

Behind the Beat: A First Look at the World Premiere of *Let the Good Times Roll*

By Jen Barraza



At The Phoenix Theatre Company, our publicity photoshoots are never just about capturing an image. They are about telling a story. With *Let the Good Times Roll: A New Orleans Gumbo*, the story we're telling is bigger than just one show. This world premiere musical marks the beginning of a new chapter for our organization as we begin producing new works in earnest with Broadway aspirations.

In a special first for our company, we were able to utilize the historic Central United Methodist Church building, located just steps from our theatre campus, that we are adapting and reusing in a partnership with the Phoenix Art Museum, as the backdrop for the photoshoot. Inside Pioneer Hall, we recreated a bar-like scene filled with moody lighting to evoke the feel of an intimate New Orleans bar. Just outside, in the church courtyard, we captured the ambiance of a New Orleans street might look like just after a Mardi Gras parade had passed.

Fresh from our Festival of New American Theatre, this vibrant musical follows the journey of a heartbroken young woman who finds her way back to life through the music, culture, and spirit of New Orleans. Set against a soundtrack of jazz, blues, funk, and soul, the show features iconic songs spanning generations, from Jelly Roll Morton and Bessie Smith to Fats Domino, The Meters, Dr. John, and Harry Connick, Jr. The city's music is the heartbeat of the story and the driving force behind the photoshoot's gritty and joyful energy.

The Look: For this shoot, we were fortunate to use actual show costumes provided by our costume shop, giving the photos an immediate sense of authenticity and character. To add a little hidden magic, the Mardi Gras beads featured in the outdoor shoot weren't just props. They were caught at the real Mardi Gras in New Orleans back in 2017 by Jen Barraza (during parades – not the other way), making them a fun Easter egg for the marketing team and a sentimental nod to the city's joyful spirit.

The Setting: To fully immerse audiences in the world of the show, we staged both indoor and outdoor scenes. Inside, we created a jazz bar filled with mood lighting and rich textures. Outside, we used the historic church's courtyard to mimic the streets of New Orleans. The photoshoot setting mirrors the actual set design of the production, which features one side representing the inside of a bar and the other portraying the outside streets of New Orleans. That duality is central to the show's storytelling, where the rhythm of the city flows continuously between public celebration and private reflection. Music is ever-present throughout the production, with the band playing live onstage, adding a soulful heartbeat to every moment.

The Vibe: This shoot had a joyful heartbeat with music being played and jokes landing throughout which showed that life imitates art. The final images capture the joy and grit that define the city, as well as the show's deeper message: that even in hard times, there is music. And even when everything feels lost or too hard, the heart will always find a way to dance and find joy.

As we embark on this exciting new journey of producing pre-Broadway caliber works, we invite you to be part of this moment in theatre history. *Let the Good Times Roll* is more than a show. It is a love letter to a city, a celebration of its music, and a testament to the power of starting over.

Come see what it means to find your rhythm again. Tickets are on sale now, and the good times are already rolling.

Click [here](#) to watch behind the scenes of the publicity photo shoot.