

Synopsis of Chicago the Musical

Chicago is a musical, first performed in 1975, based on the play *Chicago* by Maurine Dallas Watkins. Its book was by Bob Fosse and Fred Ebb, music by John Kander and lyrics by Fred Ebb.

The play *Chicago* was Watkins' retelling of two very public trials for murder that occurred in Chicago in 1924, those of Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner. Watkins had been a reporter for the Chicago Tribune and later wrote a play based on her coverage.

The show is about a failed chorus girl's, Roxie Hart, murder of her lover, nightclub regular Fred Casely. Roxie convinces her husband Amos that the victim was a burglar, and Amos cheerfully takes the blame. However, when the police mention the deceased's name, Amos belatedly puts two and two together. The truth comes out, and Roxie is arrested and sent to the women's block in Cook County Jail, inhabited by Velma Kelly and other murderesses. The block is presided over by the corrupt Matron "Mama" Morton, whose system of mutual aid perfectly suits her clientèle. Velma is not happy to see Roxie, who is stealing not only her limelight but also her lawyer, Billy Flynn. Roxie tries to convince Amos to pay for Billy Flynn to be her lawyer. Billy takes Roxie's case and re-arranges her story for consumption by sympathetic tabloid columnist Mary Sunshine, who always tries to find "A Little Bit of Good" in everyone. Roxie becomes the new toast of Chicago as Velma's fame is left in the dust. Separately, Roxie and Velma realize there's no one they can count on but themselves and the ever-resourceful Roxie decides that being pregnant in prison would put her back on the front page. A little shy on the arithmetic, Amos proudly claims paternity, and still nobody notices him. With her ego growing, Roxie has a heated argument with Billy, and fires him. She is brought back down to earth when she learns that a fellow inmate has been executed. The trial date arrives, and Billy calms her, telling her if she makes a show of it, she'll be fine. As promised, Billy gets Roxie her acquittal but, just as the verdict is given, some even more sensational crime pulls the pack of press bloodhounds away, and Roxie's fleeting celebrity life is over. Billy leaves, done with the case. Amos stays with her, glad for his wife, but she then confesses that there isn't really a baby, making Amos finally leave her. Left in the dust, Roxie pulls herself up and teams up with Velma in a new act.