



Before *A Chorus Line*, Michael Bennett choreographed two groundbreaking shows, *Company* and *Follies*, both by Stephen Sondheim. These “concept” musicals revolved around an idea rather than relying on a plot line. *A Chorus Line* took it even further.

In the early 70s, the demand for Broadway dancers was waning. So many dancers were out of work, living on unemployment and fiercely competing for the few chorus roles available. A group of veteran dancers (eight of whom would be part of the original cast) got together initially to vent. Bennett taped the sessions and captured their personal reminiscences, candid stories, triumphs and disappointments. He bought the rights to those stories and convinced Joseph Papp of the Public Theater to fund a workshop that ultimately would develop into the stage musical. Like “Hair” in the late sixties, the show was a huge hit at the Public Theater and was moved uptown in 1975 where it opened at the Shubert Theatre on Broadway. The rest is history!

Dancer Nicholas Dante and novelist/playwright James Kirkwood pieced the stories into a libretto. **A little known fact** is that playwright Neil Simon performed some uncredited book doctoring, adding some of the best one-liners.

The Story Summary: Set during an audition for an upcoming Broadway production, a director and his assistant choreographer are looking for a strong dancing chorus of four “boys” and four “girls.” The director whittles the hopefuls down to 17 and wants to know more about each of them. Reluctantly, through words, song and dance they reveal their personal stories and innermost feelings. This was reality performance, ahead of its time.

Awards and Records: The original Broadway production won the 1976 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, nine 1976 Tony Awards including Best Musical, five Drama Desk Awards, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the London Evening Standard Award, a special citation Obie Award and a Gold Record. It ran for 6,137 performances, closing on April 28, 1990. It had become the longest-running production in Broadway history up to that time. It still remains the longest running American musical.

***A Chorus Line* also broke new ground technically** as the first show on Broadway to use computers in the control booth.

Tony Award-winners for Best Musical in the 10 years preceding *A Chorus Line*
Man of La Mancha, Cabaret, Hallelujah, Baby!, 1776, Applause, Company, Two Gentleman of Verona, A Little Night Music, Raisin and The Wiz.