



For context:

Heading into the Fall of 2025, I had been eagerly preparing for months to direct Jen Silverman's *Collective Rage: A Play In 5 Betties* for Redtwist Theatre's Season of Defiant Femmes. Our team was a week into the rehearsal process when Redtwist Theatre learned that we no longer had the rights to the show.

Four sleepless days later, I pitched the production team Maurine Dallas Watkins' 1924 *Chicago*, the play that inspired the Kander and Ebb musical. It had just entered the public domain. I presented my edits of the original to the cast and design team, and from there we got to work, collaborating and crafting at the speed of light for an intense five weeks. What resulted is one of the proudest works of my life, and one of the most exhilarating and demanding creative challenges of my career. We opened the World Premiere of *Chicago: Queerly Adapted From The Play You've Never Heard Of That Inspired The Musical You Can't Get Away From* on October 19th, 2025, the same day that our original production was supposed to open. We retained all of our Artists Contracts in the process, a fact I am particularly proud of as a director and producer.



Art by Charlie Tolbert

Adapted by Eileen Dixon and Dusty Brown

With contributions from Chelsea Rolfes, Shaina Toledo,
Jasmine Robertson, Caroline Kidwell, Jack Seijo, JT Nagle,
Laura Sturm, and Macaria Chaparro Martinez

DIRECTORS NOTE

In 1924, Chicago Tribune journalist Maurine Dallas Watkins covered the sensational murder trials of Belva Gaertner and Beulah Annan—two women accused of killing their lovers. The press turned them into celebrities. *Chicago* was inspired by how the media, not justice, shaped the verdicts.

This story isn't just about crime—it's about performance. In a system where justice favors charm, wealth, and whiteness, "playing ball" can mean the difference between prison and freedom. It's a game not everyone gets to play. A century later, the message endures—those in power still twist truth to suit themselves.

Chicago explores the murky line between truth and spectacle. It asks: What matters more—the facts, or the story that sells? Who pays the price, and who walks free?

Eileen Dixon
Director and Adapter

DUSTY BROWN EILEEN DIXON
EXECUTIVE PRODUCING
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
REDTWIST THEATRE PRESENTS

CHICAGO

**Queerly Adapted from the Play
You've Never Heard Of
That Inspired the Musical
You Can't Get Away From**

WRITTEN BY
MAURINE DALLAS WATKINS
ADAPTED BY EILEEN DIXON
AND DUSTY BROWN

DIRECTED BY
EILEEN DIXON

CREATIVE TEAM

STAGE MANAGER: CHARLIE LEVINSON
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: TAYLOR MERCADO OWEN
DRAMATURG/ADAPTER: DUSTY BROWN*
SCENIC DESIGN: BRANDII CHAMPAGNE
PROPS DESIGNER: LEO BASSOW*
COSTUME DESIGN: MADELINE FELAUER*
LIGHTING DESIGN: CAT DAVIS*
SOUND DESIGN: HARPER JUSTUS
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: JEFF BRAIN
MUSIC DIRECTOR: CAROLINE KIDWELL*
PROD. MANAGER: RAINE DEDOMINICI*
CASTING DIRECTOR: EILEEN DIXON*

* DENOTES A REDTWIST ENSEMBLE MEMBER



ROXIE HART: Chelsea Rolfes
AMOS HART: JT Nagle
BILLY FLYNN; FRED CASELY: Jack Seijo
MOE WATKINS: Shaina Toledo
MARY SUNSHINE: Ashley Anderson
HARRISON; LIZ; KITTY: Caroline Kidwell*
ZELDA MORTON; JUDGE: Jasmine "Jaz" Robertson
VELMA; ROSIE: Laura Sturm
MURDOCK; MAGDALENA: Macaria Chaparro Martinez

Understudy Cast

Performances November 6th and 16th
ROXIE HART: Kelsey McGrath
AMOS HART: Jeremy Neale Cox
BILLY FLYNN; FRED CASELY: Hannah Antman
MOE WATKINS: Lexy Weixel
MARY SUNSHINE: SaniaFaith McKnight
HARRISON; LIZ; KITTY: Erin Feldman
ZELDA MORTON; JUDGE: Andie Daye
VELMA; ROSIE: Elizabeth Bushell
MURDOCK; MAGDALENA: Miranda Hernandez

Check out my website for an archived recording of the show! <https://www.eileendixon.com/about-5>



FROM INSPIRATION...





...TO CREATION



CHICAGO READER – HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

“Dixon’s spare but smart staging brings in some gender twists that add wry commentary to the ways the women are on trial.”

[Read Full Review](#)

- Kerry Reid



STAGE AND CINEMA – HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Watkin's original stage play is adapted by ensemble members Eileen Dixon and Dusty Brown. Demonstrating stellar précis-like editing skills, they've excised every extraneous bit from the original text with the result that the show doesn't move so much as hurtle down its narrative path at a breakneck pace. Not content with shaming long-winded writers, Dixon also takes on directorial duties, keeping her troupe of actors moving with the assurance of a circus ringmaster.

[Read Full Review](#)

- C.J. Fernandes



CHICAGO THEATRE REVIEW – HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

"...Redtwist Theatre continues their 21st Season, called "Defiant Femmes," with the World Premiere of *CHICAGO: Queerly Adapted From the Play You've Never Heard of That Inspired the Musical You Can't Get Away From*. Adapted with an eye and ear for the true, fast-paced Chicago Style of Comedy, this production is hilarious and exhilarating to boot. Penned by Redtwist's Producing Artistic Director, Eileen Dixon, and Executive Director, Dusty Brown, all the unnecessary details from Maurine Dallas Watkins' 1926 script have been trimmed away. The result is a perfect, streamlined show for 21st century audiences. Given the current political climate, everyone's in need of a good laugh. And this fast-paced confection of comical caricatures is guaranteed to lift every theatergoer's spirits and fill them with merriment."

[Read Full Review](#)

- Colin Douglas



DIGITAL PROGRAM:

[HTTPS://WWW.REDTWISTTHEATRE.ORG/CHICAGO](https://www.redtwisttheatre.org/chicago)

More reviews for *Chicago: Queerly Adapted*...

<https://www.theatreinchicago.com/chicago-queerly-adapted-from-the-play-youve-never-heard-of-that-inspired-the-musical-you-cant-get-away/reviews/13137/>

