

# ‘An American In Paris’ Returns To Cape Playhouse Stage



Josh Drake as American GI Jerry Mulligan and Leigh-Ann Esty as Lise Dassin in “An American in Paris,” returning to the Cape Playhouse stage by popular demand for a three-week run starting July 26. COURTESY PHOTOS

Director Al Blackstone.

by Jennifer Sexton-Riley

Romance. Music. Dancing. Paris. What more can you ask of a summertime musical?

Cape Playhouse audiences spoke, and Cape Playhouse listened. Back by popular demand, “An American in Paris” returns to the historic theater’s venerated boards for a three-week run starting July 26.

Loosely based on the 1951 Academy Award-winning film starring Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron (a Cape Playhouse alum!) “An American in Paris” takes place at the end of World War II in Paris, newly free of Nazi occupation. American GI Jerry Mulligan, a soldier with an artistic dream, decides to stay behind in the City of Light to pursue his painterly ambitions. In this romantic setting, how can he help but fall for beautiful and talented French dancer Lise Dassin, who longs to be a prima ballerina?

Emmy-winning director, choreographer, and educator Al Blackstone has returned to the Cape Playhouse to once again direct this well-loved musical, set to a score by George and Ira Gershwin. In addition to “An American in Paris,” Blackstone has directed and choreographed other reinventions of classic musicals, including “Pippin” (Music Theater Wichita) and “Annie” (Axelrod Performing Arts Center) and many more around the country and Off-Broadway. In 2020 he won an Emmy for his work on the iconic television show “So You Think You Can Dance,” where he has been making dances since 2016.

Also returning are Josh Drake as American GI Jerry Mulligan and Leigh-Ann Esty as Lise Dassin, as well as

many others from last year’s Cape Playhouse run. Esty’s credits include Roger and Hammerstein’s “Carousel” (Broadway), the first national tour of “An American in Paris,” and the regional productions of “An American in Paris” as Lise Dassin for Drury Lane as well as Cape Playhouse. She has also appeared in Steven Spielberg’s “West Side Story,” HBO’s “The Gilded Age,” and FX’s “Fosse/Verdon.” Drake appeared most recently in the original Broadway company of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “Bad Cinderella,” Disney’s “Aladdin” (Broadway) and the national tours of “Dirty Dancing” and “Finding Neverland.” Joining them on stage is Manna Nichols, who returns to pick up her role as Milo Davenport from last summer’s run. She recently starred as Marianne in the Cape Playhouse production of “Sense and Sensibility.”

“‘An American in Paris’ is set in the City of Lights, and it’s a Gershwin show,” said Cape Playhouse Guest Artistic Director Hunter Foster. “It features some of Gershwin’s greatest hits, including ‘I Got Rhythm,’ ‘S’ Wonderful,’ and ‘But Not for Me.’ And the ballet of course, which is what it’s really known for when done in New York. The

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**Hunter Foster.**

ballet, the setting of post-war Paris rebuilding itself after all that happened during World War II, the music, and the dance come together with a beautiful story of romance. I think the stage version has taken the film and done it better. These are Broadway dancers giving Broadway-caliber performances. You can’t recreate some of these dances except in a place like Cape Playhouse.”

“An American in Paris” graces the Cape Playhouse stage from July 26 to Aug. 12, directed and choreographed by Al Blackstone, with Josh Drake as Jerry Mulligan, Leigh-Ann Esty as Lise Dassin, Barrett Riggins as Adam Hochberg, Manna Nichols as Milo Davenport, Bruce Landry as Henri Baurel, Weston Krukow as Mr. Z and Jack Doyle as Monsieur Baurel. The music and lyrics are by George and Ira Gershwin, the book by Craig Lucas, Adapted for the stage by Christopher Weldon, music direction by Garrett Taylor. The assistant music director is Dr. Ray Wong, and the associate choreographer is Melissa Hunt. Scenic design is by David Arsenaault, costume design by DW, lighting design by Catherine MacDonald, with sound designer and sound engineer Jacob Levitin.

For more information and to purchase tickets visit the Cape Playhouse Box Office at 820 Main St./Route 6A in Dennis, visit [capeplayhouse.org](http://capeplayhouse.org) or call 508-385-3911.

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