

# An Actor's Process: Bringing the Four Seasons to Life

By Shelina Elyse & Elizabeth Montgomery

Jukebox musicals revive beloved music with a new perspective. They challenge traditional musical casts to embody real-life celebrity figures and evoke the audience's feelings of nostalgia and familiar affection.

*Jersey Boys* spans decades of a group's evolution into the Four Seasons. You know the guys and their popular music, but we would be remiss not to share the talent behind The Phoenix Theatre Company's production.

We talked with each of our 'Jersey Boys' about how they approached their roles, thoughts on the show, and more!

Haven't seen the show yet? You have less than one month, and performances are selling out fast! [Get your tickets now!](#)



**Justin Wolfe Smith\* plays Tommy DeVito.**

**TPTC: Tommy DeVito had a larger-than-life personality and played a pivotal role in getting *The Four Seasons* off the ground. What has been the most exciting (or challenging) part of bringing his charisma and complexity to the stage?**

**Wolfe Smith:** The hardest thing with Tommy is balancing his like-ability and his temper. He was hot headed and always trying to be the most important person in a room, but there is also this charm to him that drew people in. In this show, as Tommy, you don't get time to

warm up into it, you have to come right out of the gate with that energy and charm and set the vibe for the show and pull the audience in. And then you have to sprinkle in that temper enough to show his flaws but not too much that you lose the audiences. It's a lot of fun to play with!

**TPTC: Do you have any pre-show rituals to get into Tommy DeVito mode?**

**Wolfe Smith:** I like to drop about \$10,000 at a casino before a show hahaha. Noooooo, usually I just spend a lot of time (and hairspray) getting my hair how I want it but that's about it.

**TPTC: The show follows the group through their highest highs and lowest lows. What was the most challenging scene to nail as a unit?**

**Wolfe Smith:** I mean, I think the hardest scene is that act two confrontation scene. It's so easy to just yell louder than the last person but that's not engaging theater. Everyone in that scene is great at finding levels and actively listening and playing off each other, and when that happens you get so many more levels and nuances to the scene that make it so much more captivating.

**TPTC: What's a piece of direction or advice you've received in your career that has stuck with you?**

**Wolfe Smith:** A teacher of mine in high school told me "The day you perform something perfectly, quit because it will never happen again." I think about that a lot. I get really hard on myself as a performer, I think a lot of us do, but theater is live, and that's the best thing about it. It's always gonna be different and some days you'll feel better about your work than others. But I'm pretty certain it will never be perfect. And that's okay.

**Now, for fun...**

**TPTC: Jersey Boys is packed with hit songs! If you had to pick just one to put on your personal playlist forever, which would it be?**

**Wolfe Smith:** I think "working my way" for me.

**TPTC: If you had to wear one of their stage outfits in real life, which one would it be and why?**

**Wolfe Smith:** Easily the red jacket with black trim that we wear in "walk like a man". That's always been my favorite look in this show.

**TPTC: What's your go-to pump-up song before a show?**

**Wolfe Smith:** It's always changing but it's pretty much always 70s and 80s classic rock. Motley Crue, Def Leppard, and Boston make a lot of appearances.

**TPTC: If you could time travel to see The Four Seasons live in concert, which era would you pick?**

**Wolfe Smith:** Idk about era, but I'd wanna see them on Ed Sullivan! Being up close and personal and see them on and off camera would be so interesting!



**Daxton Bloomquist\* plays Bob Gaudio.**

**TPTC: What originally drew you to acting, and how did your journey lead you to Jersey Boys? (The short version)**

**Bloomquist:** Singing originally drew me to acting. I loved to sing, and the older I got I realized the text of a song is the true representation of a song, how it makes you feel will make other feel something too, I found that magical, touching people through lyrics, and then realized soon after script can and does the exact same thing. Telling a story is and has always been important to me. I have turned down multiple auditions for Bob Gaudio. After a handful of auditions came in for the role I finally told my agents I would submit. And I am now bringing Bob to life for the second time in under a year. Pretty wild.

**TPTC: What was the biggest challenge in portraying Bob’s journey from a young, ambitious songwriter to an industry leader, and how did you tackle it?**

**Bloomquist:** Bob and Daxton are so very similar. The biggest challenge was not to get in the way and get to “heady” about it. I am a very ambitious person and have always been, I am the collaborator and ideas man so finding myself in Bob and letting that shine is the challenge, but also the biggest reward.

**TPTC: What’s your favorite “big moment” for Bob in the show? Is it an emotional scene, a song, or something that just feels great to perform?**

**Bloomquist:** Cry For Me. Very rarely do you get to just Sit and sing such an amazing song. Singing Cry For Me will never get old.

**TPTC: What's one thing audiences might not realize about the work that goes into performing in a musical like Jersey Boys?**

**Bloomquist:** The timing and the amount of text and music that goes into each season is exciting and terrifying. You have to be on the top of your game every show. But the backstage show is even more intense, it takes a huge backstage team that the audience never sees dressing us, holding water, jackets, pushing around set pieces. It's truly one of the coolest things to be a part of. These people show up before us and leave after us, the show would not happen without the backstage team!

**Now, for fun...**

**TPTC: Jersey Boys is packed with hit songs! If you had to pick just one to put on your personal playlist forever, which would it be?**

**Bloomquist:** Fallen Angel! Just so emotional, so beautifully written. I find myself listening to the lyrics every night and just feeling the pain of the song.

**TPTC: If you had to wear one of their stage outfits in real life, which one would it be and why?**

**Bloomquist:** My opening outfit. I feel so good and confident in it!

**TPTC: What's your go-to pump-up song before a show?**

**Bloomquist:** I don't come on stage for about 30 min into the show, so I typically warmup and sit in silence and read my book. Once I am on stage, it doesn't stop, so I like to start my show calm, cool and collective.

**TPTC: If you could time travel to see The Four Seasons live in concert, which era would you pick?**

**Bloomquist:** The 60's for sure. How fun to watch the success just keep rising!

**TPTC: If you could sit down for dinner with the person you are portraying, what's the first thing you'd ask him?**

**Bloomquist:** Vodka or Gin Martini? Hahahahaha. But in all seriousness I would probably ask a lot about producing and creating the stardom of Frankie.



**Noah Archibald\* plays Nick Massi.**

**TPTC: What has been your favorite part of being in a show like Jersey Boys so far? The rehearsal process, the live audience reactions, or something else entirely?**

**Archibald:** My favorite part of being in this production of Jersey Boys is the audience reaction. The script is brilliantly constructed, and there are a few “landmark lines” where the stakes rise immediately. Hearing the audience react to these lets us know that they are right there with us, and there is no better feeling than that as a storyteller.

**TPTC: The Four Seasons had an undeniable chemistry, how did you all work on building that connection as a cast?**

**Archibald:** There is something unique and magical about this show that just draws its cast together organically. I’m unsure what it is, but it is undeniable. There is that - and countless post-rehearsal hangouts and many long nights of games.

**TPTC: How do you prepare mentally and physically for a show like Jersey Boys, where the pace is fast and the music is nonstop?**

**Archibald:** Jersey Boys is a challenge of stamina - in every way: vocally, emotionally, and physically. I prepare for this by really taking care of and listening to my body as best as I can. Rest and sleep are crucial, and I am very intentional about maintaining a level of physical and vocal fitness that allows me to perform at my best ability 9x a week.

**TPTC: Nick Massi has a quieter presence but still leaves a lasting impact. What’s been the most challenging part of playing Nick, and what’s been the most rewarding?**

**Archibald:** The most challenging part of playing Nick is avoiding character stereotypes. Sure, Nick is the “strong and silent” type, but he is, like all of us, human and nuanced far

beyond this. The most rewarding part has been getting to play and explore with this cast night in and night out.

**Now, for fun...**

**TPTC: Jersey Boys is packed with hit songs! If you had to pick just one to put on your personal playlist forever, which would it be?**

**Archibald:** I would pick Who Loves You! It has a little bit of everything I like, and if I haven't gotten tired of it yet - I don't think I ever will.

**TPTC: If you had to wear one of their stage outfits in real life, which one would it be and why?**

**Archibald:** If I'm getting to pick any of my costumes, it would be the green polo shirt that I wear for one scene and one scene only. I love the way I look in it, and it matches my current style. However, if I'm picking one of the costumes we wear for their on-stage performances, how do you not go with the one we wear for Dawn?

**TPTC: What's your go-to pump-up song before a show?**

**Archibald:** Right now, I'm on a Billy Idol kick, so its "Still Dancing", "White Wedding", etc - but usually, I opt for music that helps calm me down and focus preshow - which is currently a lot of Christopher Cross, Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, and Avi Kaplan.

**TPTC: If you could time travel to see The Four Seasons live in concert, which era would you pick?**

**Archibald:** I would pick the era right when they all came together and released their first album as "The Four Seasons".

**TPTC: If you could sit down for dinner with the person you are portraying, what's the first thing you'd ask him?**

**Archibald:** I'd ask Nick about his favorite harmony he constructed for the group.



**Noah Cornwell\* plays Frank Valli.**

**TPTC: Frankie's voice is one of the most recognizable in music history. How do you prepare vocally and physically for such a demanding performance night after night?**

**Cornwell:** I warm up vocally for twenty minutes every day, I hydrate regularly, and that's about it! I do use a steamer occasionally when my chords are feeling any sort of fatigue.

**TPTC: The bond between Frankie and the other members of The Four Seasons is at the heart of the show. How did you and your castmates develop that chemistry both on and off stage?**

**Cornwell:** We started cast bonding very quickly! From Mario Kart clashes to visiting various night life spots in Phoenix, there have never been a shortage of functions to attend. It's very easy to get along with such affable and well-rounded people!

**TPTC: Frankie goes through a rollercoaster of emotions in the show, what's your favorite scene to perform?**

**Cornwell:** My favorite scene is definitely the confrontation scene in the board room. It's fun to pretend to be mad at your friends! My favorite song is Can't Take My Eyes Off You.

**TPTC: What's a piece of direction or advice you've received in your career that has stuck with you?**

**Cornwell:** "Fear has killed more dreams than failure ever could." Don't remember where I heard it, but it's a nice reminder.

**Now, for fun...**

**TPTC: Jersey Boys is packed with hit songs! If you had to pick just one to put on your personal playlist forever, which would it be?**

**Cornwell:** Beggin' is a bop.

**TPTC: If you had to wear one of their stage outfits in real life, which one would it be and why?**

**Cornwell:** I'd wear my brown suit from the top of act 2 seven days out of the week.

**TPTC: What's your go-to pump-up song before a show?**

**Cornwell:** Raindance by Jean Batiste

**TPTC: If you could time travel to see The Four Seasons live in concert, which era would you pick?**

**Cornwell:** The early 1960s. I'd want to see them on the rise.

**TPTC: If you could sit down for dinner with the person you are portraying, what's the first thing you'd ask him?**

**Cornwell:** I might ask him how he has maintained his longevity.

\*Courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the U.S.