



Casting Announced for Musical Phenomenon at Huron Country Playhouse

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – She made more than beautiful music; she wrote the soundtrack of a generation. Now the inspiring story behind the earth-moving success of iconic singer/songwriter Carole King comes to life on stage in the Tony® and Grammy® Award-winning musical *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* at the **Huron Country Playhouse** from **June 15 to July 1**.

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical tells the true story of Carole King's remarkable journey from teenage songwriter to Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee. From the chart-topping hits she wrote for the biggest acts in music to her own life-changing, trail-blazing success with *Tapestry*, this production takes you back to where it all began...and then takes you on the ride of a lifetime.

Featuring such unforgettable classics such as "Natural Woman," "You've Got a Friend," "One Fine Day," "So Far Away," "Take Good Care of My Baby," "Up on the Roof," "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling," and "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," this musical phenomenon is filled with all the songs you remember — and a story you'll never forget.

"We are thrilled to bring this inspiring musical to the stage," says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director and CEO of Drayton Entertainment. "So many people have grown up with the music of Carole King, but they may not know the incredible story that led her into the hearts of an entire generation. This show is going to transport the audience and have them singing along the whole way through."

Director **John Stefaniuk** leads an impressive creative team. A proud Toronto native, Stefaniuk was the Worldwide Associate Director for *Disney's The Lion King*, and has directed productions around the globe. Working alongside him is Choreographer **Hollywood Jade**, a visionary Canadian dancer/choreographer turned artistic director and resident choreographer on *Canada's Drag Race*.

Stefaniuk and Jade are joined by Music Director **Nico Rhodes**, Set Designer **Douglas Paraschuk**, Costume Designer **Julia Holbert**, Lighting Designer **Michael Walton**, Stage Manager **Paul Pembleton**, and Assistant Stage Managers **Rebecca Miller** and **Frances Johnson**.

A sensational cast has been assembled for this production. **Emily Lukasik** takes on the role of Carole King, one of the most iconic and celebrated singer/songwriter of all time. Lukasik has appeared on stages across Canada including numerous seasons at the Shaw Festival, and in Mirvish's Dora Award-winning *Once*.

Kaden Forsberg is the ambitious Gerry Goffin, Carole's husband and song-writing partner. New to the Drayton Entertainment stage, Forsberg has performed at the Citadel Theatre, Segal Centre, and the Chemainus Theatre Festival.

Laura Mae Nason is the fiercely intelligent songwriter Cynthia Weil, a close friend of Carole and partner of Barry Mann. Nason appeared as Dyanne in Drayton Entertainment's *Million Dollar Quartet*, Amber/Penny in *Hairspray*, and Sister Mary Robert in *Sister Act*. Elsewhere, Nason appeared in the original Canadian production of *Dear Evan Hansen* at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto, and has performed at theatres across Canada.

Nicholas Combitsis is the charmingly neurotic Barry Mann, a brilliant musical mind and the song-writing partner/husband of Cynthia. Combitsis appeared in Drayton Entertainment's 2019 production of *Grease*. Elsewhere, he has performed the role of Frankie Valli in *Jersey Boys* for Norwegian Cruise Lines, and has appeared on stage at the Thousand Islands Playhouse and Citadel Theatre.

Jacob James is the fast-talking, energetic Donny Kirshner, the music producer known as the "Man with the Golden Ear." James most recently appeared in Drayton Entertainment's *The Sound of Music* and portrayed Billy Bishop in the 2022 production of *Billy Bishop Goes to War*. James has also appeared at the Stratford Festival, Soulpepper, and the National Arts Centre.

Joining them is **Josh Alcantara** as Neil Sedaka, Lou Adler, and one-half of the Righteous Brothers duo. **Andrew McGillivray** is Nick, and the second Righteous Brother. Alcantara is a recent graduate of Sheridan College, and McGillivray has appeared in multiple productions with Stage West Calgary. Both are making their Drayton Entertainment debut.

Gabrielle Jones is Genie Klein, Carole's tough but loving mother. Jones has appeared in many Drayton Entertainment productions, including *Elf: The Musical*, *The Drowsy Chaperon*, and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*. Elsewhere, Jones has appeared at the Stratford and Shaw Festivals, and in the National Tours of Mirvish's *Les Misérables* and *Mamma Mia!*.

Ashley Matthews takes on the roles of Betty and Marilyn. Matthews appeared in the Hollywood Bowl production of *Mamma Mia!*, and in the Off-Broadway and Las Vegas companies of *Rock of Ages*.

Rounding out this brilliant cast as the American doo-wop group The Drifters are **Aadin Church**, **Joema Frith**, **Jordan Goodridge**, and **Anton May**. The American girl group The Shirelles are **Vanessa Cobham**, **Autumn-Joy Dames**, **Ha'Keena Maneso**, and **Ocean Williams**. **Kory Fulton** and **Emily Robertson** are part of the ensemble.

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical chronicles the amazing story of an ordinary 16-year-old girl from Brooklyn who defies her mother's wishes and moves to Manhattan to sell a song, setting in motion a remarkable journey to stardom. From her relationship with her husband and their prolific song-writing partnership at 1650 Broadway, to their playful rivalry with Barry and Cynthia, to the stage at Carnegie Hall, audiences will take an unforgettable journey through the remarkable life of Carole King. The production features music by **Gerry Goffin** and **Carole King**, and **Barry Mann** and **Cynthia Weil**, and was arranged for the stage by Sony/ATV Music Publishing, with book by **Douglas McGrath**.

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical received its world premiere at the Curran Theatre, San Francisco, in October 2013, and made its Broadway debut at the Stephen Sondheim Theatre in January 2014, where it ran for over 5 years and 2,400 performances. It subsequently had a run in London's West End and has toured the US and UK. A movie version of the musical is in the works, lead by Tom Hanks' production company, Playtone.

The production is proudly sponsored by **Hay Communications** and **Oakwood Resort**. Design Sponsors are **CHOK 103.9** and **ToDo Ontario**. Media Sponsors are **Pure Country 93**, **Newstalk 1290**, **Country 104.9**, and **Virgin Radio 97.5**. The Season Media Sponsor is **CTV**.

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical is on stage from **June 15** to **July 1** at the **Huron Country Playhouse**.

Regular performance tickets are \$55 for adults, \$34 for youth under 20 years of age. Tickets for select Discount Dates and groups of 20 or more are \$45, and small groups of 10-19 are \$50. HST is applicable to all ticket prices. Tickets may be purchased by calling the Box Office at **519-238-6000** or toll free at **1-855-drayton (372-9866)**, or online at <http://www.huruncountryplayhouse.com>.

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