

Behind the Spoof: The Legacy and Laughter of Forbidden Broadway

By Elizabeth Montgomery



Breona Conrad*, William Selby*, Seth Tucker*, and Rachel Policar* (Photo by Billy Hardiman)

Four actors, one pianist, dozens of costumes, and zero mercy.

Forbidden Broadway: The Next Generation transforms The Phoenix Theatre Company's Judith Hardes stage into a fast-paced, tune-twisting, carnival that roasts the best (and sometimes worst) of Broadway, running now through August 3, 2025.

Directed by longtime cast member and veteran director William Selby, this production marks his 21st time leading the show. He first performed in *Forbidden Broadway* in 1985 as a 23-year-old actor and has been sharing its irreverent joy ever since.

"If you're not having fun on stage, you're doing something wrong," Selby said. "It's like Halloween every night. Quick changes, clever lyrics, and characters you've been obsessed with your whole life."

A tight cast of actors including Selby, Breona Conrad, Rachel Policar, Seth Tucker, and Lucas Coatney-Murieta alongside pianist Steve Hilderbrand, deliver spot-on impersonations that leave audiences laughing the night away.

From *Cats* to *Dear Evan Hansen* the show skewers the clichés and excesses that make Broadway both iconic and ripe for satire.

You can expect musical jabs at:

- *Les Misérables* – “Ten Years More” lampoons the epic’s never-ending run and operatic melodrama with lines like “This crusty show has been shellacked.”
- *Wicked* – Elphaba returns with a tongue-in-cheek take on CGI.
- *Mary Poppins* and *Annie* – both get a reality check.
- *Cabaret* – reimagined with a haunting twist on “Tomorrow Belongs to Me.”
- *Cats* – well, do we really need to explain why this one gets roasted?

And then, there’s a parody of *Into the Woods*.

The real show is currently playing in our Hormel theatre, with all its emotion and heart. In *Forbidden Broadway*, it becomes *Into the Words*, an homage to Sondheim’s famously complicated lyrics that pose a challenge to even the most seasoned performers.

You have to see both shows!

What sets *Forbidden Broadway* apart is the balance of satire and admiration. Selby said, the show’s creator Gerard Alessandrini, “always did it with love, and the stars themselves recognized that.”

Even Broadway legends like Chita Rivera and Stephen Sondheim have seen themselves parodied in the show and laughed along with the crowd.

“Being able to laugh at yourself is a sign of optimism,” Selby said.

Despite its bite and all the laughs, the show often inspires audiences back to theatre to see the real thing.

“Forbidden Broadway uplifts theatre. People see our show and go, ‘Now I have to go see *Wicked*.’ That’s the thrill.” Selby said. “It uplifts theatre by keeping us curious.” Whether you’re a seasoned theatre fan or someone who simply loves a clever joke, *Forbidden Broadway* is a joyful, high-energy escape.

It’s timely, unhinged, and absolutely worth seeing for yourself.