

John Lloyd Young Offers an Insider's View at His Life, Work and Perspective on the Arts

Feb 14, 2017 by Steve Schonberg for show-score.com

Q: We were excited to hear that you're returning to the Cafe Carlyle with a brand new show, having been there last in February, 2016. Can you give us some insight into how you approach putting together a new show? And, what fans can expect from "Here For You"?

John Lloyd Young (JLY): I do a set at home in Hollywood once a month at the Federal Bar. We have a loyal following there of familiar faces who are a great test audience for new material. Since playing the Carlyle last year, my music director Tommy Faragher and I are bringing a good deal of the material – that has gone over well back home – here to New York. I've sung songs in four languages, I've added a new one this year...I'll be debuting a song in that language this time at the Carlyle.



Q: We recently interviewed Frankie Valli, who shared his positive view on "Jersey Boys" closing its Broadway production. How did you feel about the closing, and what are your thoughts on how it will live on?

JLY: Movie musicals last forever and so do cast albums. There are millions who saw the live show but even more millions who have seen, and will see, the Clint Eastwood movie. "Jersey Boys" was a major phenomenon on Broadway and it was thrilling to see the fan base grow. But I never got as many letters from as many far corners of the world than when the movie came out. The movie cast and I even had an invitation to the White House to sing for Prime Minister Abe of Japan. Don't forget, too, that Eastwood prioritized casting actors from "Jersey Boys" stage productions [around] the world. Our interpretations live on in the film. It doesn't seem "Jersey Boys" is going away anytime soon, and I feel so privileged to have been able to do the Broadway show, the film and the album. What a ride!

Q: With organizations forming like "The Ghostlight Project" and the "Concerts for America," we've seen an outpouring of political action from the arts, as well as concern over what the arts will mean in our current political environment. As a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities (appointed by President Obama), what is your view on the immediate and continues future for the arts?

JLY: I just returned from a week on the Hill lobbying to protect the arts at the National level. I think you're going to be surprised how much the new administration supports the Arts. Stay tuned.

Q: Winter can be especially rough on a performer, and at least here in New York there's been quite a few illnesses going around. What's your secrets to keeping your voice healthy – which New York Times' Stephen Holden said is a "falsetto that [you, John] can direct through the stratosphere"?

JLY: It's tough. Fluids, rest, exercise and a good diet are key. But doing the show for two years straight on Broadway taught me all the tricks I need to know to sing even through a cold. And age has taught me the most important lesson: sometimes if you have the humility to let the audience know

you're singing through a cold, it can become a fun experience in itself. We're all people, imperfect, and it's great to be in a room together celebrating music even if I'm sounding less like clear-as-a-bell [Roy] Orbison and more like rough-and-tumble Joe Cocker.

Q: You're also an accomplished visual artist; we ate up your "Food For Thought" collection, which you debuted in 2010! Can we look forward to any new works soon?

JLY: I've been doing Warhol-inspired society portraits of late. There are about three dozen soup can "SOUPERstar" portraits out there of friends and idols from Clint Eastwood to President Obama. I have a letter from Mr. O with thanks for his portrait and have heard the rumor that it will be in the collection at the Obama Presidential Library in Chicago. Wanna take a trip with me to see it?

He's No Longer One of the Boys

Feb 2015 by Sheryl Flatow for [Revue Mag, Segerstrom Center for the Arts](#)

...to have a new singer reinterpret these indelible songs is unique

John Lloyd Young calls the program he's bringing to the Samueli Theater My Turn, and that title is laden with significance. In 2006, Young won a Tony® Award for his extraordinary portrayal of Frankie Valli in the mega-hit musical Jersey Boys, and he's remained closely associated with

the role ever since. He's played Frankie onstage some 1,300 times: two years during his initial run, limited engagements in 2012 and 2013, and six weeks in the West End production. He then had the privilege of recreating the role in Clint Eastwood's film adaptation, which was released last June.

But now, he says, Frankie Valli and Jersey Boys are behind him. My Turn, which is also the name of his debut recording, gives audiences an opportunity to discover Young's gorgeous, expressive voice, "not a voice I'm putting on to play someone



else." The show, which will be performed from February 12–14, features some of the most beautiful ballads of the '50s and '60s, including "My Prayer," "Hurt So Bad," "Ebb Tide," "Unchained Melody," "Only You," "Hey There Lonely Girl" and one Frankie Valli song, "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." When he performed My Turn at the Café Carlyle, a writer for the Huffington Post said, "I, for one, did not want the night to end."

"I'm trying to do something similar to what Harry Connick Jr. and Michael Bublé did with war-era song standards," says Young, "reinterpret them and make them fresh for a new audience. These songs came 20 years later in the timeline than the war music, they have lyrical and melodic integrity, and yet they haven't been treated as standards. People don't cover them. So to have a new singer reinterpret these indelible songs is unique, and I think the audience experiences a freshness. On a certain level, this could be just a walk down memory lane. But it's not, because it's being sung live, right in front of you, in the present. So there's an immediacy to these already familiar songs that is really exciting for me and the audience. And thematically, these are the perfect songs to be singing around Valentine's Day."

Most of the songs have an R&B sound and were big hits for artists such as The Platters, Little Anthony and the Imperials, Eddie Holman, Fred Parrish and The Satins, and Lenny Welch. "I'm drawn more to that music than anything else in the '60s because there's a raw and honest energy that connects to me as a human being," says Young. "I think they're the greatest songs and the greatest songs to sing."

Those who are intimately acquainted with this music will likely find that Young captures the essence of the beloved original versions while imbuing them with his own artistry. He sings with an emotional honesty and vulnerability, and takes great care with the lyrics. "I listened to Frank Sinatra a lot when I was young, which is why I'm a stickler for lyrical interpretation," he says. "I approach these songs with the influence of those crooners and song stylists of the '40s. And Broadway is great training for knowing how to interpret a lyric. An actor who transitions into being a singer brings a lot more depth to the singing."

Young, a native of Sacramento who now lives in Los Angeles, was a theater arts major at Brown University: He spent his junior year in Spain studying visual art, his other passion and vocation. Simultaneously with his career as a vocalist and actor, he also works as a visual artist. He installed his first commission in 2011 at Spago, and the previous year had his premiere art show, Food for Thought. "There's a little bit of a wink in what I'm doing," says Young, who works in mixed media. "A lot of the things that I'm playing with are consumer items, packaging that people discard, and elevating them to a revered object. It's kind of like Marcel Duchamp's Readymades."

Young is also active in numerous charities, and in 2013 was appointed to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. "Each president's committee has a personality that fits the administration," he says. "Early education is deeply important to the Obamas, so the character of this committee is

arts integration into early education. The flagship program of the committee is called 'Turn Around Arts.' It takes the poorest performing schools across the nation and injects arts into the curriculum, which creates a magical up-tick in academic performance across all subjects and dramatically decreases discipline problems and increases attendance. It's basically a paradigm for arts not only enhancing school culture but being integral to school culture. Since it works in the poorest schools, it demonstrates that it can work in all schools. The data is irrefutable. The committee has reached out to artists as important as Elton John and architect Frank Gehry, who are going to schools and talking to kids and inspiring them."

So is Young, who traveled a long road to get to this place in his life. He says he prefers to look forward rather than look back, and rarely pauses to think about what's happened to him. But, he acknowledges, on rare occasions he'll sit back and reflect. "Ten or 15 years ago I was cashing an unemployment check hoping I could make it through the week with four roommates in a house in Purchase, New York, and taking Metro North into the city for a random audition for a children's theater. Now I'm visiting the White House. So, yes, when I look back it's pretty staggering."

[John Lloyd Young On The Harmony Street Show \(Audio\)](#)

03/8/2014 by Mike Miller from harmonystreet.biz



[John Lloyd Young Takes 'Jersey Boys' From Broadway To Screen \(Audio\)](#)

http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/audio/hereandnow_20-06-2014-npr.mp3

20/06/2014 by Jeremy Hobson for 'Here&Now' radio show on wbur 90.9 fm

Interview Highlights: John Lloyd Young

On portraying Frankie Valli on stage and screen

"I love the character, it's a really fun show to play. But when you get to know a character so well, you start to have insights that you can't show because you're confined to your script of your hit show. And when the movie happened, suddenly, I was so excited because I knew I'd be able to let

some of those insights out to play in a new medium and with a little bit different script, and also, just – Clint, I knew, would let us do a lot of improv. So I could let my character breathe in a way that he hadn't been able to for those few years on Broadway.”

On his rise to fame

“Things are looking pretty nice right now. But, you know, it hasn't been without struggle, and it's funny – Frankie Valli's story and that advice that he was just getting from, you know, Christopher Walken's character, is very true for someone who's in a creative field. You just have to be patient and keep working and have faith. And I just feel so, so honored and privileged, because I was a Hollywood musical fan as a kid, and I know how rare it is for someone who originates the Broadway role to get to then do it on screen. And I know, for me, you know, my generation – I never would have known anything about Robert Preston's performance in 'The Music Man' if there hadn't been a film where he played the part. I just heard how great he was on Broadway way before my time. So I'm kind of happy to know there may be some kid or teenager now who might never have had the chance to see my Broadway performance, but gets a taste for what it might have been like now, because they can see Clint Eastwood's film.”

On singing and speaking in Frankie Valli's distinct voice

“I definitely worked really hard to evoke Frankie Valli, but not do a strict imitation, because I feel that a strict imitation is not as compelling to watch.”

“I have an album that just came out on iTunes, it's called 'My Turn' and it's '60s R&B with my voice. The way that I actually sing is different. With Frankie, it's – Frankie's voice is clearly very unique, but also, his speaking voice is different from my own, as you can hear now. You know, I don't have a Jersey dialect. So when I approached the singing, I approached

it the same way as an actor I approach a dialect, just as a singer. I approach the singing kind of like with dialect thoughts in my mind. I have to sound like this on certain things to give that Frankie Valli flavor.”

[John Lloyd Young, Michael Lomenda and Erich Bergen Interview \(audio\)](#)

20/06/2014 by Andrea Chase for prx.org

http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/audio/prx_radio_interview_jersey_boys062014.mp3

It would, perhaps, be more of a surprise if, in the course of an interview, no one from JERSEY BOYS did an impression of their co-star Christopher Walken. I may have forced the issue just a little by asking John Lloyd Young, Michael Lomenda, and Erich Bergen if being in Walken’s proximity prompted them to perfect their impression of him, or of their director Clint Eastwood. Aside from that bit of frippery, what I most wanted to know from them when we spoke on June 16, 2014, was what it was like to finally be able to see their performances after playing, respectively, Frankie Valli, Nick Massi, and Bob Gaudio on stage for so many years. Their answers were both moving and perceptive, as were their memories of going onstage with JERSEY BOYS for the first time. In Young’s case, it was the first performance ever, and the public was not clamoring for another “jukebox” musical. Charming, funny, and energetic, they were an interview that ended much too soon.

[John Lloyd Young, Erich Bergen, and Michael Lomenda on Jersey Boys \(Audio\)](#)

http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/audio/jersey_boys_interview_062014.mp3

20/06/2014 by Zaki Hasan for huffingtonpost.com

For his new film Jersey Boys, legendary director Clint Eastwood translates the blockbuster jukebox musical about the rise and fall (and rise) of singer Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons from the stage (where it's been a global phenomenon since its debut in 2006) to the big screen. When it came time to fill out the cast of his celluloid songsters, Eastwood didn't wander too far from the project's stage roots, selecting veteran players from the many lives of Jersey Boys for three of the leads: Tony-winning **John Lloyd Young**, who originated the role on Broadway, as Valli, and actors Erich Bergen and Michael Lomenda as singer/writer Bob Gaudio and bassist Nick Massi, respectively. (Boardwalk Empire's Vincent Piazza plays group founder Tommy DeVito).

I had the chance to talk with Young, Bergen, and Lomenda during their swing through the San Francisco Bay Area promoting the film, and one thing that became amply clear with all of them was how surreal it was to be in the middle of a whirlwind that's seen them rocket from relative obscurity to headlining a movie directed by Clint Eastwood. In addition to reminiscing about previous visits to the city, I talked to them about the play's long journey from conception to completion, what it was like to perform a play when you know Clint Eastwood is in the audience watching, and the experience of making the movie after doing it for so long on stage. Read on for the transcript of our conversation:

So, how are you guys doing? How is the tour going?

Erich Bergen: Good. This is it, this is the last stop, today.

I was thinking as I was parking, you guys are living what your characters were living in the film.

Bergen: Better hotel accommodations.

John Lloyd Young: Except, Warner Bros. is paying for our rooms. We're not paying off a million dollars of debt to the mob.

Bergen: Yes, and we are sort of going out and telling this story now, and living that a little bit. And Michael and I were actually on tour with Jersey Boys, the stage version. I opened the tour here and he closed the tour here in San Fran. So, we've all lived versions of the art that we're imitating in various ways.

So, you guys all did the stage tour. You did not do it at the same time.

Michael Lomenda: No. We knew of each other. My first introduction to Jersey Boys was seeing John Lloyd on the Tonys, winning his Tony Award, and seeing their performance on the Tonys.

Young: I never did the tour. I did the Broadway version.

And the last time you did it was five years ago, I believe?

Young: I did the first two years, and then after several years away, I was asked back to do it, and so I did for a few months at the end of 2012, beginning of 2013, and that's when Clint came and saw it. And I just did it again in London after we wrapped the movie. They asked me to do six weeks in London.

When you were doing it the first time, did it even enter onto your radar that you would be starring in the film version?

Young: I say yes, not out of any sort of retroactive presumptuousness or arrogance or anything. I say yes only because when the show was becoming a big hit on Broadway, Hollywood started to really try to compete for the rights to it. So much to an extent that I was a neophyte actor making his Broadway debut, and I was at the opening of a Hollywood film in New York, and one of the major studio heads came up to me at a party and cornered me and said, "You have to convince [one of our writers] Marshall Brickman to give us the film rights." So, yes, right in the beginning, I thought, "Wow, they are all over this movie, and this cast, we could end up in it." But, that didn't happen.

It grew into this international hit over several years. No one really got the movie that early on. Something happened, I think probably Bob Gaudio and Frankie Valli, who are now executive producers, were holding out for some more involvement or something. So, it was several years later that, finally, in 2010, that Graham King, who was our originating producer, won the rights in a bidding war, and then it started to ramp up to the point that, by the time I was back on Broadway and Clint was attached, he was able to see me. So, Michael, who was on tour, and Eric Bergen just has a reputation for being the best Bob Gaudio – according to the real Bob Gaudio. So, when Clint was casting, Clint told me this on set that he asked Bob Gaudio, "Who is the most like you?" and Bob said, "Erich Bergen."

Wow, that's high praise.

Bergen: Yeah, it is. It's also one of those things where, I mean, thank God he said that, because I wasn't seen by Clint and the producers. I was no longer in the show, and if you ask any actor, "Did you ever think...blah blah blah," and they can sit back and say, "Well, you know, I always felt..." But, I think, as actors, we all go through that back-and-forth of yes and no every day, right? We sit there and we go after a job that we want.

When they started auditioning for this movie, I said to my agents, "How do we just make sure that I'm really seen, and how do we campaign for this, and how do we do it?" But, if I hadn't got the job, if it had gone to someone else, they'd be saying the same thing, and I would be sitting back, going, "Well, I'm very happy with my next thing." So, you sort of make light of whatever happens to you.

Young: But, aren't you glad we don't have to see someone else play these roles that we love so much? Someone else do them? I'm so relieved.

Bergen: Correct. By the way, I saw great actors play my role who would have been wonderful. I was picked to do it, but I don't know. I just know that, yes, I wanted it, yes, I thought I really have a shot at this, yes, I think I was the best person for the role, but did I ever think it would actually happen? Like, really actually happen? I don't know. I don't know. I want to say, "Yeah, I always felt." But, I don't know.

Young: Even having won a Tony Award for the original production, and being on the cast album of the original production, presuming that you would get the role, period, feels almost just like you'll jinx yourself. I even thought, "Who am I to decide who the studio is going to choose?" I just hoped that whoever they choose is not really bad, so that I don't have to spend the rest of my life looking at this legacy that I started with an original cast, and say, "God, if only they had let me play it, I could have shown them this or this or this, and instead, they made a mistake." So, I'm happy that I don't have to know what that feels like.

Bergen: Not to be in the position of Carol Channing when they remade Hello, Dolly! into a film with Barbra Streisand...

Young: Or how about the most famous one ever, Julie Andrews with My Fair Lady.

Bergen: Right. And you know what Carol says about Hello,

Dolly!?" "What do you think about the movie of Hello, Dolly!" and she goes "Is there a movie? I didn't know there was a movie." So, I'm glad we don't have to...

You don't have to get that line out there.

Bergen: No, not so much.

Young: She ended up doing fine for herself, because she got an Oscar nomination for Thoroughly Modern Millie, and Julie Andrews then won an Oscar for Sound of Music. It ended alright for them.

Bergen: And there are people who didn't get these parts that go to the next thing. It's one of those things where, at the end of the day, it is a job, and it's a career-making job, and we love it, but we're all ready to do whatever comes next.

Young: You know what's even more rare? An actor of the thousands, the tens of thousands of actors who are professional actors who hold union cards, so they're professional actors. Of the tens of thousands of actors that are out there, there are only a few dozen of us who get to say that we played lead roles for Clint Eastwood and it doesn't even really matter that it was Jersey Boys. That's its own thing.

That was actually my next question, and it really is for all three of you, but John and Michael, you knew Clint Eastwood was in the audience, watching you. What was the immediate emotion that you feel at that moment?

Lomenda: I refused to believe that that was actually happening. It wasn't until I saw a picture that one of our swing sent that he had taken in the lobby with Mr. Eastwood, that I sort of had to realize it was true. Frankly, the movie was really off my radar. I thought it had already been cast. I thought that he was just there brushing up before he started shooting, and so I met him backstage, obviously, thrilled to

meet a legendary icon.

But, I shook hands and I didn't expect to get a call a couple of weeks later to audition. I'm Canadian, with limited-to-no film or TV experience, and so honestly, this is literally just the most crazy thing that's ever happened to me in my entire life. And then, to then get that call saying that I was going to be working with Mr. Eastwood, it was just mindblowing in every way. And, to be honest with you, ever since that call, every single experience with this whole movie has been that way for me. It's just far beyond anything I could have fathomed. So, I'm just grateful for it all.

Young: When Clint got attached, well, through the years, after originating the Broadway production and winning the awards and watching it, over the years, become a hit all across the English-speaking world, hearing of the movie here and there over the years, my emotions would go up and down, because no matter what, first of all, it's a privilege for any actor to become well-associated with a role, or to be starring in a hit show or whatever. When, before, you were just a struggling actor like everybody else, right? Suddenly, you're well-known.

Then, you start to realize you have a legacy in something and it starts to grow all over the world, and it's a strange feeling to see it come together and change in ways, and then to know that you have no control over what happens with the movie and yet, in my case, I wanted to make my legacy permanent somehow and do the role, if I could, but I had to spend a lot of years as the movie was coming up, and then it was going down. It was, "Are people going to make it?" Then, it wasn't going to be made.

After awhile, I became used to the idea that I have no control, and I know that it's gonna be awkward to have to see someone else come, to give the baton to someone else and watch them play this role for posterity. But, I came to a point where I accepted that possibility and I was very calm about

it. It took awhile, but I got there. By the time that Clint was attached, I got to that point where I just felt the equanimity. So, when I found out Clint was in the audience, I knew, "Well, this is what's going to either get me the part or not. I have no control over it."

I know I'm good in this role on stage. I've seen audiences react to my performance on-stage, by that point, for about 1,200 times, and I'm just really joyful. I felt just joyful that this guy, who's got dominion in Hollywood and clearly is a leader in his territory, was seeing me in the one thing in my life, so far, where I knew was in my territory, playing Frankie Valli on stage, on Broadway, and I felt, this is great. Whatever happens will happen, but how wonderful to show Clint Eastwood how at-home I am in this role, today, for this two-hour performance.

And, Erich, what's your Clint Eastwood story?

Bergen: Who? (laughs) Every time you say it, it's always like, "Why are you asking me? Oh right." It's still a lot to get used to. I think what I will always take from working with Clint was that he let us be us. I didn't know what to think. I never thought I would be in a Clint Eastwood movie. I always loved Clint Eastwood films.

That's not something most people think.

Bergen: No! I also wasn't one of those actors, like, I remember when I was in college for acting, every guy wanted to be Marlon Brando and every guy wanted to do these gritty, masculine things. I was like, that is just not my speed. I just came from a different world. So, as much as I loved Clint Eastwood films, it wasn't on my bucket list. So, I knew nothing. I truly knew nothing about going to work with him, other than his finished products.

Working with him, I was so thrilled to find out, first of all, how much fun he is, but what I will always take away is the

confidence he instilled in me. Because, I walked on that set with the mindset of, "How do I please the director?" What he gave back to us was, "You don't have to worry about pleasing me. We're all making a movie here together." And, the reason why he hired us, specifically the three of us but even including Vincent [Piazza], was what we did either in the audition room or what he saw us do on stage.

That's why we got the job. So, for us to all of a sudden do something different now made no sense, and to instill in us the confidence to just continue doing what we had always done, that's something that I never had any director give me before. I'm so used to being micromanaged.

Young: "You're good enough. That's the thing. You're not only good enough, but you're the best one, and I chose you." Being chosen by Clint Eastwood, when he can have any actor he wants in the world in his films and he chose unknowns, 'cause he liked our performances, how can you not rise to the occasion?

Bergen: Yeah, that's definitely what I will take away. I was talking to Mike Doyle, who plays Bob Crewe in this film, and Mike's one of these guys that you might not know his name but he's been in everything. He's that guy from everything. One day, on set, we were sitting in the back of one of those golf carts on set, and I said to him, "Alright, what is your greatest experience, of all the things you've ever done? What was your best film or show or whatever?" and he said, "This."

I said, "You can't be serious. Really? After all of everything? This, what we're doing right now, is your greatest?" And, he said, because I forget who of us, there were a couple of us in the car, and he said, "You guys don't know what you're doing. You have no clue how important this is. You have no clue how good this is. You are spoiled rotten with this, and it is all downhill from here."

Hopefully not! (Laughs)

Bergen: (Laughs) No, he didn't mean that literally, but in the sense that...

It's a pretty good entrée into everything.

Bergen: If this guy, who has been in everything, is telling me that, just from his experience on this film, that this is the best, most fun experience he's ever had, then I don't know if we'll ever be able to fully take in what we've done until maybe years from now.

Lloyd: I have friends from the South that have an expression that I think is very charming: "We fell into the honey pot."

Eastwood couldn't take his eyes off this Frankie Valli

19/06/2014 by Elysa Gardner for USA Today

NEW YORK —To land the lead role in Clint Eastwood's film adaptation of the stage musical Jersey Boys, John Lloyd Young had to go through "the most important audition of my life — and the easiest."

Young had, after all, already played Frankie Valli on and off for more than seven years, starting in the original Broadway production of the musical, which traces the rise and fall of Valli's legendary group, the Four Seasons.



(Photo: Todd Plitt,
USA TODAY)

And it just so happened that the baby-faced 38-year-old actor – who won a Tony Award for his portrayal – was making a return engagement in the Main Stem production last year when he got word that Eastwood was in town on a scouting mission for the film (opening nationwide Friday).

The director had been checking out various companies of the musical and was scheduled to give an interview at the Tribeca Film Festival – which Young attended. “We had a hunch that he might see Jersey Boys on Broadway,” Young says. “And lo and behold, as we were getting ready to start that Sunday matinee, we heard that Clint Eastwood had entered the audience to a standing ovation.”

Eastwood greeted the actors after the performance. “I expressed my appreciation that he was there and told him I had seen his interview the day before,” Young recalls. “He said he enjoyed my performance. We made small talk, and not much of it. Then I gave him his space to speak with the rest of the cast.”

Young next saw Eastwood on the set of the Jersey Boys movie. “He saw me in the show, and that was enough for him.”

Eastwood says he was drawn to Young's fluid singing – he does a dead-on impersonation of Valli's distinctive falsetto – and his “great appeal onstage. He was the original Frankie Valli and my first choice. With all the stage performances under his belt already, it seemed effortless.”



(Photo: Keith Bernstein, Warner Bros. Pictures)

Young found his director “in some ways the stereotype of a low-key California guy. But he's got that strain of intimidating stoicism we've all come to love, and he brings that to the set. He inspires deep loyalty in everyone who works for him. You don't want to risk displeasing him, so you bring your A-game.”

On-screen, Eastwood used different locations to flesh out the band's struggles and triumphs, though Young notes that original librettists Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice's screenplay “reads very much like” their book for the stage.

“I think it's a more psychologically visible depiction of Frankie Valli” on-screen, he allows, adding that one song in particular, *Can't Take My Eyes Off of You*, is used in a different context, drawing more heavily on the story of Valli's troubled daughter, Francine.

For all the attention he's gotten for channeling Valli's tenor, Young insists that it's “like doing a dialect. It's not my voice.” His first major influence as a singer was, in fact,

an earlier pop icon from New Jersey: “One of my favorite childhood memories is of singing Frank Sinatra songs with my Italian grandfather on a karaoke machine he had in his basement in Queens.”

In choosing his next project, Young will be mindful of “something Meryl Streep said in an interview: that your responsibility as an actor is to immediately undermine your first big success.”

And what kind of role would that require?

“Someone very different from a working-class hero,” he says. “Maybe an evil genius or some master-of-the-universe type. That would be fun.”

[Q&A: Former Omahan John Lloyd Young on ‘Jersey Boys,’ working with Clint Eastwood](#)

19/06/2014 by By Bob Fischbach for omaha.com



Clint Eastwood, from left, Erich Bergen and John Lloyd

Young on the set of Warner Bros. Pictures' musical 'Jersey Boys. The big-screen adaptation of the hit Broadway musical "Jersey Boys" is Eastwood's 12th film as a director since turning 70. (AP Photo/Keith Bernstein)

For John Lloyd Young, the acting bug bit at the Omaha Community Playhouse in the late 1980s, under the tutelage of stage veterans Mary Peckham, Dick Boyd and director Charles Jones. His Air Force dad was stationed at Offutt Air Force Base back then, and he did some acting in commercials as well. This week, Young stars in director Clint Eastwood's movie version of "Jersey Boys," which earned him best-actor Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Theatre World Awards in 2006. In both the Broadway musical smash (still running nearly nine years later) and the movie, he was cast as Frankie Valli, lead singer of the 1960s pop group The Four Seasons. Valli's trademark soaring falsetto helped sell hits such as "Sherry," "Big Girls Don't Cry," "Walk Like a Man" and "Rag Doll." The Broadway album went platinum and won a Grammy.

Young has gone on to a coast-to-coast singing career, including a gig at Carnegie Hall, singing Marius in "Les Misérables" at the Hollywood Bowl and releasing several CDs. In November he was named to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. He has performed in "Jersey Boys" more than 1,300 times, including in London's West End and in a limited return engagement on Broadway.

We caught up to him by phone in Toronto, touring to promote the movie, which opens nationwide Friday.

Q. Where do you call home these days, and how's life?

John Lloyd Young: Life is great. I live in L.A. now, which is great when you need to get out of bed and go to the movie set.

Q. Can you tell me about the casting process for the movie role of Frankie Valli? I know Jon Favreau was attached as director at one time.

JLY: When Clint Eastwood got attached, I had just coincidentally been asked to come back and do "Jersey Boys" on Broadway a second time. I had heard Eastwood was going around the country seeing versions of "Jersey Boys," getting a sense of the show. I also heard (movie director) Darren Aronofsky was going to interview him at a movie screening at a New York film festival. I snuck into the screening and took a notepad to jot down what Eastwood said. The next day at my matinee, I had a hunch he might be there. Word came back right before we started that the audience was giving him a standing ovation.



John Lloyd
Young as
Frankie Valli
in Warner
Bros.

Pictures'
musical
"Jersey Boys".

(AP
Photo/Courtesy
Keith
Bernstein)

Q. That must have been nerve-racking.

JLY: Actually, not. Having done the show, and lived with the legacy of being the original guy (playing Frankie Valli), I felt that no matter what happened, I was so proud to be doing something I knew I was good at for someone I admired so much. I wasn't nervous at all. It was a very joyful performance. He came up onstage briefly afterward. The next time I saw him, I had been cast and was on the set. I didn't even have to audition. I just had to do the show for the man directing.

Q. The role of Frankie Valli calls for playing a broad age range. Do you think your age played a factor in your being cast? (He is 38.)

JLY: Not necessarily. I do think the fact that I had aged and experienced more in my life made the later stages of the story easier to access. I had more life experience. Clearly on film, which is a much more intimate medium, it's much harder to lie. To show that world-weariness – I've been through some things in my career, including the duality, the heartache side of it. So I hope it's more authentic.

Q. I was surprised to see so many unfamiliar faces in key roles in the movie. How did you feel about Eastwood casting a lot of people who have done "Jersey Boys" onstage?

JLY: I felt like it was a really brave and bold choice. Two things going on with this movie, independent of who's cast: One, it's been seen by 19 million people. Two, it's Clint Eastwood's next movie. People will want to see it. He had the latitude to cast actors not as familiar to audiences.

On the level of believing the characters, it helps to have them be unknowns, not from a franchise movie or a sitcom. And economically he was able to work at his pace and do a musical movie at his pace, which is lightning speed. The shoot was under 40 days. Everybody knew their roles cold. Clint put the camera out front and captured what was honed onstage. I had worked in "Jersey Boys" on Broadway with Erica (Piccininni,

who plays Valli's girlfriend), Norm Waxman (who plays a loan shark) and Mark Lotito as (songwriter-keyboardist) Bob Gaudio's father.

Q. Eastwood is known as a director of few takes. Was that a concern for you going into the shoot?

JLY: I was a little nervous about that. I figured I might need more because of my inexperience in a studio movie. But I found I was able to bring my performance down pretty quickly. Clint put me at ease immediately. I told myself it was logical feeling Eastwood had confidence in the performance. Why else would he cast me? So I was not nervous.

Q. Any thoughts about how the musical changed as it was adapted for the screen?

JLY: It's a Clint Eastwood movie through and through, the drama and the grit. But also the exhilaration that stage audiences go nuts for. I know this show very well. It was so interesting to sit and watch it, knowing every line, and yet the experience couldn't be more different. It's its own thing, and yet it retains the exciting elements of the show people see onstage.

Q. Film acting is quite different from a large Broadway house. How did you prepare?

JLY: I had been studying film acting between jobs all along. Every stage actor wants to do film. So I had been ready for that for a long time. I had done a comedy with Lainie Kazan a few years before, so I had some movie experience. And Eastwood is a master director. They did "Casablanca" on that soundstage, so it was very heady. But I'd spent 15 years acting, training, consolidating what I was learning in preparation for the opportunity to do the role.

Q. Heading into filming, what did you see as the biggest challenge?

JLY: I anticipated certain stagecraft issues. For example, I know I can have an impact with a live audience – like turning downstage toward them on a line to give it more emotional impact. That worked so well onstage. So the day we shot that scene, I (told Eastwood I) didn't know how to translate that to film. He had me do the exact same thing. He said your instincts serve you well.

Q. Now that the movie's done, what are some of your favorite moments in it?

JLY: I really love the aging of the character. The camera's right there, so it's much more noticeable than onstage. It's fun to do as an actor, to gradually age Frankie. And it's fun to watch for me. I also loved the relationship with these other guys I'd never worked with onstage. And of course the surprise ending.

Q. Do you have a behind-the-scenes story of working with Eastwood?

JLY: We were shooting a scene late in the Four Seasons' stage career, when Frankie is successful and living in a slinky Fifth Avenue apartment. Between (camera) setups, I was sitting in a chair waiting, and I heard a really familiar theme on the grand piano in the room. After a few bars, I realized it was the theme from "Mystic River" (a movie Eastwood directed). Eastwood was on set by himself. While everyone else was taking a break, he was playing a theme he himself had composed. It was a beautiful moment. But then some yahoo actor got on the piano after him and started playing Joplin's "The Entertainer" or something. (Laughter.) It completely ruined the moment.

Q. You didn't grow up in Jersey. What was it like shooting in Frankie Valli's childhood neighborhood?

JLY: He was right there with us. I felt a great degree of reverence for that moment. There was a moment outside his (former) home in the projects when we sat down on his stoop,

and he told me stories – pointing out where his girlfriend lived, the neighbors by name, getting sentimental about his own life. He was literally beside himself, since I was playing him. It was a really wonderful moment. I think it was the most sentimental I've seen him.

Q. What are your current projects?

JLY: I just finished a CD of music from the period of the Four Seasons, "My Turn." It's on iTunes and will soon be on Amazon. It's R&B from the '60s, songs I've loved. People ask me for songs from that period when I've been singing live all over the country.

I'm also serving on the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Within the next few months I'm coming back with ("Harold & Kumar" actor) Kal Penn to work next door to you in Iowa, working with kids in five schools around the Des Moines area. It's a groundbreaking initiative called Turnaround Arts, taking some of the lower-performing public schools and integrating the arts into their curriculums as a way to improve academic performance and school culture.

Q. Do you ever get back to Omaha?

JLY: I haven't been back since I lived there. Maybe on a trip to Des Moines I can sneak over there. I still know some folks there. ☐

[Interview with John Lloyd Young of "Jersey Boys"](#)

16/06/2014 by Ed Symkus for lenconnect.com

John Lloyd Young's professional career is all over the place. He's acted in numerous off-Broadway productions, he's sung at the Café Carlyle, he has a new R&B-flavored album called "My Turn ...", his pop art sculptures are represented by the Hamilton-Selway Gallery in West Hollywood, and he was recently appointed by Barack Obama to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. One other note: He originated – and won a Tony Award for – the role of the Four Seasons lead singer Frankie Valli in the Broadway production of "Jersey Boys," has played the part about 1,400 times, and is now starring as Valli in Clint Eastwood's film version. Young, 38, a Brown University graduate, spoke about a little bit of everything by phone from Minneapolis last week.

Q. What were you doing just before you got the play and then just before you got the movie?

JLY: Just before I got the play I had great success with a stage adaptation of Chaim Potok's novel "The Chosen." It was a very happy time for me as an actor because I played the Hassidic character Danny Saunders, a role that's very different from me. And I played opposite Theodore Bikel, who was theater royalty. I learned a lot from him. I did the first two years of "Jersey Boys" on Broadway, then went on to other things. But before the movie started ramping up, the "Jersey Boys" producers on Broadway asked me if I wanted to come back for a stint, and I said yes. So I was playing the role on Broadway again at precisely the time when Clint Eastwood got attached. He was going around the country looking at different productions, and he came to a matinee performance of it in New York. I met him after the show, he told me he totally enjoyed my performance, I told him I was glad he was there, and the next time I met him was on his set. That [talk] had functioned as my audition and I didn't even know it.

Q. When you do a play, you can tweak things every night. What were your thoughts about getting to do one film performance that would be captured for posterity?

JLY: It was actually a real relief. When you do a stage performance you're tied to one script and it's the same direction and the same staging every time. You get to know your character very well, but there's a sort of pressure building up. You get new insights into your character but you still have the same script, and you have no place to express them. So when I got the chance to do the film I was just so relieved that I would have a place to put those extra insights. I was able to let that character psychologically emerge more than I could onstage.

Q. Was it a big difference working with a film director rather than a stage director?

JLY: Absolutely. When you're building something in theater you try things different ways during rehearsal; you do scenes over and over again until you and the director and the cast are satisfied, then you kind of set it in stone and take that to the stage, and it doesn't change much. With the film, we rehearsed for 40 days. You get the raw material and try things in different ways, and then the director and his editors choose the pieces that work for them and they end up telling your story, which to me was fascinating to see.



Q. Do you think of yourself as an actor who can sing or a singer who can act?

JLY: I can do both, but I prefer to do them separately. I prefer to either be in a concert, singing songs, or to act a role.

The thing about "Jersey Boys" is that the Broadway experience afforded me the opportunity to do both in the same show. I was playing a singer. So when I was singing I was in concert or a recording studio. I didn't have to do that tricky thing where you're singing lyrics as though they're a scene, like in an operatic way. I don't have any problem with that. I just don't enjoy doing it as much as I enjoy acting by itself and singing

by itself.

Q. There's a scene in the movie where Frankie plays directly to the red-headed girl in a club. When you were onstage, did you find yourself playing to audience members or feeding on the audience's energy during songs?

JLY: One of the reasons people love "Jersey Boys" so much is that the audience is a character in the story. When you're in concert the audience that's there that night is your stand-in for the concert audience that you're imagining in the play. So as the character Frankie, you're actually playing off the audience that's in front of you, and it deeply involves them.

Q. Are the film offers already lining up?

JLY: The doors to those sorts of things are definitely opening, and I'm looking forward to see what the future holds.

[Kory Chats With John Lloyd Young From The Movie "Jersey Boys" \(audio\)](#)

16/06/2014 by Kory for morehits1037.cbslocal.com

http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/audio/kvilcom_radio_Kory_Chats_With_John_Lloyd_Young.mp3



NEW YORK, NY – APRIL 29:
Actor John Lloyd Young
speaks to the media at the
58th annual Drama Desk
Awards nominations at 54
Below on April 29, 2013 in
New York City. The Drama
Desk awards will be
presented on Sunday, May 19,
2013 at The Town Hall in New
York City (Photo by Jemal
Countess/Getty Images)

[John Lloyd Young talks about his role as Frankie Valli in 'Jersey Boys' Film \(audio\)](#)

16/06/2014 by Sarah Knight Adamson for Hollywood 360 Radio

http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/audio/hollywood360radio_interview_JLY062014.mp3

From Stage to the Big Screen: John Lloyd Young is 'Enjoying the Ride.'

Frankie Valli once said, "You can take the boy out of the neighborhood, but you can't take the neighborhood out of the boy." After screening Jersey Boys, Clint Eastwood's new film about the rise of the musical group, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, truer words were never spoken and played out in real life. The film provides an up close and personal look at the group's rise to success and the dark clouds they performed

under.

John Lloyd Young, the actor who originated the Frankie Valli role on Broadway in Jersey Boys in the debut year of 2005, also won a Tony for Best Actor. He's very instrumental in the success of the show and its enormous popularity. During our interview on June 12, he confirmed that he'd been in over 1800 performances of the play in New York and London.

Director Clint Eastwood is known for his love of music and his composing talents and I was curious as to what Young learned from him as an Academy Award winning film director.

Young replied, "Clint says to keep it simple and to not over think anything and that usually your first idea is your best idea. It's a really great philosophy because Clint himself says that filmmaking is not an intellectual medium. It's an emotional medium. It's one of those things in life that proves that you should go with your gut."

I asked about Rob Lorenz, Clint's collaborator, as I'd interviewed him in 2012 when he directed Eastwood in his last film, Trouble with the Curve, and if he worked on the Jersey Boys film.

Young said, "Yes, Rob is really Clint's right hand man and is intricately involved in filmmaking as he can possibly be without actually being the director. He was a constant presence on the set. They [Clint's crew] really keep things moving very quickly and easily. Many of the crew have been with Clint for twenty years. Some of them come out of retirement just to work on a new Clint Eastwood movie. He's got loyalty and efficiency down to just a science."

There's no denying that Young is grateful for his opportunity to bring the play to the big screen as he talked about the odds of a Broadway star crossing over into the film arena.

Young reflected, "I know from the experience of loving

Hollywood movies my whole life and knowing the historical impact and the rarity of a Broadway actor who's known very well for a theater performance to be able to then make it permanent on film like Robert Preston was able to do with Music Man or Yul Brynner with The King and I, I know that it's a very rare thing."

He continued, "The fact that I achieved the goal of being that guy and working with Clint Eastwood too is a major dream; that's the primary thing that I'm grateful for."

As we all know, stage work and film work are very different and I asked Young to speak about his experience with both.

"I really love the process of meticulously pouring over every angle of the scene with yourself and your fellow actors. As in one or two scenes of a day and then moving on and meticulously pouring over every single nuance of the next scene. I think it's a really nice way to work. I feel that you give your director raw material in a film scenario, the best raw material you can, because, in the end, he shapes your performance in the editing room, whereas on stage, once the director is done mounting the production, they leave and the actors are thereby themselves responsible for carrying the audience to the story."

"They say that theater is a playwright – an actor's medium and that film is a director's medium. However, as an actor in that director's medium, I found that really fascinating to just try to live moment to moment on set, giving the best material to Clint and his editors – the best material possible and then be surprised at what they have chosen, how they chose to piece it together."

Young spoke of his enormous respect and appreciation for the man he portrays, Frankie Valli – as the singer (also his friend) was on set many days throughout the filming.

"Frankie (age 80) is a very interesting man, which is what I'm

so grateful for because it's not fun to play a boring character. He certainly is not boring in the least. What I find very interesting about Frankie is that he's succeeded against all odds. He really is an American dream story and yet, he's also had really, really hard knocks in his life. In getting to know him over the years and also understanding him from the character. When you're playing someone who's living and breathing, there's a lot of ways that I learn about him. Not only from Frankie himself, but from what people tell me about him or from my observations back stage- like how people react to him."

"I think the main thing about Frankie that was so easy to savor as an actor is he's got success measured with a deep awareness of the other side of the positive of life."

What does **Young** hope that audiences take away from the film rendition of Jersey Boys?

"I hope the audiences who already loved the stage production of Jersey Boys see this as their bonus version. If Jersey Boys the stage play were the outside of a mansion of someone you are really intrigued about, the movie is a tour inside the mansion. It's goes deeper and it enhances something that you already love. People who don't know the stage play will think it is an intriguing drama. It's a Clint Eastwood movie. I love Clint Eastwood's movies and just on the sheer curiosity of itself of how Clint Eastwood directs a musical themed movie, I think people are going to be just fascinated to see how he brings that off."

John Lloyd Young, Erich Bergen & Michael Lomenda – Jersey Boys

16/6/2014 by grouchoreviews.com

John Lloyd Young won the 2006 Tony Award for Best Leading Actor in a Musical for his portrayal of Frankie Valli in the original Broadway cast of Jersey Boys (he also picked up Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and Theatre World Awards). In addition to reprising Jersey Boys in a second Broadway run and a West End run, Young has also appeared on Glee, recorded a solo album, and performed in his own solo concert at Lincoln Center and in a concert presentation of Les Misérables at the Hollywood Bowl. Erich Bergen played Bob Gaudio in the first national tour of Jersey Boys and in the Las Vegas and Los Angeles productions. Soon he'll be appearing in CBS' new fall drama Madame Secretary; his other credits include playing Billy Crocker in the first national tour of Anything Goes. Michael Lomenda essayed Nick Massi in the first national tour of Jersey Boys, the culmination of regional stage stints in musicals like Hairspray, Cabaret and Grease. He's also one of the select few to have played James Bond creator Ian Fleming (in the Canadian television project True Bond). We all sat down to discuss Clint Eastwood's film of Jersey Boys—and their history with the play—at San Francisco's entirely apropos Four Seasons Hotel.

Groucho: Hello boys...!

John Lloyd Young: Did you see [James Franco]'s movie?

Groucho: Palo Alto? Yeah, yeah.

John Lloyd Young: Is it good?

G: I thought it was quite good.

JLY: Oh, it is? Okay. I read some of the stories—they were interesting. He really remembers adolescence. maybe he never left it.

(All laugh.)



CHICAGO, IL –
JUNE 10:
Actors Erich
Bergen, John
Lloyd Young
and Michael
Lomenda attend
the “Jersey
Boys”
screening at
Kerasotes
Showplace ICON
on June 10,
2014 in
Chicago,
Illinois.
(Photo by
Barry
Brecheisen)

JLY: Actors rarely do.

G: Alright, well, to me one of the most exciting aspects of the material—other than, of course, the music—is the multiple

perspectives.

Erich Bergen: Yes.

G: Which is the tag line of the movie as well, right? "Everybody remembers it like they need to." So could you each...speak a little bit to what you worked out about your character's perspective, maybe some of the things that might not be expressly articulated in your monologues, but that you figured out about where your character's coming from?

JLY: You want me to start? Well, one of the things that changed from the stage adaptation to the screen is that Frankie doesn't have as much of a spoken point of view as he does on stage. Very little voice-over, very little narration to the camera—

G: And it's held back longer in the story too, right, before we hear that?

JLY: Absolutely. He comes together with the other guys at the end, and sort of sums it up. But I think for me the experience of Frankie Valli in this movie is less "Here's my point of view," like it is on stage or even that their three characters have—the other three characters actually share their point of view—and it's more about actually observing Frankie Valli and looking into his psychology. So I didn't have as much a point of view. I couldn't dictate my own point of view in this.

G: Right, yeah.

JLY: And that's great. 'Cause I just got to live as the character a little more thoroughly.

Erich Bergen: Bob Gaudio is responsible for—I think Johnny told me earlier they have seventy-one—

JLY: Just heard that on the Today show today: they introduced the Four Seasons; they talked to Clint Eastwood. They said that the Four Seasons had seventy-one chart-topping songs.

EB: Right! Seventy-one songs, in American popular music, which, y'know, I can't even imagine that. I can't even think of the Beatles having it. It just sort of—that's an incredible amount of songs. Of course the other side of that is how in the world did it take this long—how in the world did no one know that they were all by the same band. You have seventy-one songs hitting the charts! And yet...Bob being responsible for at least three-fourths of those songs, it seems as though he's at times prouder of his business decisions than he is of his creative endeavors. And that's so funny to me to be so far removed—not so far removed—but for him to have been prouder of things that we sort of don't care about. It's like "Those songs! Those songs!" but he's really way more into the ideas that he had and sort of the innovative things that they did, especially considering he was sixteen when this all was really getting started. That's, I think, very interesting to me as someone who loves these songs, just as an actor who loves and appreciates these songs. Playing someone who sort of writes them and goes, "Huh, yeah," that's really interesting to me.

Michael Lomenda: I think Nick sort of offered what I kind of think of as "the sober second thought." I think he often talks—well, in the play, particularly, he talks about Gaudio [slips into accent] "looking so far into the future he never saw what was going on under his nose."

EB: He even comes out with the accent!

Michael Lomenda: Yeah. And so I think he's in the background a lot of it but that allowed him to be the observer and to really realize, to say, "Hey. These guys were caught up in it, but this is what was really going on underneath the surface. And I think he offers that sober second thought and says, y'know, "This is the grit. This is the reality of it."

G: And to tell it back to the others, yeah.

ML: Yeah. Absolutely.

G: "Here's what you're not seeing."

ML: Yeah.

G: So an obvious question has to do with your contact with the real guys, minus the late Nick Massi. What, if any, help were they able to provide you and at what points in your journey with this material?

JLY: Frankie Valli offered me much more help than he ever knew. Because I stole from him shamelessly every time I've seen him over all of these years. You can learn something about somebody's psychology more by what they choose to evade, or how they choose to answer, than you can by what they actually say, so I've never listened to actually—no, I've listened to what Frankie Valli has to say, clearly, but instinctively as an actor I've never listened to his words so much as I've listened to why he's chosen to use them. And his outlook on life, which I think is very important to be able to be around, in playing him. He's fatalistic. He's had a lot of bad things happen to him, and yet at the same time he has a talent, and he never gives up. He's like the yin-yang of pop singers.

ML: I think one of the awesome byproducts of Bergen and I touring the show around North America is all these people come out of the woodwork—

G: And tell you stories.

ML: And tell you stories, exactly.

JLY: Everyone's a cousin.

ML: Everyone is a cousin. Charlie Calello, you know. These great stories. I met Nick Massi, Jr., Nick's son. And so although I didn't get a chance to meet the actual Nick, it's, as you sort of say, John Lloyd, you learn a lot more about people based on what other people say about them. You know?

And so that was kind of interesting to learn that.

EB: I have a great memory of tech-ing the show, the tour, that we opened here in San Fran at the Curran. And seeing an empty theater, from the stage, but looking out into an empty house, with the exception of one person that was Bob Gaudio himself, sitting in like the fifth row of the orchestra section. And he was looking at the speakers when we were singing a song. Almost like when you look at a dog, and they hear a noise from behind them, but they don't turn their head; they just turn their ears instead? He was sort of like—his ears were hearing things that we weren't even hearing. And he was able to say, "No, that speaker needs to move a little bit more—." He was so involved with the sound that I was getting to watch someone not reflecting on their life but still at work. I mean, I was getting to—it was like this weird meta thing where I'm watching—I'm playing a person onstage, and I'm watching, and he's actually working on my version. It was very bizarre!

G: It's like he was managing himself.

EB: Exactly! Exactly.

G: So Clint Eastwood has a reputation for few takes, which would seem at odds with a musical film. How did that play out? Was it a fast-paced shoot? Was it leisurely? Was it both?

JLY: Maybe, maybe not it would seem at odds. Think about how he cast it: three-fourths of the core group he cast with guys who've done this—each of us have done our roles, respectively, in our separate companies of Jersey Boys, more than twelve hundred times each.

G: Right, right.

JLY: So when you think about how fast Clint works, well, doesn't that fit?

G: Yeah.

JLY: 'Cause all he needs to do, really, is put a camera in front of something we already know so intimately. We've had more rehearsal—

(Bergen laughs.)



JLY: Than any other actors he's ever worked with his entire career. And he's actually said that. I mean, "These guys have tread the path in these roles for years and years."

EB: And with the film...in the scenes, he was very involved and right there, obviously, but when it came time to do the musical numbers, we almost didn't see him. He went away and sort of hid in the audience with the cameras and sort of left us in the hands of Ron Melrose, our music director, and Sergio Trujillo, our choreographer. And he filmed those numbers almost like a documentary, where he filmed it from the audience's perspective, capturing live rock and roll at work. He didn't stage them, we didn't rehearse them, we really just did as we'd always done. We got Vincent [Piazza], who had never done these songs...in and comfortable, but then we just did it as we always had and the cameras rolled. And that's why when you watch it, it has that look of a concert at that time. It helps that we're not doing "Seventy-Six Trombones," and none of these songs are coming out of the plot. They're all done within the context of a live concert or a recording studio or things like that.

JLY: It's still a scene. He's shooting a scene of a band at work.

EB: Yeah.

JLY: Either behind the microphones in a recording studio or

onstage in front of an audience. So that can go fast, 'cause we already knew our stuff. We didn't have to rehearse it, we never messed up lyrics: I mean, c'mon! You can't mess up on stage; it's a two-and-a-half-hour take. And we know how to do it without screwing up.

EB: But I think we only did "Sherry" like five times in full? That was it.

G: What's an example of a Clint Eastwood direction?

(Pause. Chuckles.)

EB: Oh! Well, when he yelled at me, to—he didn't yell at me, but I think he was changing the lens on the camera, and I heard in the background, "Hurry up! Bergen's thinking!"

(All laugh.)

ML: Or, I mean, "Kick ass and take names." (Laughs.) That was one of my favorite quotes. That's often—I mean, he does a great job of creating the vibe on set of what he wants the feel. So he would—in that particular scene, he'd want us to really hit it out of the park, and other scenes, he's very much more relaxed and creates that sort of feel of, I don't know, just a bit more chilled sort of vibe, so that he almost evokes it by creating the environment.

JLY: We had a little visit in my trailer. There was a complex scene coming up, and I was kind of—I needed—I didn't have to talk to him very often about things, luckily, 'cause I'd lived with my character so much so that I didn't have to bother—well, I don't think he would even have considered it bothering.

ML: No.

JLY: But he came to my trailer one day 'cause I had wanted to talk to him about a scene that was giving me a little bit of nerves, and I didn't know how to kind of keep my performance

from stage strong in his milieu, you know? And he directed me a few times via anecdote. In this meeting, he said to get—he told me this story about an actor—I don't know, some famous actor—who had told Clint, when he was a young actor, about Olivier. And Olivier on stage in London was doing a show, and he would rev himself up beforehand, thinking that the audience was his enemy. So that when the curtain went up, there was this feral animal there that the audience couldn't keep their eyes off of. But the reason is because he hated them! They just didn't know it. And I thought, "Why did he tell me that anecdote?" And I realized the only possible explanation was that he was giving me permission, in the scene that we were about to shoot, to dare to let the audience not like me. On Broadway, it's so tempting—the audience is eating out of your hand in this show. You take care of them, you narrate your sections, they're on your side no matter what. In this scene, it could very easily be that the audience would not like me, and I think that he detected maybe I didn't know how to negotiate that. And he gave me permission to be unliked.

G: One of the domestic scenes?

JLY: It was the scene where the band's breaking up.

G: Ah, yeah. To me, that's the most memorable scene in the movie. It really captures that scene in the life of every band. Right? Every band has that moment...

EB: Well, every family has that moment. I mean, we've seen that so much in—I mean, I hate to say it, but it's what we see in reality TV now. Y'know, it's almost become the height of drama is to have a breakdown like that, but in this it wasn't about extraneous things. This was a band at the height of its success that had nothing to show for it. But even if—I always say, if you take the songs out of Jersey Boys, you still have an amazing play and screenplay about four guys growing up together, four brothers who—that's why so many people relate to this, especially men of that generation. There's so much of

seeing ourselves in these people. And that scene in particular because it's just written so well that, y'know, even with these guys doing some things that maybe they're not proud of, it's written in a way that we're rooting for them.

G: So something that all Broadway and touring actors have to deal with is the time you are doing that material over and over again, and protecting your voice, the unflagging vocal demands and the essentially unchanging material, and living with that over a long period. So what are your varying methodologies for dealing with a long run?

ML: I think what's so great about Jersey Boys is that we get this ability to connect with the audience directly by speaking to them. And I think there's something about—it's different every single night. The audience has a different identity every single night. So I think what's great about it is being able to sort of suss that out and figure out who this audience is and what your relationship every single night is, uniquely, to that specific audience and almost tailoring your performance to them. I mean, we're all breathing the same air in the same room, right? So that's kind of wild. And so that's...I felt...what keeps it really fresh. And also working with a great group of actors who love the show and are proud of it means that everybody brings their "A" game every single night, and you get to see the different changes, and people want to come and play within the framework of the play.

G: Yeah, subtle little cues that change it up a bit.

ML: Yeah, subtle little cues. And people are willing to sort of experiment and enjoy that. And I think that's ultimately what keeps it fresh.

EB: Mine was to get out of the way of the script. There's very little "acting" in its heightened form that we're doing here. The script is written so well; every last word is important. And it's moving on paper. When you read the script, it's

moving. And that's how you know it's good. And that's always been my approach is let the audience hear these words—they already know the song—so they're hearing in their heads what they want to hear. But they haven't heard the script yet, So make sure that they know these words.

JLY: I care very much about an audience when I'm in front of one, like almost like it's my job to take care of them. And so to keep it fresh for me, it feels like I have to consider them. Most of them are new, have not seen it, but they've heard it's great, and how sad would it be, and disappointed in myself would I be, if I allowed them to see anything less than what they heard they were gonna see. So that for me is I'm taking them through the story 'cause I know it's their first time. It's like if I was a tour guide at the Capitol building. I'd know, "This is so exciting for them." So it stays exciting for me. And in terms of just physically maintaining a physical performance over six to eight shows a week, week after week after week, it's like you have to have a very clean life, get rest, and, y'know, not do all the bad things. Especially as a singer: no drinking and no yelling loudly in bars. It's a very quiet kind of life. I do a lot of reading, when I'm working on the show: a lot of reading, a lot of study and stuff for myself, like Rosetta Stone, learning a language or something. And I save my energy all day for the stage.



G: Alright, well, they're going to yank me, so it was great talking to you guys.

EB: Thank you!

ML: Likewise.

JLY: Thanks.

Q&A: JOHN LLOYD YOUNG

24/03/2014 by Matthew Amer for officiallondontheatre.co.uk



John Lloyd Young in Jersey Boys on Broadway (Photo: Joan Marcus)

As career-defining moments go, being cast as iconic singer Frankie Valli in the original Broadway cast of Jersey Boys is as close to dictionary definition perfection as possible for the Californian stage star John Lloyd Young.

The US performer had served his apprenticeship in regional and off-Broadway productions before being cast in the lead role of the musical, new to the Great White Way, telling the chequered story of Frankie Valli And The Four Seasons. Little could he have known then – this was back in 2005 – that the role would lead to him winning a Tony Award, performing at the White House, or recreating his performance in the big screen adaptation of the musical directed by Clint Eastwood.

Or, in fact, that it would also bring him to the UK, to London, to the Piccadilly Theatre, to once again hit Valli's high notes in songs from Sherry and Walk Like A Man to Begging and You're Just Too Good To Be True in the West End production of Jersey Boys.

We quizzed the American star and discovered some surprising childhood movie favourites, what it was like to work with Eastwood and a pleasingly New Jersey-ish taste in meals.

How did it feel to create the role of Frankie Valli for the Broadway production?

Exhilarating. To step into the shoes of someone who was already a well-known star and to see my own career begin to take off for portraying Frankie Valli in a way that re-engaged his fans and made him (and me) brand new ones was the privilege of a lifetime.

What was it like to win a Tony Award for your Broadway debut?

So many actors say that the role is everything. This role, amongst musical theatre roles this size, is truly rich and full of potential. I was so relieved to fulfil that promise in my first Broadway outing and to have made such an impression on audiences and Broadway insiders, who can be a really tough crowd to win over.

How does performing in Jersey Boys in the West End compare to performing on Broadway?

I'm just beginning my run, but my first impression is that this theatre district is a much cosier enclave than the vast Broadway jungle. Theatre people here are so warm and friendly and the audiences, though equally enthusiastic as on Broadway, seem extra polite at the stage door! But maybe that's just my American ear, savouring that English accent we all love so much.

What makes Jersey Boys such a popular show?

Simply this: everyone loves a rags to riches story, especially when it's set in New Jersey! There is something irresistible about getting to see the backstory of something you already love: in this case the music of this legendary group. The fact that the Four Seasons speak to the audience along the course of the story really brings people in and makes them feel an integral part of the characters' journey.

Which is your favourite song in the show?

It's a tie: Sherry and Can't Take My Eyes Off You, because they're respectively the real spine-tingling Act One and Act Two show stoppers.

How was filming the movie with Clint Eastwood?

I was in constant awe being on set with such an American film icon. He is a sensitive and intuitive director who understands music and true grit, albeit this time Jersey-style, not wild-wild-West. His sensibilities served this story beautifully. Most meaningful to me was the respect and trust he showed me in translating my stage performance to the screen. Clint is a surprisingly gentle yet deeply motivating leader.

What does your work with the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities involve?

Not surprisingly under the Obamas, with their history in community organising, this Committee is engaged in a groundbreaking initiative called Turnaround Arts, taking some of the lowest-performing public schools and integrating the arts into their curriculums as a way to improve academic performance and school culture. They are using an arts-based approach to teaching across all the subjects and the results in student performance, motivation, decrease in discipline problems and sense of community for students and their families have been astounding. They are expanding the reach of the program to include some new schools and I will take on one of the schools as their sponsor Committee Member. Some other members of the Committee like Sarah Jessica Parker, Forest Whitaker, Yo-Yo Ma and the artist Chuck Close have been working with some of the first schools of the program, and they and the students have really developed a wonderful relationship.

For us, it's a great feeling to give back to young people; for the students, it's so important to them that their whole school has been "chosen" by the Committee and that there are accomplished people who care about their progress and want to see them succeed.

What sparked your interest in performing?

When I was very young two of the biggest movies out there were Tootsie and Amadeus. I was obsessed with both of these movies, watched them over and over again, and related viscerally and immediately to Dustin Hoffman's and Tom Hulce's characters, which is probably a bit odd for an eight-year-old. But something in me was instinctively drawn to the life of a misunderstood, brilliant and wilful artist. I wanted to become one.

What is the finest performance you have seen?

For pure stagecraft, Dame Judi Dench in Amy's View on Broadway ties for me with Al Pacino in Hughie.

If you could create a fantasy production to star in, who would you cast, who would direct and what would it be?

I don't really think along these lines, ever. I have always been much more interested in being open to what the universe produces. For example, I never would have expected to work with Clint Eastwood and suddenly there I was working with him. I like to see what surprises life has in store.

Do you have any theatrical superstitions?

Though I'm not generally superstitious, I held over from college that tradition to never dare call Macbeth anything other than "The Scottish Play."

What is your fondest childhood memory?

The rare trips to the big city to see Broadway shows. I remember the first time I sat in the mezzanine (or what you call the dress circle, here) and gripped onto the cool brass railing eagerly awaiting the curtain coming up.

Who or what has inspired you?

My friend and manager, Dona. She never lets me get away with anything; she challenges me to constantly improve myself. We've had some epic battles, but it's made me a better man.

Where was the first place you went when you arrived in London?

Bed. I had Los Angeles to London jet lag to take care of!

What will always, without fail, bring a smile to your face?

I'll keep that one to myself.

What book, film or album would you recommend to a friend?

Make Good Art by Neil Gaiman.

What would you choose as a last meal?

Pepperoni pizza.

What could you not be without?

Soap.

Do you have any advice for young actors?

The thing early on that you think is "wrong" with you, that makes you not fit in with everyone else, becomes the key to your career as an actor. Start embracing it.

If you weren't an actor, what would you be?

A lawyer. And probably a tough one.

[Tony Winner John Lloyd Young on Bringing a Taste of Jersey to London, Working with Clint Eastwood and More](#)

19/03/2014 by Matt Wolf for [broadway.com](#)

'I'd rather have more work as an actor than some award on my shelf any day of the week.'

John Lloyd Young needs no introduction as the defining Frankie Valli in Jersey Boys, the international musical smash hit in which he has been starring off and on for almost nine years. He won a 2006 Tony Award for his performance on Broadway, returning to the New York production last year only then to be tapped by the director Clint Eastwood to star in the film version of the musical, due for release June 20. As if that weren't enough, actor is currently leading the transfer of the Olivier Award-winning West End production from the Prince Edward to the Piccadilly Theatre. Is it possible to have too much of a good thing? Not a chance, as the personable performer explains to Broadway.com two performances into his six-week London engagement.

Your arrival on the West End is being heralded as the “best thing to ever happen to British theater since Shakespeare.”

Well, Shakespeare has evolved then, I guess—though I'll tell you, there are moments in this show that reach Shakespearean heights.



It must be interesting performing this show in a land where the word “Jersey” has numerous meanings—a sweater or one of the Channel Islands, for starters—that have nothing to do with New Jersey.

And don't forget the famously milk-producing Jersey cows! I suppose that I have so far felt a little bit with the English audience that there is a learning curve at the beginning of

the show where they're thinking, "What is this going to be?" But by the middle of the first act through to the end, they're with it all the way.

Tell me about appearing alongside a British cast. Are you ever tempted to correct a rogue accent?

Not at all. I sometimes notice a little bit of a tinge of something here and there but nothing that in any way upsets the apple cart.

How does it feel to return to the show after being away for a bit?

It's been like jumping back on a bicycle.

Between returning to the Broadway production last year and coming to London, you starred in the Clint Eastwood-directed film version.

That's right, and I go directly from this London engagement to promoting the movie. The whole thing has been kismet.

What was it like reprising the part on film?

The most amazing thing right at the beginning was that I didn't have to audition. What happened was that I was back in New York in the show for nine months, when Clint got attached to the project and started seeing the various Jersey Boys companies around the country, so he saw the show on Broadway when I happened to be in it—that was my de facto audition.

Did he say anything to you backstage afterward?

We said hello, but it was all very quick because he keeps things very close to the vest and so do I. I was polite and kept it short and thanked him for being there—and the next time I saw him was on set.

That's amazing considering how infrequently stage stars are

tapped to recreate their roles on film.

Yes, although as you can imagine when the idea of the movie came up, I did some research into Hollywood history to see what the chances were of my getting to do the role, and it appears that the performer who gets passed over most often is the female star whereas often times the male star has gotten to do the role—Rex Harrison with *My Fair Lady* or Robert Preston with *The Music Man*, among others.

So you had a sense of what your chances might be?

Let's just say that some of the qualities that you might think disqualify you from a lot of things can also end up being the key to your career. For example, with Frankie Valli you've got to have a very specific Italian look and a high voice that can sing the part and a shorter stature and be slight of build. There's a certain cocktail of qualities that you have to have and that limits the pool.

Did the movie feel like the stage show simply put up on the screen?

Well, because it's written by Marshall [Brickman] and Rick [Elice], it's very close in essence to what you've seen and know, but because it's a film, it goes deeper. For instance, whereas we meet Frankie's daughter once in the stage show, in the movie, she is played by three different actresses as she grows up.

What was it like being directed by Clint Eastwood?

Fast! We shot in 40 days, and our producer Graham King, who's a Brit actually and did *Argo*, told me that he's used to working with directors who talk fast and shoot slow and Clint was the first one who shoots fast and talks slow.

Some Oscar pundits are already touting you as a possible Best Actor nominee next year.

I haven't even seen the movie yet, and I may even wait till the premiere, so I don't have any clue what I'm going to think of it. But I do know what it felt like to be on set, and it felt as if we were getting really good things. Anything beyond that to do with awards is clearly out of my hands. I'd rather have more work as an actor than some award on my shelf any day of the week.

Do you see yourself returning to this role at regular intervals in years to come?

I don't know. Frankie in our show does start at age 16 and it would be kind of awkward to be 50 and playing a 16-year-old. No disrespect to the Jersey Boys family at all, but I do hope to find some other roles as well.

Still, I bet your association with this role is going to be hard to top.

Perhaps, but I don't really think of "topping" something in terms of finding a better role. What I do think of constantly is racking up life experience. I have other things in my life that are so fun for me like art and music. It's about letting the universe present itself to me and taking the best out of what life has to offer.

On the Couch With... JOHN LLOYD YOUNG

15/02/2013 by Timmy Blupe for oandmco.com

He's just too good to be true! John Lloyd Young is the slick crooner best known for his Tony Award-Winning portrayal of

Frankie Valli in Broadway's Jersey Boys. Currently playing an engagement at the Café Carlyle until February 22nd, John continues to dazzle audiences with Four Seasons' era inspired tunes. Find out what John wastes too much time doing as we get him On the Couch!



Q: What do you consider to be your best asset?

My fans.

Q: What was your proudest moment?

Winning the Tony Award for Best Actor.

Q: What is your favorite drink?

Iced tea.

Q: What is your favorite food?

Pizza.

Q: What is your favorite condiment?

Whole grain mustard.

Q: What is your current obsession?

Learning to write Chinese.

Q: If you could give up one of your vices, what would it be?

Pizza.

Q: What is the one professional accomplishment you long for

most?

A duet with Beyoncé.

Q: What is the one thing you waste too much money on?

Background checks on my enemies.

Q: What is the one activity you waste too much time doing?

Background checks on my enemies.

Q: What do you consider to be the single greatest threat to your health?

Pizza.

Q: What is the single best trait you inherited or learned from your parents?

Discipline in work.

Q: What is the single worst trait you inherited or learned from your parents?

Paranoia.

Q: What in the world most thrills you?

Art.

Q: What current trend in popular culture most irritates you?

Serious journalists interviewing Honey Boo Boo.

Q: What was the single most embarrassing moment you've ever experienced on the job?

Reading that my original understudy from Jersey Boys was touring the country letting people think he was me.

Q: What is your favorite place in the world?

Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Q: What is the most important trait you seek in a romantic partner?

Patience!

Q: Do you prefer the company of dogs or cats?

Very funny.

Q: What would have to happen to make today the best day of your life?

My original understudy gets cast as Eddie Munster in Munsters, the Musical.

Q: What is your personal motto?

Maintain your integrity; keep your sense of humor.

[John Lloyd Young Interview for Milk of Minuta \(audio\)](#)

28/10/2010

This time out we have the honor speaking with Tony Award winner John Lloyd Young. Mr. Young is of course best known for playing the role of Frankie Valli in the blockbuster Broadway musical Jersey Boys. He is the only American actor to date to have received a Lead Actor in a Musical Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Theatre World Award for a Broadway debut. We are also proud to present music from the Original Broadway Recording featuring John Lloyd Young on vocals. Special thanks to the fine people at MPL Music Publishing and to Dona Miller for helping to make this episode possible. John Lloyd Young's website is at www.johnlloydyoung.com.

http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/audio/milkofminuta_john_lloyd_young_102010.mp3



[John Lloyd Young Recalls a Close Encounter with Oprah on Tony Night](#)

01/06/2010 by Broadway.com Staff

I dedicated the award to my father

When a Broadway debut yields a Best Actor Tony Award, it's obvious that the performer and role are perfectly matched. Such was the case when John Lloyd Young burst onto the Broadway scene as Frankie Valli in Jersey Boys. In bringing the Four Seasons icon to life, Young gave a magnetic star turn (featuring an impeccable falsetto) and was rewarded with a Tony in what he acknowledges was stiff competition. Young looked back on his winning night for Broadway.com.

Which year did you win your first Tony?

2006

For which role and show?

Frankie Valli in Jersey Boys

Where were the awards held?

Radio City Music Hall

Who hosted?

“60 stars of stage and screen”

What did you wear?

Our director, Des McAnuff, hooked us up with his favorite designer, Ted Baker.

Who was sitting next to you?

My girlfriend and Jersey Boys co-star Daniel Reichard

Who did you think would win your category?

I had just won three other major awards, so I knew I had a great shot. But my fellow nominees, especially Harry Connick, Jr. [for The Pajama Game] and Michael Cerveris [Sweeney Todd], had me very worried.

What was the first thing that ran through your mind when they said your name?

I better book it to center stage so that I don't run out of time to speak.

Did you forget to thank anyone?

I knew I couldn't ever thank everyone who deserved to be in the short time allotted, so instead I dedicated the award to my father, sent personal notes to everybody and thanked the entire world on my blog. (It's still there!)

Did you cry?

Later that night, alone in a bunk on the tour bus to DC (we sang at the White House the next day). Tears of exhaustion!

If you could relive that night, would you change anything?

It was such a treadmill that night, I don't think there'd have been room to change anything!

Who were you most surprised to hear from after your win?

Oprah Winfrey, in the wings, right after I won, who told me I gave an excellent speech.

Did winning a Tony change your life? How?

I'm still trying to figure that one out.

What's your biggest memory of the night?

Standing on a platform at the beginning of the ceremony chatting with dozens of legendary stars, talking to Rita Wilson about her butterflies for her opening in Chicago the next day.

What's the best piece of advice you can offer for getting through Tony night?

You're at work; the party's for everyone else.

Where do you keep your Tony?

In my study, lit from above in a glass bookcase with my other awards for Jersey Boys and my treasured plays, books and biographies.

After starring as Frankie Valli, Young makes concert debut

21/02/2008 by Jay Lustig for The Star Ledger on nj.com

It was the role of a lifetime: playing rock icon Frankie Valli in the musical "Jersey Boys." John Lloyd Young made the most of the opportunity, winning a Tony in his Broadway debut.

But now what does Young – who left the show in November after two years in it – do for an encore?

Young, 32, who grew up in Plattsburgh, N.Y., and now lives in Jersey City, is reading scripts, looking for another great role. But he is also trying something new, presenting two concerts on Saturday in New York.

Q. If this your first concert?

A. I did some private concerts during "Jersey Boys." But yeah, this is my first public concert. It's certainly the first time that people are buying tickets to come and see me, as myself. That's a bit of a scary thing for an actor to contend with, but I think I'm ready.



Q. Do you see this as the first step of the next stage of your career – that you'll do a lot of concerts and, maybe,

recording?

A. It's not what I've set out to do: I'm an actor first and foremost. The concert is sort of an accident – a result of being an actor who played a rock 'n' roll superstar in a show that had a heavy concert element. So now that it's a skill that I'm very good at, and prepared to do, it's an obvious offshoot. But I'm still reading scripts, I'm still auditioning for roles.

Q. What kind of material are you going to do? Broadway songs? Pop songs?

A. It doesn't really make sense to me to do a concert with Broadway songs right now. "Jersey Boys" was my Broadway debut, and I didn't sing any Broadway songs in that show. So I'm singing classic (pop rock) songs from that same period, and exploring this new genre that I accidentally discovered I was a good interpreter of.

The great thing is that, when you're an actor playing a character – especially when you're playing a real person, in a biography of their life – you've got to hit the marks that they hit, and a lot of the challenge is sounding like them, behaving like them, convincing the audience that you are that person. I enjoyed singing Frankie's career, but a lot of those songs were very specific to him, and it required extra effort to be able to sing one or two of those songs that weren't necessarily the most natural fit for me. So, choosing 75 minutes of material has been so exciting, because I've only chosen stuff that's right for me.

Q. Can you give me a couple of examples?

A. Well, without giving away any of the playlist, I can tell you some of the artists I've chosen: Del Shannon, Roy Orbison, Three Dog Night, Sam Cooke, Jay and the Americans. Just great singers. And I'm not putting my falsetto away. Everything I discovered I could use in "Jersey Boys," I'm using.

Q. Before “Jersey Boys,” had you ever done musical theater?

A. I did get the odd musical, but certainly never had the lead character, and only ever had one or two songs.

Musical theater is often musical comedy. I can play comedy, but ... it’s not often that you have a musical where you plumb the depths of your soul, and tear out your heart in front of the audience, on a nightly basis. And “Jersey Boys” allowed me to do that.

Q. Would you ever release an album under your own name?

A. If someone approaches me with an idea that appeals to me, then of course I’ll say yes. “Jersey Boys” was that kind of situation. They needed someone to play Frankie. And I happened to fit, and it was a discovery for them and for myself, at the same time.

Q. What kind of musical backing will you have at this show?

A. Two backup singers and five in the band.

Q. Do you have a musical director?

A. Yeah, Ed Alstrom. He knows this genre very well. In fact, we met because he works with someone from that era: he’s the musical director for Darlene Love, and she invited me to be in her Christmas concert a few years ago. He and I put together a song for that concert, and discovered we liked working with each other. So we put together this show, and he introduced me to a lot of these songs. Knowing my voice, he suggested a lot of these songs that I distantly knew, but would not have really known were right for me.

Q. I have to ask: Will you sing “Can’t Take My Eyes Off You” or any other “Jersey Boys” songs at these shows?

A. I’ll answer you this way: There is one song that will probably follow me around the rest of my life, and it’s the

same song that's followed Frankie around during his life. We've got a really great problem in common.

Q. It is a song that you don't ever get tired of hearing?

A. The thing about the lyrics of that song is that they're universal. If you continue to live life and deal with the ups and downs of your own romantic life, a song like "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" will have a different meaning for you when you're 50 or 60 than it does when you're 20 or 30. So it can actually deepen.

If my signature song were "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini," I probably wouldn't be too happy that I had to sing that the rest of my career. But this is a great song to be connected to.

[Interview with John Lloyd Young – Jersey Boys Podcast](#)

<http://johnlloydyoung.club/media/audio/jly-interview-jerseyboypodcast-12-01-2008.mp3>

12/01/2008

The topics covered in the interview includes: what John is doing now and in the near future including his upcoming concert on Feb. 23, 2008; his thoughts on supporting service through fund raising; his praise for his dedicated fans; the Tony Award wins; his feelings about leaving the cast of Jersey Boys; and Michael Longoria's strengths as the new Frankie Valli on Broadway.

Young mingles with old at Home

14/09/2007 by Bob Verini for variety.com

Actors Fund houses showbiz legends

When one “Jersey Boy” visited the Actors Fund Home last year he discovered not just a nursing home but a repository of showbiz lore, a place where old can mingle with young.

That would be John Lloyd Young, specifically.

Young, the Tony-winning star of “Jersey Boys,” wanted “to do something of my own election for my community,” so he passed up the April 2006 MAC Award ceremony to appear at the groundbreaking of a Home expansion project.

“I spent the day there, meeting and talking to everyone: dancers, people who’d been in vaudeville ... It was great to see the Actors Fund funds at work in such a beautiful way.”

Coincidentally, he encountered a songwriter whose work figures in his performance as Frankie Valli.

“Call me Miss Barbara Belle,” insists Barbara Belle Newman, Home resident and co-author of the ’40s gold record “Sunday Kind of Love” which Young sings nightly in a scene set – where else – in church.

Newman hears the “Jersey Boys” CD often in her residence area. She opines that Young “sings it very well. Of course, the song really belongs to Fran Warren.”

Actors Fund executive director Joe Benincasa says “There’s a

national intergenerational interest” in Home visits though there’s no formal program to bring generations together.

“When John Lloyd Young comes out and visits residents, he’s truly interested in understanding the careers of people there, and what his arc in the business might be,” Benincasa says.

Since his visit, Young has been appointed, with “Young Frankenstein’s” Sutton Foster, as co-chair of the Fund’s national board of advisers.

He plans to return to the Home to perform a cabaret set for Newman and his other new friends.

Does Newman give counsel to the earnest showbiz kids who drop by?

“Well, there’s one thing I tell them: Believe in yourself. If you believe in yourself and your talent, that’s everything.”

And no, she hasn’t yet been to see “Jersey Boys,” but she hopes that an invitation will be offered.

“They better!,” she says.

[JBB EXCLUSIVE: Interview with John Lloyd Young!](#)

24/07/2006

Jersey Boys Blog was honored to interview Tony Award-winner **John Lloyd Young** prior to his matinee performance on Sunday, July 9, 2006. John Lloyd discussed his amazing year from his Broadway debut in Jersey Boys to winning the coveted Tony Award; his life as an actor; and what it’s like to play the

legendary Frankie Valli on the Great White Way.

JBB: It's been just about a year since the media announced that you landed the role of Frankie Valli in Jersey Boys. When you accepted the part, what did you think this would mean for your career? Did you have any idea that the show would be a blockbuster hit and a Tony winner?

JLY: Well, I knew I landed the part in April of last year, but I had to keep quiet about it. There were delicate negotiations ahead, and I was going to have to fight hard for all the things I knew I'd need in order to pull off such a difficult part. It became official on June 12, 2005.

I was exhilarated when I landed the Frankie Valli role, but there was a lot of pressure and responsibility with the role—it was a solo crusade. I had six months of training, rehearsals, and previews to build up the stamina to play the role. We also opened in the winter when it's very rough on the voice. My vocal coach Katie Agresta, who has been training rock stars for forty years, was up for the challenge. Katie has given me one of the greatest gifts—a peace of mind—and, in her words, a “larynx of steel.”

Earlier in my career, I had triumphs and well-reviewed performances. I always can tell from the first time I read a script. The first time I read those scripts, I laughed and cried. I really identified with the characters. And in each case, it ended up being a successful portrayal in the end. I felt the same connection with the Jersey Boys' script.

I've always been able to sing, and I was up for a lot of catalog, or jukebox musicals in the past, though I can't say I always wanted to be cast! Generally in musical theatre, you can't always expect to see a lot of high quality scene work, and jukebox musicals are on the bottom rung, in that regard. You don't expect to get high-quality scene work in a jukebox musical, but this play is about the band and is so well-

written by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice that it can attract real actors. The fact that Jersey Boys won Tonys for Best Musical, Best Lead Actor, and Best Featured Actor is a real testament to how good it is. I felt that there was a lot of potential with the script.

Jersey Boys is a real play with great music, and it's great because everyone works to serve the piece. If you look at Sergio Trujillo's excellent choreography, it's rather underrated and unrecognized, but it's because he serves the piece, not himself. Bobby Spencer does the same and downplays his portrayal of Nick Massi. He serves the piece.

JBB: Congratulations on winning the Tony Award for Best Leading Actor in a Musical! When you actually won the Tony and they called your name, was it surreal? Your acceptance dedicated to your father was extraordinarily touching. How did it come about?

JLY: Thank you. During the luncheon for all the Tony nominees, CBS asked us not to thank a list of names in our speeches. It would be more interesting to a national audience to say what the Tony meant to us, personally. And I thought about that and realized that all the Tony speeches I could remember were the ones that said something personal. I abandoned my multiple, polite, obedient drafts and went straight to what got me to me the most, emotionally.

Because I had already won three other awards, with the Tony, I was prepared to win; but I was also prepared to lose. I rewrote the speech many times, because you have 90 seconds to get it right, and you don't want to screw it up. I knew I'd talk about when my father and I lost my birthmother, then, after Christian won for Best Featured Actor, I was re-writing a new entrance to my speech, in my head, since Christian had also mentioned his lost parent. And all along, I was nervous and wondering whether I'd even get to use the speech at all.

Since Father's Day was a week after the Tony Awards, had I not won, I would have given my father my written speech on Father's Day.

The most thrilling part of the Tonys, though, was winning Best Musical. Because not everyone has felt sufficiently recognized, this year, and a lot of people have been very upset by that. Daniel Reichard and Bobby Spencer, especially, deserved to be recognized, because they originated the show with Christian Hoff in La Jolla, along with a great deal of our Broadway cast. It was very nice to see them happy and celebrating a shared award.

JBB: As you prepared to take on the role of Frankie Valli, you saw him in concert in Las Vegas. What were your first impressions of him as an entertainer and as a person?

JLY: As Valli walked on stage, the energy completely changed. Although he has a great band and great backup singers, the energy in the room didn't come alive until he walked on stage. He has an aura. There is warmth and affection for him from the audience.

JBB: Jersey Boys is the hottest musical on Broadway. What is it about the story and the music that makes the audience feel so connected?

JLY: The story is told by four relatively unknown actors who are playing the Four Seasons. Most people do not remember what the real Four Seasons looked like, so they can easily believe us as those characters. The audience follows the story and connects with the four guys going through their struggles, hitting it big, and then losing it all. It's a story of the 1960s, with the Four Seasons as the tour guides.

JBB: What's your favorite scene in Jersey Boys?

JLY: The explosive scene between Mary and Frankie, when Francine, their daughter, calls them on the phone. Although

I'm not married yet, and I'm not a father yet, in that scene I feel like an estranged husband and a father. This scene also pays homage to my grandfather, and Jennifer Naimo, with her red hair, reminds me a bit of my grandmother.

JBB: Give us your best line.

JLY: She says to me, "Francine needs a father." I answer, "How about a mother? Whyn't you pull yourself together?!" It's my favorite line because the writers Marshall and Rick invented a word: "whyn't."

JBB: What's the most challenging part of playing Frankie Valli?

JLY: The challenges of playing Frankie Valli are mostly now behind me. There were six months of training, including listening to the Four Seasons' music non-stop for months before the first rehearsal, along with rehearsals and previews, and managing the workload of playing this role. It was a challenge to build the character, and become that rock star, and it was a challenge to build up the stamina to play this role. Now it's still eight shows a week, which is still hard, but all that preparation is behind me. It's always been and still is a challenge to keep that stamina up, which means no staying out late, no drinking, etc. And that can be isolating, literally: I can't have a social life with the cast or even my own friends. But the sacrifices have been so obviously worth it in so many ways.

JBB: In Jersey Boys, you go from a 16 year-old blue-collar kid with a dream to be a singer, to a 60 year-old superstar, who experienced amazing success in the music business, as well as heart wrenching personal and professional tragedies-how do you transform yourself? What is the theatrical process that you use to make it believable?

JLY: I am an actor! I know how to change my expressions and my voice. Transforming myself is my job. But there are other

elements at play, too. As you see on stage, as I grow older, I begin to wear more mature clothes. Late in the play, there are times when my director, Des McAnuff, has me with my back to the audience. I'm sure it's easier to believe someone as older when you're seeing their back, and hearing an older-sounding voice. The lighting is harsher, late in the play. So there is also help from the lighting and direction, as well as the change in design and my own physicality-so these elements come together to make it work.

JBB: What would you like to do next? Do you have aspirations for an Emmy or an Oscar?

JLY: It was an incredible honor to be nominated for and win the Tony, since it is recognition from our peers. However, I am not in this for awards. I do want to do Emmy-level or Oscar-level performances. Whether I get awards or not is less important than the level at which I'm working. You can't survive for almost a decade as an unknown actor if you're just in it for awards or publicity. It's all about the work. It always has been. I strive to play high-caliber, interesting, challenging roles. Maybe now I'll just have an easier time finding them.

[Plattsburgh Native Wins Tony for Jersey Boys \(Audio\)](#)

<http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ncpr-jly-16-06-2006.mp3>

16/06/2006 by Todd Moe for 'Weekday Morning' radio show on ncpr

Plattsburgh is celebrating the success of native son John Lloyd Young who won a Tony Award and then made a trip to the White House for a command performance earlier this week. Young was honored last Sunday night with Broadway's highest award – the Tony for best lead actor in a musical – for his powerful performance as Frankie Valli in Jersey Boys. The show also won best musical. Young graduated from Plattsburgh High School in 1993, and he told Todd Moe about growing up in the North Country.

[Hear Robin Young's Radio Interview With John Lloyd Young](#)

http://johnlloydyoung.club/wp-content/uploads/audio/hereandnow_07-06-2006-npr.mp3

07/06/2006 by Robin Young for 'Here&Now' radio show on wbur 90.9 fm

[Jersey Boy\(s\), a Toast of Broadway – New York Times](#)

28/05/2006 by Mark Rotella for N.Y. New Jersey



photo: Dith Pran/The New York Times

IT may be one of the few musicals men actually drag their wives to see – time after time. In this case, at least, their judgment is apparently impeccable.

The Tony nominations were announced a little more than a week ago, and “Jersey Boys” – the Broadway musical about the lives, music and times of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons (of Newark and Belleville) – earned eight of them, trailing only “The Drowsy Chaperone,” with 13 nominations, and “The Color Purple,” with 11.

Little wonder, since from the time it opened on Broadway last November, “Jersey Boys,” which features a book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, has been a critical success and one of the hottest tickets on Broadway – which is not always the case.

John Lloyd Young, the man who plays Frankie Valli, has received not only the Tony nomination for lead actor in a musical, but also similar award nominations from the Drama League, Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle (in the last two cases, he has already won). Appropriately, Mr. Young, who is 30, lives in New Jersey.

He moved to Jersey City just as “Jersey Boys” opened in previews last October. But why did he move from Brooklyn to a city on the other side of the Hudson? To tap into his “Jersey Boys” roots? For inspiration?

“For love,” **Mr. Young** answered, as he sat at a table at Madame Claude, a cozy sun-drenched cafe in downtown Jersey City.

For love of New Jersey?

“No, love of my girlfriend,” he said with a smile, referring to Alison Franck, who has lived in Jersey City for about four years and has been his girlfriend the last two.

Mr. Young sipped his tea, and cut into his egg-and-cheese

croissant. Dressed smartly in designer jeans, a black T-shirt and a navy blazer, he reminded me of Mr. Valli, who wore a stylish blazer over a sweater made of merino wool the time I met him. Mr. Young, who is half-Italian, even has Mr. Valli's dark hair and looks.

"My mother's name was Cianciola," he said. "Which means 'sad eyes' in Sicilian dialect."

Mr. Young's mother died at age 26, when he was 2 years old and living in Plattsburgh, N.Y. But he continued to visit his Italian grandparents in Queens. He grew up listening to Frank Sinatra and Vic Damone and was encouraged to perform by his father and the woman who later became his stepmother.

"When I was 3 years old, they stood me on the kitchen chair and had me sing," **Mr. Young** said. "And that year I sang 'You Light Up My Life' at their wedding."

Later, he performed in high school musicals and then studied theater and Spanish at Brown University. Soon after graduating, he made his first New Jersey connection with his professional debut at the McCarter Theater in Princeton as part of the ensemble of "A Christmas Carol" in 1998.

His first big role was as the Hasidic teenager Danny Saunders in "The Chosen" at Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn in 2004. He commuted from Park Slope, Brooklyn, and it was at the Paper Mill that he met Ms. Franck, who was the show's casting director.

While he was an understudy for another Paper Mill show, "The Drawer Boy," **Mr. Young** auditioned for the La Jolla, Calif., production of "Jersey Boys." The role he sought was that of the Four Seasons' founder, Tommy DeVito. But upon seeing Mr. Young and hearing him sing, the director, Des McAnuff, asked him to audition for the role of Mr. Valli, who grew up in Newark.

When **Mr. Young** didn't get the role, he began working as an usher for the Broadway revival of "42nd Street" and transcribing celebrity interviews.

"I had prepared for the DeVito role, not Valli's," he said. "I didn't seize the role. You don't ever land a part you don't seize."

When he read in a theater trade newspaper that "Jersey Boys" was going to Broadway and that the Valli role had yet to be filled, he called his agent to ask for another audition.

"It's a specific role," **Mr. Young** said. "You have to look like him – be slight of build, be Italian looking, be able to sing. And you should probably be a good actor."

Mr. Young also had a good falsetto, having sung along as a teenager to the Bee Gees, Chicago and Supertramp. He didn't fully appreciate his gift, but it was the falsetto that surprised everyone.

While preparing for the part, Mr. Young met with Bob Gaudio, the Four Seasons member who wrote most of the band's music.

"If you want to learn about someone – especially a legend – you talk to that person's best friend," **Mr. Young** said.

While in rehearsal, Mr. Young finally met Mr. Valli himself, from whom he continues to learn.

"Every time I meet him, I steal something from him – a gesture, a way he says something," **Mr. Young** said. He quit his job as an usher in 2004, and a year to the day later – on Nov. 6 – "Jersey Boys" opened at what is now the August Wilson Theater (it was then the Virginia).

On June 11, Mr. Young will find out whether he will win a Tony for his first Broadway role. Christian Hoff, who plays Mr. DeVito, has also been nominated, for featured actor in a musical. He, too, lives New Jersey, in Millburn.

Naturally, Mr. Young would love to win the award, but he keeps in mind what his singing instructor, Katie Agresta, tells him. Tens of thousands of actors come to New York to work; thousands actually find work; hundreds are cast in Broadway shows; dozens gets lead parts. But only five are nominated.

For now, **Mr. Young** has been doing a variety of fund-raisers, and participating in lunches auctioned off on eBay by Broadway Cares/EquityFights AIDS. Most of the lunch guests have been men – “middle-aged baby boomers from the tristate area,” he said. Unlike the Beatles, the Beach Boys and some of their other contemporaries, the Four Seasons attracted a mostly male working-class audience.

“I had one lunch with a guy – a member of New York’s auxiliary police squad,” **Mr. Young** said. “He had seen the show with his wife five times, and he told me that now when he thinks of Frankie Valli, he sees me. That’s a high.”

After performances, **Mr. Young** returns home to Jersey City. He lives off of Hamilton Park, picks up coffee at Basic and relaxes at local bars like the White Star and the Ale House. He and Ms. Franck also take walks along the Newport-Pavonia waterfront.

Living here, **Mr. Young** said, “makes me want to get a dog.”

“It’s a dog lover’s paradise,” he said.

Mr. Young said that when people come to the stage door and greet him after “Jersey Boys,” they always ask him if he lives in New Jersey.

“The best thing is that I can say that I live in Jersey City,” he said. “They beam and have this proprietary glee that I actually live in Jersey.”

2006 Tony Awards Q&A: John Lloyd Young

17/05/2006 by Robert Diamond for broadwayworld.com

John Lloyd Young is currently starring as Frankie Valli in Broadway's JERSEY BOYS. For his work in JERSEY BOYS, John Lloyd has received the 2006 Outer Critics Circle Award (Outstanding Lead Actor), a 2006 Theatre World Award, and nominations for the 2006 Drama League Award (Performer of the Year), and the 2006 Drama Desk Award (Outstanding Lead Actor). Now, he adds a 2006 Tony Award Nomination for Best Leading Actor in a Musical to his list of credits. Before JERSEY BOYS, John Lloyd completed the New York-area premiere of Michael Healey's THE DRAWER BOY, with Steppenwolf's John Mahoney (TV's Frasier), at the Paper Mill Playhouse. Regional appearances include the McCarter Theatre; Kennedy Center. John Lloyd was also named one of 2004's Best Featured Actors in a Play by the NJ Star-Ledger for "Danny Saunders" in Aaron Posner and Chaim Potok's dramatic adaptation of THE CHOSEN, opposite Theodore Bikel, at Miami's Coconut Grove Playhouse and Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse, directed by David Ellenstein.

Tell us John what the last few weeks leading up to this morning have been like?

I feel great, and this morning is sort of a caper to the past great few weeks. This is the big one, but it's been great, and it's all been an amazing buildup to here because we've had lots of activity up until now. We've had the Theatre World Awards, the Outer Critics Circle Awards, and nominations for that and the Drama Desk Awards, so for it to now also happen with the Tony Awards, was perfect.

Given all the success, and how well you've been doing in 'awards season' so far, it sounds like there shouldn't have been much doubt?

I was actually a little frightened that maybe it wouldn't happen today. The more people that say that something's going to happen, the more I worry that they're going to be wrong. That's a curse for us Catholics at least!

And how has the journey of JERSEY BOYS been for you?

Well, it is extremely intimidating to think that it was a little more than a year ago when I got the offer to do it. At the time, I was an actor who was doing plays primarily and some small musicals, but certainly not a major musical, and certainly I never had the lead in a major musical! A year ago, I was in a place where I was 2 months into rigorous training to just attempt to sing this score, not to mention that I was looking to star in it! It's a show where I had to carry a great deal of it, and had to work with a company that had already done it at La Jolla, so I was going to be the new kid. I was petrified a year ago! I was working hard, and not letting my fear cripple me, but I was scared.



And now?

Well now I'm in a place where about 7-8 months into the run,

I'm very comfortable and very confident in what I'm doing because all the initial work is behind me. There's of course all the ongoing work of 8 shows a week, but it's just a real rush to not only have achieved the stuff that I wanted to do for myself like playing the role and doing it justice, but to now also be recognized by my peers. That especially is great, and even more so because I'm like a new peer on Broadway this year. To make a long story short, if you look at the place that I was a year ago, and the place that I'm at now, it couldn't be more different. If I had to write the book, I wouldn't have written it any differently on how it all turned out.

For those of us that have seen the show, it's clear that you're put through the paces both vocally, and physically every night how are you holding up?

Getting through the show 8 times a week has always been a challenge, but the lucky thing for myself and my colleagues (and anyone that opens in a rigorous show) is that we opened in the winter. Those were the worst months, and we're all very happy to have them behind us. I know that for our dance captains, not that our show has that much dance, but they hate the winter because you have to spend twice as long warming up.

I think that what was great for us was that opening in the winter made us all so strong from battling the elements so now that the weather has cleared up, the 8 shows a week are actually easier physically. This gives a reserve of energy for all the other stuff that's happening in this awards season. Luckily it's not as daunting now that the weather has given up.

So it's not quite easy, but 'easier' ?

It will never be easy, but easier is an appropriate way to describe it.

Going back to this morning when the nominations came out who

was the first that you heard from?

The first person that called me was my father, then my agent and someone's even calling me on my cell phone right now it's my mother again. The closest women in my life were the first people to call me, and my girlfriend was here with me which was a good thing to be able to watch that together.

Have you been able to catch any of the other men who are nominated in your category?

I've actually seen all of the men nominated in my category I've seen all of their performances, except for Stephen's because he and I have the same exact schedule but I did see the opening number of The Wedding Singer last night at a benefit. It's a tough category because everyone is really great, and so we'll see what happens. Any result will be a fair one and they're also all very nice at these functions where we've had a chance to talk. They're all great guys.

Any last thoughts to wrap up with?

My voice teacher says that tens of thousands of people come to New York to be actors, thousands get paid for it, hundreds are on Broadway, dozens get leads, and only 5 get nominated for the Tony. So, I feel like all of us have won already!