



BROADWAY
AT MUSIC CIRCUS

2025

SEASON PERFORMANCE GUIDE





WELCOME TO THE 2025 SEASON

Collaboration is essential in theatre making.

The Oxford dictionary defines collaboration as “the action of working with someone to produce or create something.”

What you will witness in today’s performance is the creative vision of dozens of artists. Artists who range in experience, background and perspective. You’ll see them under the bright lights of our stage, glimpse some quietly working in the dark and hear others making music from the orchestra pit. There are many more who are sewing, sawing, welding and painting the visual world of the play. And there are those who run the business of theatre making: Programming the ticketing software, creating enticing advertisements and balancing complicated budgets in order to make this magic possible. Most of these artists have studied and practiced their craft for years and yet they execute it selflessly so that their contribution isn’t singled out over another’s.

You are the last, essential participant in this collaboration. Your presence, laughter, applause and audible reactions energize this theatre and fuel this performance. Your contribution will make this performance unique: None before it or following will be identical because your attendance today had an impact.

I hope you leave this theatre today feeling better than you did when you arrived. I hope that the exquisitely detailed work of our artists has made an impression. I hope you were able to discuss your observations of the show with the person sitting next to you and that their insights enriched your own experience. I hope the story spoke to your soul, the performers reminded you of your potential, the show triggered your best memories and its story inspired you to journey outside your comfort zone.

Thank you for taking part in this theatrical collaboration and encouraging others to do the same!

SCOTT KLIER

PRESIDENT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

- **1949** Actor St. John Terrell sets up a summer stock theatre under a giant round tent in Lambertville, New Jersey. Drawing inspiration from the layout of greek amphitheatres and summer fun of the circus, Terrell's idea is a success and more than 40 others pop up across the country in the next decade.
- **1951** With the support of arts patron and newspaper owner Eleanor McClatchy, producers Russell Lewis and Howard Young establish the Sacramento Music Circus by setting up a tent in the parking lot of the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre. It is the first professional theatre-in-the-round located west of the Mississippi River and the fourth in the country.
- **1953** Lewis and Young found the Sacramento Light Opera Association to continue producing shows in the area. Sacramento Music Circus continues to be a successful summer tradition, gaining a notable reputation in the theatre community.
- **1989** The Broadway Series is introduced as a winter companion to the summer shows, bringing National Tours of Broadway musicals and plays to Sacramento every year.
- **2003** The Wells Fargo Pavilion (now called the UC Davis Health Pavilion) opens on the site of the original Sacramento Music Circus tent, providing a state-of-the-art, permanent, facility for all future shows.
- **2018** The company name changes to Broadway Sacramento, with the respective touring and summer seasons being named Broadway On Tour and Broadway At Music Circus.
- **2022** Broadway At Music Circus returns after two summers off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, at the renamed UC Davis Health Pavilion.
- **2023** Richard Lewis, son of co-founder Russell Lewis, retires as President and CEO of Broadway Sacramento after 21 years in that position. He is succeeded by Scott Klier, who has been with the company for over 20 years.
- **2025** Broadway At Music Circus expands its programming for the 73rd season, transforming Sacramento's summer tradition into an all-year experience!

BEFORE THE SHOW BEGINS, A FEW QUICK REMINDERS:

- ▶ Make sure you find your seat before the show starts. Actors will enter through the aisles, so staying seated when the lights go down helps keep everyone safe. If you need to leave, the ushers in the hall will let you know when it's okay to enter again.
- ▶ Please keep your phone silenced and put it away during the show. You are welcome to use it before or after, but the bright screen is distracting for everyone else at the theatre. Using your phone to take pictures or video during the performance is not allowed.
- ▶ If you're enjoying the show, make sure to laugh, cheer and applaud! The actors love hearing you have a good time. Please save singing and side conversations until after the show. This can be distracting for the actors and the people around you.

ELVIS PRESLEY | JERRY LEE LEWIS | CARL PERKINS | JOHNNY CASH

MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET

CREDITS

BOOK BY
COLIN ESCOTT
& FLOYD MUTRUX

ORIGINAL CONCEPT
AND DIRECTION BY
FLOYD MUTRUX

DIRECTOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER
GREG SANTOS

MUSIC DIRECTOR
SAM SHERWOOD



STORY

On December 4, 1956, Sun Records founder Sam Phillips opens up his studio in Memphis, Tennessee, for a recording session with rockabilly star Carl Perkins. The band for the session is made up of Carl's brother Jay on bass, Fluke Holland on drums and a recent Sun Records recruit named Jerry Lee Lewis on piano. Carl arrives late and quickly butts heads with Jerry Lee's brash, confident attitude, but Phillips calms them down by sharing that his latest breakout star, Johnny Cash, is stopping by the studio to sign his new contract. Not far behind Johnny is Elvis Presley, a former Sun Records artist who has stopped by the studio with his new girlfriend Dyanne to give Phillips a present.

The four singers' strong personalities all clash at first, but they start to find harmony when Johnny suggests that they sing some old gospel songs. They continue with an impromptu jam session, playing a variety of rock and roll songs that highlight each one's specific talents and Phillips captures the entire session on tape. Everyone can sense that there is a special energy in the room, but no one is aware of just how monumental their meeting is— or how their lives will change in the years to come.

CHARACTERS

SAM PHILLIPS: A charismatic music producer considered “The Father of Rock and Roll”.

CARL PERKINS: A skilled young guitarist who helped popularize rockabilly music.

JOHNNY CASH: A tall, deep-voiced country musician at the start of his career.

JERRY LEE LEWIS: An energetic piano player and rock and roll singer who had just signed to Sun Records.

ELVIS PRESLEY: A soulful singer with an electric stage presence, who has left Sun Records for RCA Victor.

DYANNE: A confident woman and talented vocalist who is dating Elvis.

JAY PERKINS: Brother to Carl and bassist in the band.

W.S. “FLUKE” HOLLAND: The drummer of the band.

MAKING THE SHOW

BRINGING MUSIC HISTORY TO LIFE

The Million Dollar Quartet recording session at Sun Records is a thing of rock and roll legend. It was seemingly by chance that Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley all wound up at the studio on that day in 1956 and it was quick thinking on Phillips's part to capture most of the session on tape. Despite that, the only public record available for many years was a news article in the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* and an accompanying photo of the quartet. All four singers involved had yet to reach the peak of their success and this chance meeting seemed likely to be a thing of the past as their careers continued to soar.



The Million Dollar Quartet by "Memphis Press-Scimitar," 1956

In 1969, Phillips sold Sun Records to record producer Shelby Singleton. Singleton spent many years going through over 10,000 hours of archived recordings and happened upon part of the Million Dollar Quartet session. In 1981, an album was released featuring 17 songs from the session, mostly gospel numbers. Additional material was uncovered and released first in 1987 as "The Complete Million Dollar Session" and then in 1990 as "Elvis Presley: Million Dollar Quartet." The latter release included album liner notes written by music historian Colin Escott, who further documented the historic session in his 1992 book "Good Rockin' Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock & Roll."

In 2001, Hollywood screenwriter and producer Floyd Mutrux reached out to Escott to pitch the idea of collaborating on a musical based on the

Million Dollar Quartet session. The duo used the session recordings, which included snippets of conversations, as a starting point for their script but did not aim to create an exact transcript of the events of that evening. They wove in flashbacks of Sam Phillips discovering each star and sought to capture the essence of each character through dramatized conversations. They also created the character of Dyanne, a fictionalized version of Elvis's real-life companion, to add a powerful female voice to the mix.



MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET Original Broadway Cast by Joan Marcus, 2010

MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET premiered at Seaside Music Theatre in Daytona Beach, Florida, in the fall of 2006 and played at the Village Theatre outside of Seattle, Washington, the following year. In 2008, a production opened for a limited run at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago and it was so successful that it transferred a few blocks north to the Apollo Theater for an open-ended run that lasted until January 2016. The Broadway production of **MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET** opened in April 2010 at the Nederlander Theatre, running for 489 performances and earning three Tony Award nominations before transferring to an Off-Broadway theatre in 2011 for another year-long run. Colin Escott revisited the show in 2021 to create **MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET CHRISTMAS**, a holiday-themed version of the musical that included a handful of seasonal hits. The show continues to be performed across the US, with countless actors getting the opportunities to step into the shoes of the four groundbreaking artists at its center and share a piece of American music history.

LIVING LEGACIES

MAJOR MOMENTS IN SUN RECORDS HISTORY



The iconic Sun Records label design



Sam Phillips and Elvis Presley, 1954



Carl Perkins, 1955



Jerry Lee Lewis - "Great Balls of Fire"



Johnny Cash, 1959

1950

JANUARY – Sam Phillips opens Memphis Recording Service. Early artists who record here include B.B. King and Ike Turner.

1951

MARCH – Phillips records "Rocket 88" by Jackie Brenston and his Delta Cats, the first hit rock and roll record.

1952

FEBRUARY – Sam Phillips establishes Sun Records at the site of Memphis Recording Service.

1953

JULY – Elvis Presley makes his first ever recordings at Phillips's studio.

1954

JULY – Elvis signs to Sun Records.

1955

MARCH – Carl Perkins releases his first single on a subsidiary of Sun.

JUNE – Johnny Cash signs to Sun Records and releases his first single.

NOVEMBER – RCA Records buys Elvis Presley's contract from Sun.

DECEMBER – Carl Perkins releases "Blue Suede Shoes" to massive success.

1956

MARCH – Roy Orbison signs with Sun and makes his first recordings.

MAY – Johnny Cash releases "I Walk the Line."

SEPTEMBER – Jerry Lee Lewis auditions for Sun and records some demos.

DECEMBER – The "Million Dollar Quartet" jam session at Sun Studios.

1957

DECEMBER – Jerry Lee Lewis releases "Great Balls of Fire."

Aspiring country artist Charlie Rich is hired as a session musician and later has a successful solo career.

1961

FEBRUARY – Sun Records opens a new recording studio in Memphis.

1963

MAY – Jerry Lee Lewis leaves Sun, later signing with Smash Records.

1969

JULY – Record producer Shelby Singleton purchases the Sun Records catalog and moves the business to Nashville.

Sun Records still operates to this day, but not in the same capacity. The label has changed ownership several times since Singleton's purchase in 1969 and they rarely sign new artists. Instead, the majority of Sun Records' output is reissues of classic recordings and archival tapes, keeping the history of rock and roll alive for future generations. The original studio space reopened in 1987 as a hybrid recording studio and museum, both of which are still open to the public.

WORD SEARCH

LOCATE THE GIVEN WORDS IN THE GRID, RUNNING HORIZONTALLY, VERTICALLY OR DIAGONALLY



~~BAND~~

CARL

DYANNE

ELVIS

GUITAR

JERRY LEE

JOHNNY

MILLION

PIANO

QUARTET

RECORD

ROCK AND ROLL

THINK ABOUT IT

- ▶ **MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET** is a snapshot of four famous musicians on one specific day, early in their careers. Read a bit more about each character and then reflect on the show—do you think they were accurately depicted on stage?
 - What choices helped characterize each musician's portrayal?
- ▶ Imagine you are forming your own **MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET** with contemporary artists. What genre(s) would you highlight and which artists would you bring together? Why do you think they are culturally significant?
- ▶ Listen to some music from the 1940s. How is it different from what you heard in **MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET**?
 - Why do you think the changing sounds of rock and roll were so controversial at the time?
- ▶ Rock and roll was frequently referred to as “the devil’s music” by critics in its early years, but the men of **MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET** were also all raised in the Christian faith and sang gospel songs during this recording session. How did you see these contradictions represented in their behaviors?
 - Can a type of music really be inherently good or bad for people? Why do you think so?

**BE SURE TO CHECK BACK IN DECEMBER
FOR OUR WHITE CHRISTMAS GUIDE!**



**BROADWAY
AT MUSIC CIRCUS**

UC DAVIS HEALTH PAVILION

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Commerce **Printing** 
SERVICES

This guide was developed by Mason Diab, Caleb Larrosa-Colombo and Jackie Vanderbeck.
Special thanks to Griff Field, Matt Hessburg, Scott Klier, Dejan Zivkovic and YOU,
audience members, for joining us at **Broadway At Music Circus!**