

# BUZZ EXTRA

# XANADU

BROADWAY'S SURPRISE HIT MUSICAL

March 2-14 at PlayhouseSquare  
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### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE ANCIENT GREEK GODS?

#### "I'M ACTUALLY FROM GRAFTON, OH."

Talking with Choreographer Dan Knechtges  
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### "To a theater person, the Greeks are the founders of pure theater."

-Douglas Carter Beane  
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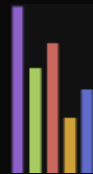


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Yes

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### HEAVEN ON WHEELS



Photo: Elizabeth Stanley and company

Suddenly, the wheels are in motion as **XANADU** skates into PlayhouseSquare March 2-14 as part of the KeyBank Broadway Series. Based on the cult classic film of the same name starring Olivia Newton-John, *The New York Times* has blessed **XANADU** as "Heaven on Wheels." Olivia herself "laughed the entire time! It's great fun for the whole family!" **XANADU** has been called Broadway's "surprise hit musical" with music by pop-rock legends Jeff Lynne and John Farrar. You just have to believe this show is magic.

**Awards**  
**XANADU** was nominated for four 2008 Tony Awards: Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, Best Actress in a Musical and

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Ohio Arts Council

Rita Heyworth, Gene Kelly, Olivia Newton-John and Broadway

1980s Pop Culture

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### Awards

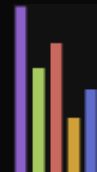
XANADU was nominated for four 2008 Tony Awards: Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, Best Actress in a Musical and Best Choreography. XANADU won a Drama Desk award for Outstanding Book of a Musical and an Outer Critic's Circle award for Outstanding New Broadway Musical. The show features five Billboard Top 20 hit singles.

Whoopie Goldberg on *WKTU Radio* stated, "XANADU is a fabulous, fabulous musical! It's lots of fun – and great fun for families!"

"The silliest new show to hit Broadway since *Spamalot!*," laughs *The Newark Star Ledger's* Michael Sommers, "a goofy glitterball of a musical! Christopher Ashley's sharply staged production zooms along in 90 intermission-free minutes. Douglas Carter Beane's script and a solid-gold company bang high into the bleachers of absurdity! The chart-busting charms of more than a dozen old ELO [Electric Light Orchestra] favorites such as "Magic," "Party All Over the World" and "I'm Alive" are no small part of this sweetly-sung show's allure."

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"Riotous! 90 minutes of belly laughs!" declares Liz Smith of *The New York Post*.

*The Washington Post's* Peter Marks describes XANADU as "bursts of joy explod[ing] all over the stage!"

#### Synopsis

Journey to Venice Beach, California in 1980 where Sonny, a struggling artist, creates a mural of Mount Olympus, complete with Pegasus, the winged horse, and the nine daughters of Zeus called the Muses.

Suddenly, the mural comes to life, releasing Clio and her eight sisters who note, "whenever a mortal has the creative instinct, he soon after has the feeling of doubt." If Clio can help Sonny "achieve his quest for artistic achievement," she can attain Xanadu, a gift of the gods so grand, that no one truly knows what it is. But if a muse ever falls in love with a mortal, she will face death. Of course, two of her jealous sisters decide to sabotage Clio by getting her to fall in love with Sonny.

Chaos ensues as the gods of ancient Greece mix with fashions of the 1980s: roller skates, leg warmers, short shorts, pink frosted lips and big hair.

Boy meets girl, boy loses girl...will boy get girl? And will all their dreams come true as neon lights shine in XANADU?

Did You Know...

...XANADU composers Jeff Lynne and John Farrar are legends in the pop-music industry?

**John Farrar** is the producer, singer and guitarist who wrote and produced many of **Olivia Newton-John's** gold and platinum hit songs. He also wrote "**You're the One That I Want**" and "Hopelessly Devoted To You" for the movie musical *Grease*. Farrar has 20 hit records to his credit.

Composer/producer/guitarist **Jeff Lynne** was the force behind the **Electric Light Orchestra** and the **Traveling Wilburys**. He has produced or written songs for Joe Cocker, The Beatles, Bonnie Tyler, Aerosmith, Tom Jones, Tom Petty, and Roy Orbison, just to name a few. *The Washington Times* called Lynne "the greatest record producer in music history."

For more information on the Broadway Show go to:  
<http://www.XanaduonTour.com>

*Quotations are from XANADU.*

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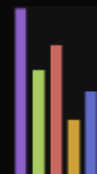


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## RITA HAYWORTH, GENE KELLY, OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN and BROADWAY



Photo: Larry Marshall, Elizabeth Stanley, Max von Essen and company

Before it was a successful Broadway show in 2008, XANADU was a 1947 film called *Down to Earth* starring Rita Hayworth.

**Hayworth** played a Greek Muse who did not like a Broadway show making fun of Greek mythology, so she comes to Earth to make things right. Amid many complications, she falls in love with a man named Danny and re-writes the show.

Prior to this 1947 film, Gene Kelly and Rita Hayworth did a film in 1944 called *Cover Girl*. Kelly's character was nightclub owner Danny McGuire, a role he reprised 36 years later in the film *Xanadu*.

*Xanadu*, the film, was released in 1980 starring **Olivia Newton-John** and **Gene Kelly**. The music was by Newton-John, the Electric Light Orchestra, **The Tubes** and **Cliff Richard**.

The story of the film has several similarities to the musical:

- Sonny Malone is a struggling artist (painting record covers instead of murals).
- He paints an album cover of 9 Sisters (the cover is a portal that transports the

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Muses to California).

- Kira, one of the 9 Sisters, who are really the ancient Greek Muses, inspires a rich older businessman, Danny McGuire and Sonny to partner up and open a roller disco skating rink.
- Sonny falls in love with Kira.
- Breaking the rules of the gods, Kira falls in love with Sonny.
- Sonny journeys to Mount Olympus to talk with Zeus, King of the ancient Greek gods and father of Kira.
- Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets a waitress who looks exactly like the girl.

The music in *Xanadu* was a huge success. Five songs hit Billboard's Top 20 singles: "Magic," "Suddenly," "I'm Alive," "All Over the World" and the title song "Xanadu." The soundtrack went double platinum.

But while the music was a huge hit, the film was not. *Xanadu* won the **Golden Raspberry Award** (Razzie) for the Worst Director. It was also nominated for the Razzie's Worst Picture, Screenplay, Actor, Actress, Original Song and Musical.

Film Reviewer **Brian Orndorf** noted *Xanadu* was "a massive flop at the time of its release and generally considered the final nail in the roller-boogie coffin."

*The Kalamazoo Gazette* said of the film, "There's never been a movie quite like this, and there never will be again. And that may not be a bad thing."

*Variety* declared, "*Xanadu* is truly a stupendously bad film whose only salvage is the music. Olivia Newton-John plays a muse, first seen with her eight sisters painted on a wall. Suddenly, they all come alive, with glowing stuff all around them, singing and zipping hither and yon, apparently looking for a script that will never be found."

How ironic that a script is just what the Broadway show found, as evidenced by the Tony nomination for Best Book of a Musical, Drama Desk award for Outstanding Book of a Musical and Outer Critic's Circle award for Outstanding New Broadway Musical.

No wonder *The New Yorker* declared the musical's script, "so ridiculously brilliant" and *The New York Times* proclaimed the script to be "ingeniously adapted by Douglas Carter Beane."

Thanks to Mr. Beane, XANADU went from bad film to excellent musical, or in the words of *The New York Times*, XANADU is "Heaven on wheels," Broadway's surprise hit musical!

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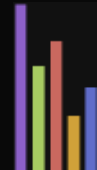


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## 1980s POP CULTURE

XANADU transports the audience back to the 1980s through music, fashion and language. How much do you remember?

Identify the artist who sang:

- "We were young and strong, we were running against the wind."
- "I'm gonna live forever, I'm gonna learn how to fly."
- "If you live it off the wall, life ain't so bad at all."
- "Do that to me one more time."
- "Working my way back to you, with a burning love inside."

- Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band*
- "Fame" sung by Irene Cara
- Michael Jackson
- The Captain and Tennille*
- The Spinners*



Have you worn:

- Leg warmers
- Roller skates
- Shoulder pads
- Short shorts for men
- The Mullet hair style

Identify the TV show:

- Who shot J.R.?
  - "Movin' on up to the eastside, to a deluxe apartment in the sky."
  - Moustached P.I. who wore short shorts and drove a red Ferrari?
  - "The plane, boss, the plane!"
  - "Kiss my grits."
- Dallas*
  - The Jeffersons*
  - Magnum P. I.*
  - Fantasy Island*
  - Alice*

Do you recall the birth of:

- Super Mario Brothers
- Mac Computers
- CDs

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4. [Mobile Phones](#)
5. [MTV](#)
6. [CNN](#)

Identify these films:

1. [Star Wars movie that came out in the 80s](#)
2. ["You're a sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot."](#)
3. [A DeLorean that can travel through time.](#)
4. ["Nobody puts Baby in a corner."](#)
5. [A hat, whip, leather jacket and search for the Ark of the Covenant.](#)

1. *Star Wars: Episode 5-The Empire Strikes Back*
2. *Nine to Five*
3. *Back to the Future*
4. *Dirty Dancing*
5. *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*

Do you remember these headlines:

1. [U.S. tries to rescue hostages in Iran.](#)
2. [Ronald Reagan elected President.](#)
3. [John Lennon is shot in New York.](#)
4. [The Pittsburgh Steelers win the XIV Super Bowl.](#)
5. [Director/Choreographer Gower Champion dies right before his last show, \*42nd Street\*, opens on Broadway.](#)

TRANSLATE THESE PHRASES:

1. "Mega Bummer!"
2. "Jive Turkey"
3. "Chill"
4. "Foxy Lady"
5. "Awesome!"

1. Very, very bad
2. Worthless, inept person
3. Cool off
4. Hottie
5. Very, very good

Have you ever been to a disco and seen:

1. [Mirror \(or Disco\) balls](#)
2. [Lighted dance floor](#)
3. [Fog machine](#)
4. [Lasers](#)
5. [Velvet cord](#)

*Photo: Elizabeth Stanley and Max von Essen*



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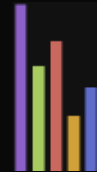


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## HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE ANCIENT GREEK GODS?

XANADU's playwright [Douglas Carter Beane](#) has said, "To a theater person, the Greeks are the founders of pure theater. Now, when you combine that with the nadir of theater, which would be putting movies on stages -- why you slap those together and let them comment on each other. That's good theater."

Traditionally, it is believed that theater sprang out of ritual and ceremonies to honor the gods. The ancient Greeks built spaces to perform these rituals. Groups of people in procession, wearing costumes and masks were watched by many others sitting in the "theatron," or place where the audience sits to watch a show. Thus Theater was born.

It wasn't until [Thespis](#), a priest of [Dionysus](#), stepped forward in 534 BCE to recite poetry as if he had actually *become* the character was the first actor born. In doing this, Thespis must have inspired the ancient Greek playwrights just as a muse who inspires an artist's creative process.

The [nine muses](#), daughters of [Zeus](#), are some of the main characters in XANADU. Beane based his characters on these actual ancient Greek muses. He also used Greek gods and other mythological creatures in his script. He remained true to their historical descriptions below.

### The Nine Muses of XANADU

- Clio- Muse of history, her name means 'Proclaimer.'
- Calliope- Muse of eloquence, her name means 'Beautiful Voice.'
- Erato- Muse of lyric poetry, her name means 'Lovely.'
- Euterpe- Muse of music, her name means 'Delight.'
- Melpomene- Muse of tragedy, her name means 'Choir.'
- Thalia- Muse of comedy, her name means 'Flourishing.'
- Terpsicore- Muse of dance, her name means 'Delight of Dancing.'
- Urania- Muse of astronomy and astrology, her name means 'Queen of the Mountains.'
- Polyhymnia- Muse of the sacred hymn, her name means 'Many Songs.'

[Gods and Other Creatures in XANADU](#)



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**Zeus**- King of the gods, father of the Muses

**Hera**- Queen of the gods, wife of Zeus

**Aphrodite**- Daughter of Zeus, goddess of Love and Beauty

**Hermes**- Messenger of the gods

**Eros**- God of love and beauty, son of Aphrodite, also known as Cupid

**Medusa**- A gorgon with hair of snakes - anyone who looks upon her face turns to stone

**Centaur**- Creature that is half man and half horse

**Cyclops**- One-eyed giant

**Sirens**- Seductive bird women, daughters of the Muse Melpomene, who lure sailors to shipwreck with their lovely singing voices

**Mnemosyne**- Mother of the muses

**Pegasus**- Winged horse

*Photo: Elizabeth Stanley*

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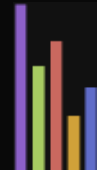
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## TALKING WITH CHOREOGRAPHER DAN KNECHTGES



Photo: Elizabeth Stanley

Buzz Extra spoke with [Dan Knechtges](#), the choreographer of XANADU. He is currently working on a show by the guys who wrote [South Park](#) that's going to be in New York in August and September. Then in April, he has a [Sondheim revue](#) that will be on Broadway starring Vanessa Williams. Knechtges is the acclaimed choreographer of [The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee](#) and [110 in the Shade](#) with Audra McDonald.

EXTRA:

I understand you are from Ohio!

KNECHTGES:

I'm actually from [Grafton, Ohio](#); I attended [Midview High School](#) and was the Drum Major for the marching band.

EXTRA:

What got you interested in dance?

KNECHTGES:

It was like [A Chorus Line](#). My sister danced, and my mother, at the time, didn't have enough money for a babysitter, so she took me to class. I said, "I can do that" and ended up doing dance better than my sister. It was also "up a steep and very narrow stairway" at [Miss Stevens Dance Studio in Elyria, Ohio](#).

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EXTRA:  
How did you get from Ohio to New York?

KNECHTGES:  
I always wanted to go to New York, but my parents wouldn't let me; I had to go to college first. So I went to [Otterbein College](#) in the Columbus area. Part of the training at Otterbein is doing an internship in New York, which I did for three months. I did an internship at a casting office and knew that New York was where I wanted to be. I moved right afterwards and been here ever since.

EXTRA:  
What did you do once you got to New York?

KNECHTGES:  
I went to a lot of auditions. I got a few small things. To pay the bills, I choreographed and taught. Each job led to another job and in a year and a half, I met several people who gave me my first break, which was choreographing nine shows in one summer on [Cape Cod at the College Light Opera Company](#). This company was run by a couple that lived in Oberlin, Ohio and worked at Oberlin College. So I moved all the way to New York to find out my boss is 10 minutes from where I grew up. Through that job, I got everybody who gave me my Broadway career.

EXTRA:  
I understand in addition to roller-skating, you do flag and baton twirling, [fire batons](#), [juggling](#), and [stilt walking](#). How do you incorporate all that into your choreography?

KNECHTGES:  
It sort of finds you. With XANADU, I didn't know that was going to be a part of it until I interviewed and they asked, 'do you roller skate?' And I said, 'yes, of course I roller skate.' But I hadn't really roller skated in 15 years.

EXTRA:  
Are you using any of these special skills in any show right now?

KNECHTGES:  
The show I'm working on now involves a parade of nations and it developed into a whole flag routine. Everything I did when I was young that drove my parents crazy, [roller-skating](#), [flags](#), and [batons](#), is now making me money.

EXTRA:  
When you were casting for XANADU, was it easy to find people who could roller skate?

KNECHTGES:  
No, it was very difficult because there are no roller rinks anymore and people don't have that skill like they once did in the '70s or 80s. We eventually learned to cast the best dancer with enough aptitude and after they spent six weeks roller-skating; they would be able to pull it off.

EXTRA:  
What attracted you to XANADU?

KNECHTGES:  
I grew up in that time period. I was the end of the disco era. It made a huge impression on me. And as a kid, I was obsessed with Olivia Newton-John. When she came to see the show on opening night, I got to meet her. It was exciting.

EXTRA:  
What's your best XANADU story?

KNECHTGES:  
We lost an actor two weeks before opening because the actor broke his leg. We had to postpone. But because that happened, we got an extra two weeks to keep working, which made the show so much better.

EXTRA:  
What has XANADU taught you?

KNECHTGES:  
Not to give up. The way you succeed is not to stop, keep trying new things; don't just be satisfied by doing the same thing over and over. XANADU taught me to be flexible.

EXTRA:  
A good lesson to learn.

KNECHTGES:

And one that I constantly have to re-learn. But it gets easier each time.

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-Douglas Carter Beane  
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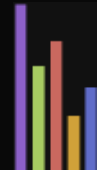


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Yes

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## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q. What makes or breaks a Broadway show?

A. "Word of mouth" can make or break a show. The audience really sells the show. The early audiences seeing *A Chorus Line* sold it before it moved to Broadway and became a legend.

It worked in reverse for *Xanadu*. After a disastrous workshop, the leading lady and leading man abandoned the project, and a week before the show opened on Broadway the new leading man broke his ankle and withdrew from the show. The word of mouth was libelous. The critics arrived at the opening with shovels ready to bury the show, but they loved it they came out singing its praises. "YouTube" and the internet became the new word of mouth and soon lines were forming at the boxoffice. Ah, the wonders of show business.

See you at Broadway Buzz,

Joe Garry

q & a  
with Joe Garry  
**BROADWAY BUZZ**

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# BUZZ EXTRA

# XANADU

BROADWAY'S SURPRISE HIT MUSICAL

March 2-14 at PlayhouseSquare

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PlayhouseSquare

## FEATURED ARTICLES



**HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE ANCIENT GREEK GODS?**

**"I'M ACTUALLY FROM GRAFTON, OH."**  
Talking with Choreographer Dan Knechtges  
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**"To a theater person, the Greeks are the founders of pure theater."**  
-Douglas Carter Beane  
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**ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE**  
Pre-Show Talks with Joe Garry  
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## ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE

Want to find out even more about the show? Come get "buzzed" with host Joe Garry at the Broadway Buzz Pre-Show Talk! Join us one hour before the curtain of each performance of XANADU in the Idea Center® at PlayhouseSquare.



The Idea Center is located just two doors west of the Allen Theatre at 1375 Euclid Avenue. You can enter the Idea Center quickly from the PlayhouseSquare parking garage by taking the elevator or stairs to Level 1. Exit through the red doors and cross at the crosswalk which will lead you directly into the rear entrance of the building. You also may enter the Idea Center from Euclid Avenue.

Catch our Post-Show Chats with the Cast following Thursday evening performances (4th and 11th.)

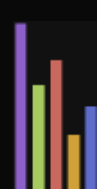
On Wednesday, March 10, from 3-4:30 p.m., XANADU cast member Kevin Duda will lead a vocal master class focusing on auditioning with a pop song. Participants must come prepared to sing 16-32 bars of a pop or rock song and must dress in current stylish clothes appropriate to wear to an audition. Participants may not sing traditional musical theater songs, or pop or rock songs from musical theater productions (i.e., no songs from *Mamma Mia*). Participants must be high school or college students, or local professional artists. Ages 14 and up only, please.

Reservations for the master class are required; please call 216-771-4444 x3258 or email [reeds@playhousesquare.org](mailto:reeds@playhousesquare.org).

There is no charge for admission to Broadway Buzz events.

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## FUN FEATURES



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- [Chicago \(January 12-24, 2010\)](#)
- [Young Frankenstein \(October 13-25, 2009\)](#)
- [Mary Poppins \(July 17-August 9, 2009\)](#)
- [An Evening With Patti LuPone & Mandy Patinkin \(May 5-17, 2009\)](#)
- [Spring Awakening \(March 3-15, 2009\)](#)
- [Frost/Nixon \(January 13-25, 2009\)](#)
- [Radio City Christmas Spectacular \(December 4-28, 2008\)](#)
- [Legally Blonde \(November 11-23, 2008\)](#)
- [A Chorus Line. The Best Musical. Ever. \(October 14-26, 2008\)](#)
- [Jersey Boys: The Story of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons \(June 17-July 20, 2008\)](#)
- [The 25th annual Putnam County Spelling Bee \( May 6 - May 18, 2008\)](#)
- [Color Purple \(March 26 - April 13, 2008\)](#)
- [Wicked \( Feb. 6 - March 9, 2008\)](#)
- [Avenue Q \(January 15 - 27, 2008\)](#)
- [Twelve Angry Men \(November 27-December 9, 2007\)](#)
- [The Drowsy Chaperone \(October 16-28, 2007\)](#)
- [Dirty Rotten Scoundrels \(June 12-24, 2007\)](#)
- [All Shook Up \(April 10-22, 2007\)](#)
- [Legends! \(March 20-April 1, 2007\)](#)
- [Chita Rivera \(February 13-25, 2007\)](#)
- [The Nutcracker \(December 6-10, 2006\)](#)
- [Spamalot \(October 3-15, 2006\)](#)
- [Wicked \(June 21-July 9, 2006\)](#)
- [Little Women \(May 9-21, 2006\)](#)
- [Dr. Dolittle \(April 18-30, 2006\)](#)
- [Bombay Dreams \(March 21-April 2, 2006\)](#)
- [Evita \(January 10-22, 2006\)](#)
- [Little Shop of Horrors \(Nov. 8-20, 2005\)](#)

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