

Four IU grads meet up in traveling 'Chorus Line'

Spotlight will be on the stage, but IU success stories playing out in orchestra pit

By Jimmy Jenkins

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BLOOMINGTON — One of the longest running and most successful musicals in the history of Broadway is coming to town, bringing with it a pit orchestra populated by Indiana University Jacobs School of Music graduates.



All smiles: Left to right are musicians Chris Imhoff, Sean Imboden, Trevor Davis and Eric Dickson. The four Jacobs School grads all play in the traveling production of "A Chorus Line," at the IU Auditorium Tuesday and Wednesday. Courtesy photo

They are Trevor Davis (MM, '08), Sean Imboden (BM, '06), Chris Imhoff (MM, '08) and Eric Dickson (MM, '05), and they make up nearly half of the pit in the current traveling production of "A Chorus Line." The musical comes to the IU Auditorium Tuesday and Wednesday.

Dickson, who spoke recently via telephone from a tour stop in Appleton, Wis., said he is excited to return to Bloomington.

After earning a masters in trumpet performance from the Jacobs School, he went on to freelance as a musician, working with ensembles in Richmond, Lafayette and Fort Wayne.

Currently a doctoral candidate at the Jacobs School, Dickson has been working hard, but also "having a lot of fun on the road."

His time at IU served him well, Dickson said.

"One of the great things about the Jacobs School is that there are so many different opportunities to work with different styles of music. When I was there, I played in

orchestras, wind ensembles, brass quintets, and I even freelanced in an R&B band. Working with so many different formats helps you learn that good music is good music, it's just a matter of learning to play the different styles."

And that's one of the really fun things about playing this show," Dickson continued. "There are many different styles within it. 'A Chorus Line' was written in the mid '70s, so it has that rock feel to it, but it also has some jazzy influence. The big thing I learned at IU was that, fundamentally, all music is the same."

He appreciated the large network of friends and colleagues he made through the music school.

"You never know who you might run into in the halls of the Jacobs school – what kind of relationships you might make, or where they might take you."

While the tour will continue on through next May, Dickson is happy his path has returned to Bloomington.

"I'm looking forward to reconnecting with some friends while we're in town, and visiting the Upland Brewery after the show."

The Great White Way

"A Chorus Line," which originally opened in New York City in 1975, was developed by several Broadway veterans as a celebration of musical theater and the process that performers undergo to make it onto the "Great White Way." The show won several Tony Awards and set records for longevity, running nonstop until it closed in 1990.

In recent years, "A Chorus Line" has seen a revival in the music world, touring with fresh

faces and renewed energy since 2008.

Erica Cenci, a cast member of the current touring production, thinks people will enjoy the show because "it really lets the audience see the audition process that performers go through."

Based on famed Broadway star Michael Bennett's interviews with career dancers, Cenci feels that the authenticity of "A Chorus Line" comes through.

"You see all of these people get thrown together in a room and put through the paces of singing and dancing as they audition for a show. I think it really conveys the amount of work, determination, and effort that it takes to make it in this business."

Cenci's character, Bebe Benzenheimer, is "an almost embarrassingly eager singer and dancer" who sings about her love of ballet, and how she only feels beautiful when dancing.

Speaking to the unique nature of musical theater, Cenci herself believes in the power of song.

"While some people might think musicals are too schmaltzy or make-believe, I think the songs are there because sometimes it's the only way people can convey what they are truly thinking and feeling. Sometimes it's not enough to just speak words – you have to sing it, you have to dance it," she said.

If you go

WHO: National touring company

WHAT: "A Chorus Line"

WHEN: 8 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday

**WHERE: IU Auditorium, 1211 E. Seventh St.,
Bloomington**

**TICKETS: \$20-\$60. Online at
IUauditorium.com or Ticketmaster.com, in
person at the IU Auditorium Box Office, or
charge by phone at 800-745-3000.**