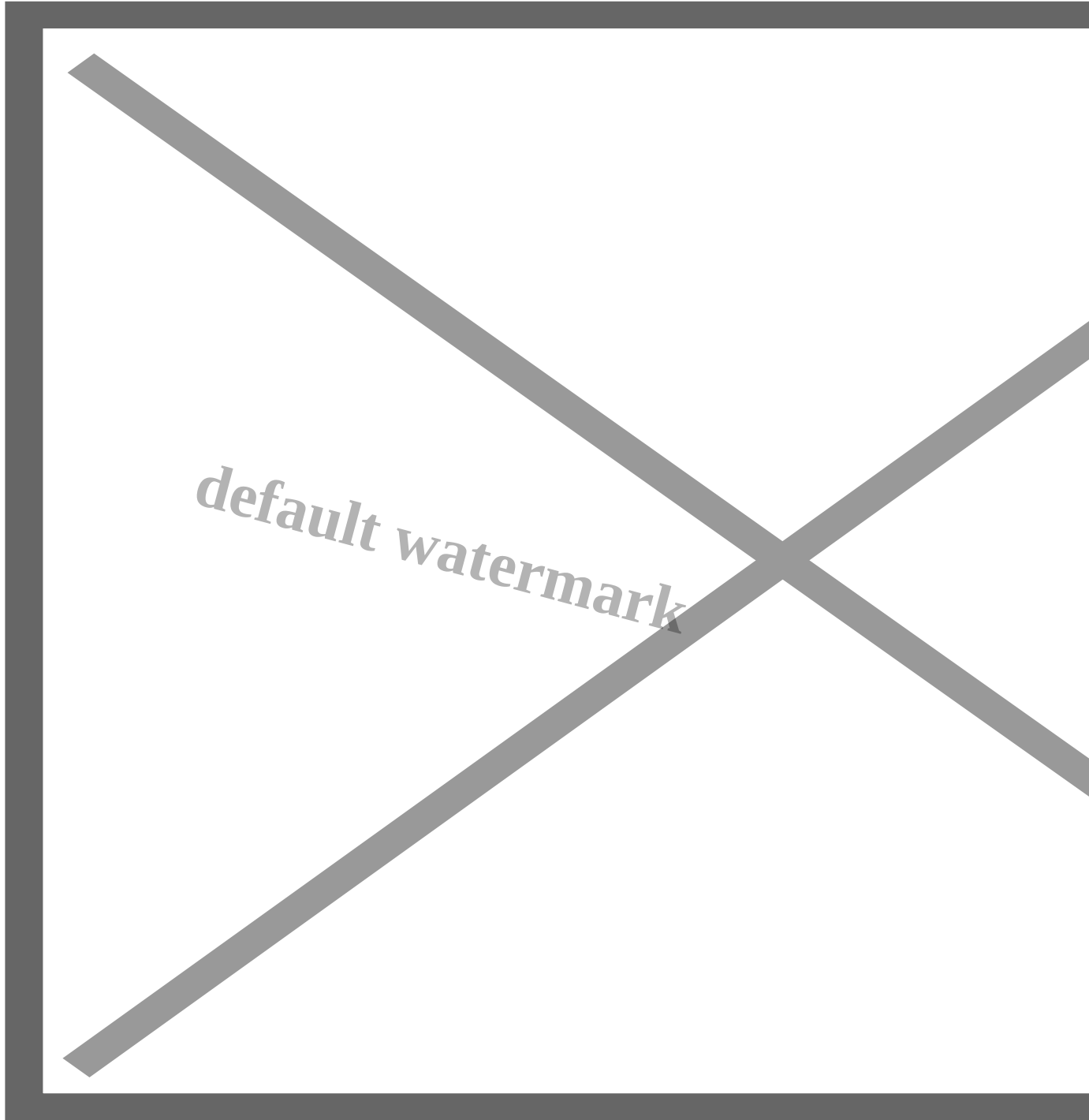
The Company | Credit: BW Productions

[Stephen Christopher Anthony](#) (*Dear Evan Hansen*, *The Book of Mormon*) and [Lee Alexandra Harrington](#), portraying the songwriting duo Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, offer a dynamic contrast with their sharp comedic timing and undeniable chemistry. They not only bring humor to the stage but also showcase their impressive contributions to the music industry, underscoring the duo's chart-topping success. And they do so with a set of pipes that I'm sure Mann and Weil themselves would have envied.

Mary Fanning Driggs brings warmth and sincerity to Genie Klein, Carole King's mother, delivering a nuanced portrayal of a woman who is both supportive and pragmatic. Her comedic timing is effective, particularly in moments where Genie's dry wit and motherly concern intersect. **Jason Andrew Hackney** brings charm and finesse to the role of Don Kirshner, effectively portraying the influential music publisher's role in King's career. Over time, his character subtly takes on the role of a father figure in King's life, adding emotional depth to the story.

The ensemble cast plays a crucial role in bringing the energy and vibrancy of the 1960s and 1970s music scene to life. [Elexis Morton](#) delivers a standout performance as one of **The Shirelles** (**Hannah Camille Hall**, **Kianna Kelly-Futch**), blending soulful harmonies with a commanding stage presence.

Other ensemble members deliver spirited renditions of iconic hits by **The Righteous Brothers** (**Jordan Briggs**, **Nate Ginsberg**) and more. But perhaps my favorite ensemble tune of the night was performed by the group **The Drifters** (**Travis Keith Battle**, **Chris Richie**, **Nathan Andrew Riley**, and **Corey Simmons**), "On Broadway," for obvious reasons. Each delivers strong, polished vocals with a commanding stage presence.



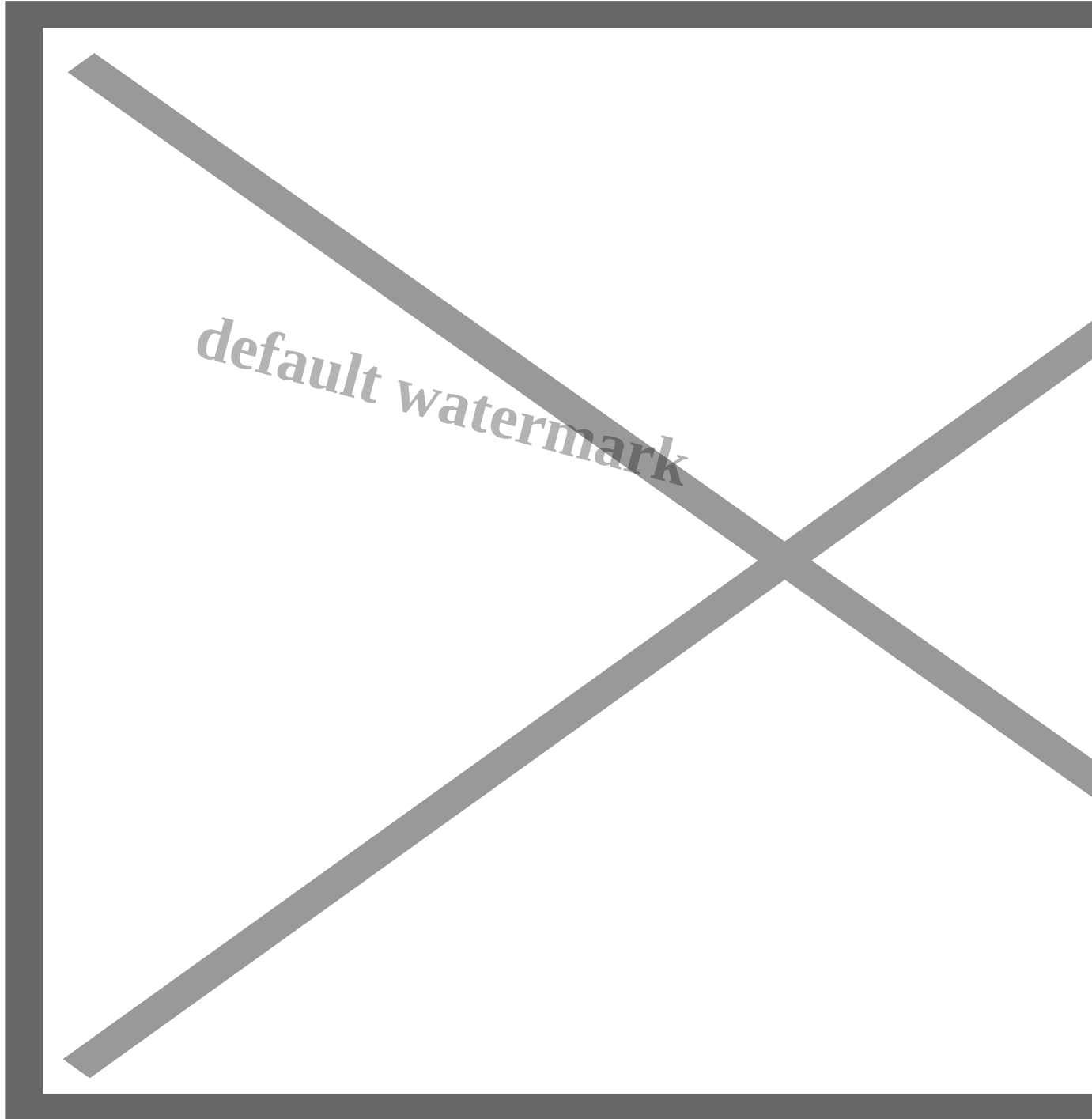
Mary Fanning Driggs, Sara Sheperd, Olivia Hellin | Credit: BW Productions

Other standout performances were noted by **Tyrick Wiltez Jones**, **Chris Richie**, and **Travis Keith Battle**, whose rich tones and blends were seamless.

Grace Ellis Solomon, as Little Eva, the babysitter, explodes onto the stage with impressive range and control in “*The Loco-Motion*,” in one of the most amusing scenes of the show.

Beyond its stellar performances, the production excels in its visual and musical presentation. Director [Karen Azenberg](#) balances intimate moments with high-energy musical numbers beautifully. The scenic

design evokes the feel of recording studios and 1960s concert halls, seamlessly transitioning between Kingâ??s personal and professional lives. The lighting design enhances the emotional shifts, from the warmth of Kingâ??s home life to the bright, flashing lights of her performances. This is a large cast and production team, and itâ??s obvious Azenberg knows what sheâ??s doing.



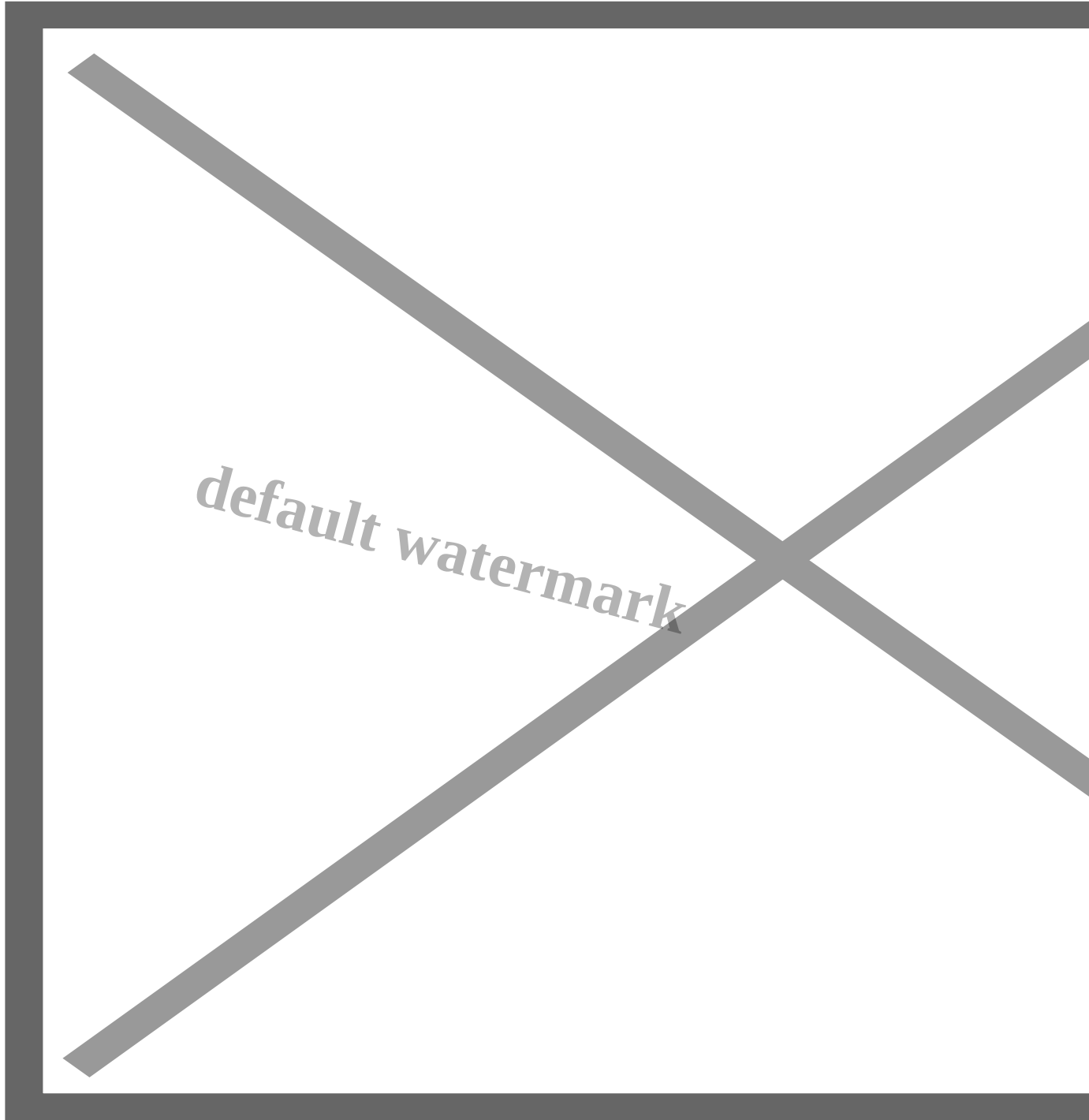
Tyler Symone, Kianna Kelly-Futch, Hannah Camille Hall, Elexis Morton | Credit: BW Productions

The brilliance of this musical wouldn't be possible without the incredible work of the talented team behind the scenes. Musical Director and Conductor **Helen Gregory** expertly leads the orchestra, ensuring that every note is delivered with precision and emotional depth. Choreographer **Gerry McIntyre** brings the musical's energy to life through dynamic movements, complementing the emotional beats of the story. Scenic Designer **Jason Simms** creates a stunning, multifunctional set, with the staircase playing a key role in shaping the narrative's flow. Costume Designer **Kara Harmon** outfits the cast in period-perfect costumes, enhancing the authenticity of each scene and character. Lighting Designer **Dawn Chiang** elevates the mood with her mastery of light, perfectly capturing the evolving tones of Carole King's journey. Sound Designer **Aaron Hubbard** ensures the soundscape resonates with clarity, while Hair and Makeup Designer **Kate Casalino** captures the iconic looks of the era, further solidifying the show's immersive experience. Their collective efforts work in harmony to create a visually and sonically captivating production that brings Carole King's story to life in a way that feels both timeless and personal.

The staircase itself is not just a physical structure but a symbolic one, representing Carole King's journey from a young songwriter struggling for recognition to an iconic performer at the height of her career.

~Rhetorical Review~

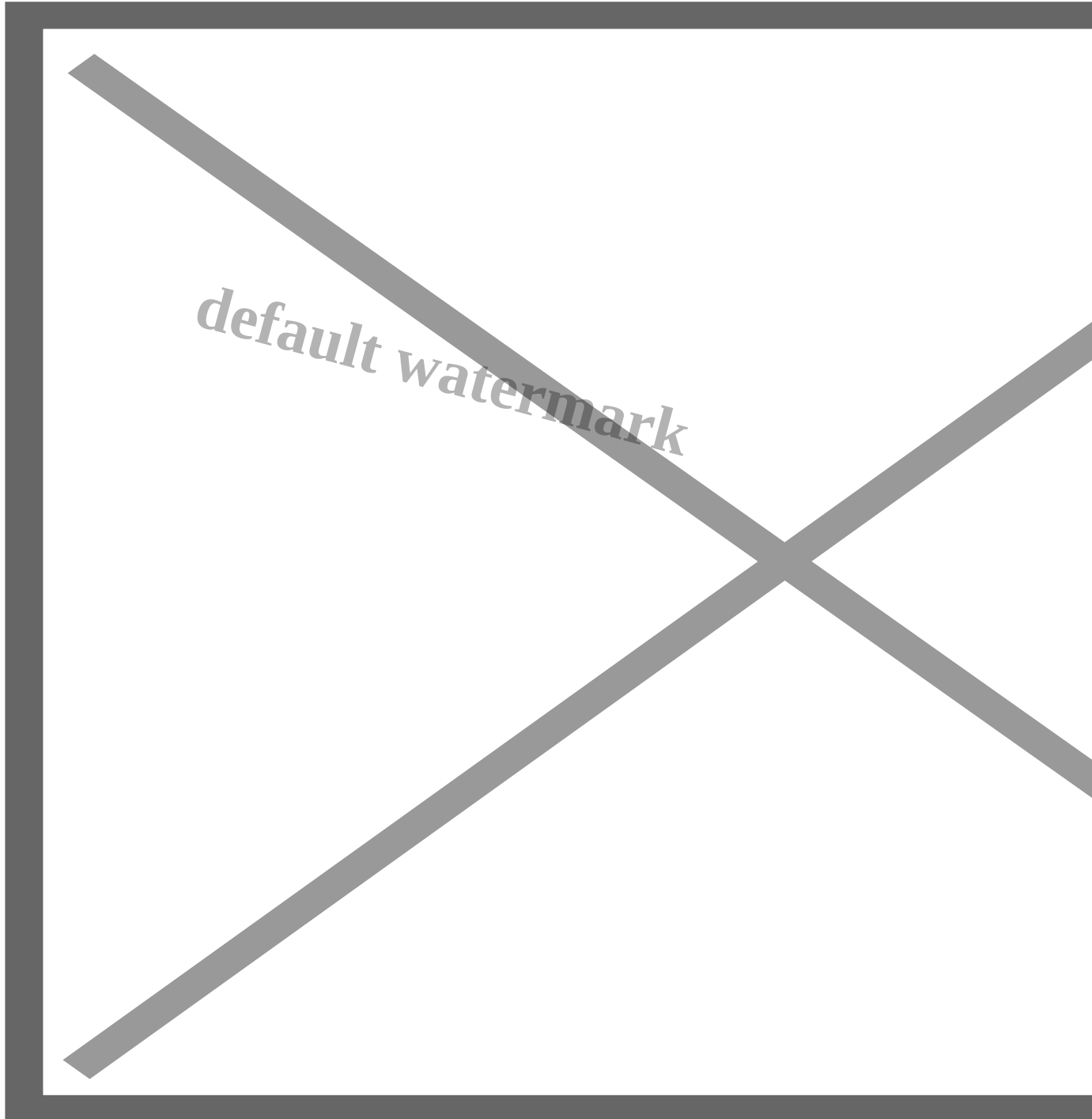
Jason Simms's ingenious use of a multifunctional staircase set is a standout feature of the production; its versatility effortlessly transforms throughout the show, seamlessly shifting from the vibrant offices of Broadway to a rooftop, a nightclub, and finally, the intimate stage of Carnegie Hall. The staircase itself is not just a physical structure but a symbolic one, representing Carole King's journey from a young songwriter struggling for recognition to an iconic performer at the height of her career. The clever design allows the actors to move fluidly between spaces, evoking both the personal and professional dimensions of Carole's life. At times, the staircase serves as a platform for introspection, while at others, it becomes a vibrant centerpiece for energetic musical numbers. The multifunctional nature of the set enhances the storytelling, capturing the highs and lows of Carole's journey and ultimately becoming a visual metaphor for the way King ascended both in her career and as a woman finding her own voice in a male-dominated industry. The set's genius lies in its ability to adapt to the narrative's needs while maintaining a seamless flow, making it a standout element of the show.



Jason Andrew Hackney, Lee Alexandra Harrington, Sara Sheperd, Stephen Christopher Anthony, Photo Credit: BW Productions

Music direction and orchestration, led by [Steve Sidwell](#) ([Operation Mincemeat](#), [Il Divo](#) ?? [A Musical Affair: The Greatest Songs of Broadway](#)) and [Jason Howland](#) ([Shucked](#), [Jekyll & Hyde](#), [Little Women](#)) ensure that every song retains its original charm while blending seamlessly into the narrative. The live band, an essential component of the show's success, delivers a vibrant and faithful rendition of King's legendary compositions.

You might worry that *Beautiful* falls into the common jukebox musical trap of prioritizing songs over character depth, but thatâ??s far from the case. This production is one of the most cohesive and compelling jukebox musicals Iâ??ve ever seen. While some momentsâ??especially those depicting Kingâ??s later solo careerâ??feel a bit rushed compared to the carefully crafted storytelling of the first act, itâ??s inevitable that a lifetime canâ??t be fully captured in just two hours.



Travis Keith Battle, Cory Simmons, Nathan Andrew Riley, Chris Richie, Photo Credit, BW Productions

The timing of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*'s opening on Valentine's Day adds a meaningful layer of reflection on love, loss, and self-worth. The musical beautifully captures the complexities of human relationships, making it a fitting choice for a day dedicated to connection. Beyond its focus on King's rise to fame, the production also sheds light on the financial struggles faced by songwriters. In an era where streaming platforms like Spotify and the rise of AI-generated music complicate earnings, many songwriters continue to struggle with fair compensation. According to a survey by MIDiA Research, 54% of songwriters earn between \$0 and \$1,000 annually, a disparity that is hard to ignore ([MIDiA Research](#)). This financial instability serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges that still persist in the industry.

Despite these hurdles, *Beautiful* also acts as a tribute to the barriers women in music, like Carole King, have overcome in a male-dominated industry. These struggles remain relevant today, underscoring the enduring impact of her legacy. Even those unfamiliar with King's catalog will find themselves drawn to her story of perseverance and artistry. With standout performances, impeccable musical direction, and a heartfelt narrative, *Beautiful* is not just a celebration of music but also a powerful reflection on the ongoing fight for artistic and financial recognition in the music industry. Whether you're a longtime fan of King or discovering her story for the first time, this production ensures that her legacy continues to inspire and resonate.

default watermark

default watermark

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical is more than just a tribute to an iconic artist—it's a celebration of resilience, artistry, and the profound impact of music on our lives. Carole King's story serves as a reminder of the power of perseverance in the face of adversity and the enduring legacy that artists leave behind.

~Rhetorical Review~

In the end, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* is more than just a tribute to an iconic artist—it's a celebration of resilience, artistry, and the profound impact of music on our lives. Carole King's story serves as a reminder of the power of perseverance in the face of adversity and the enduring legacy that artists leave behind. As the show closes, audiences are not only left humming the tunes of a timeless soundtrack but also reflecting on the universal themes of love, ambition, and the pursuit of creative freedom. In a world where the struggles of musicians are often overlooked, *Beautiful* offers a poignant reminder of the sacrifices and triumphs that shape the music we cherish.

default watermark

default watermark

WHEN

February 14-March 1, 2025

TIMES

Monday – Thursday, 7:00 PM

Friday and Saturday, 7:30 PM

Saturday, 2:00 PM

WHERE

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical will be performed at PTC's Simmons Pioneer Memorial Theatre
300 South 1400 East, Salt Lake City

TICKET PRICES

\$57 – \$83 in advance; \$5 more when purchased on the day of the show:
<https://pioneertheatre.org/beautiful-cast-and-creative/>

Students K – 12 or ages 5-18 are half-price Monday – Thursday

MORE INFO

Box Office: 801-581-6961

Open 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM, Monday – Friday

PTC Show Listing – Beautiful: The Carole King Musical

ACCESSIBILITY

- ASL Performance *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* – **Monday, February 24 at 7:00pm**

CAST

Carole King: Sara Shepherd*

Gerry Goffin: Anthony Sagaria*

Barry Mann: Stephen Christopher Anthony*

Cynthia Weil: Lee Alexandra Harrington*

Genie Klein: Mary Fanning Driggs*

Don Kirschner: Jason Andrew Hackney

Ensemble: Travis Keith Battle*, Tyrick Wiltez Jones*, Elexis Morton*, Chris Richie*, Nathan Andrew Riley*, Grace Ellis Solomon*, Tyler Symone*, Makenna Asby, Ashlen Boresow, Jordan Briggs, Nate Ginsberg, Hannah Camille Hall, Olivia Hellin, Kianna Kelly-Futch, and Cory Simmons.

CREATIVE TEAM

Director: Karen Azenberg

Musical Director/Conductor: Helen Gregory

Choreographer: Gerry McIntyre

Scenic Designer: Jason Simms

Costume Designer: Kara Harmon

Lighting Designer: Dawn Chiang

Sound Designer: Aaron Hubbard

Hair & Makeup Designer: Kate Casalino

Casting: Geoff Josselson, CSA

Production Stage Manager: James O. Hansen*

*Member of Actorsâ?? Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

Sources

Cobb, J. (2023, December 23). Is there any escape from the Spotify syndrome? *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com>

Cookson, C. (2023, November 4). Abbaâ??s BjÃ¶rn Ulvaeus warns of AI threat to musiciansâ?? revenues. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com>

Neilsen, L. (2023, June 18). Australian artistsâ?? fears and fury are laid bare as the music industry grapples with AI. *The Australian*. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au>

Category

- 1. Musicals
- 2. Reviews

Tags

1. Aaron Hubbard
2. Anthony Sagaria
3. Brooklyn
4. Carnegie Hall
5. Carole King
6. Chris Richie
7. Corey Simmons
8. Dawn Chiang
9. Elexis Morton
10. Gerry Goffin
11. Gerry McIntyre
12. Geva Theatre
13. Grace Ellis Solomon
14. Hannah Camille Hall
15. Helen Gregory
16. Jason Andrew Hackney
17. Jason Howland
18. Jason Simms
19. Jordan Briggs
20. Kara Harmon
21. Kate Casalino
22. Keola Kinghorn
23. Keolanani Kinghorn
24. Kianna Kelly-Futch
25. Lee Alexandra Harrington
26. Manhattan
27. Mary Fanning Driggs
28. Nate Ginsberg
29. Nathan Andrew Riley
30. Pioneer Theatre
31. Rhetorical Review
32. rhetoricalreview
33. Salt Lake City
34. Sara Sheperd
35. Simmons Pioneer Memorial Theatre
36. Stephen Christopher Anthony
37. Steve Sidwell
38. The Drifters
39. The Righteous Brothers
40. The Shirelles
41. Travis Keith Battle
42. Tyrick Wiltez Jone

Date

2026/09/17

Date Created

2025/02/15

Author
keola06

default watermark