

THE DEPARTMENTS OF
THEATRE AND MUSIC
PRESENT



*Little
Women*
the musical

Directed and
Choreographed by
Vanessa Campagna

APRIL 15-18, 2021
WELLS THEATER



Monmouth
COLLEGE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: "THE FIRE WITHIN YOU"



I've got a fire in me!¹ In this concise and cogent line of dialogue from Act 1, scene 4, Jo March—the young, ambitious, creative, female protagonist—unabashedly articulates what audiences have already discerned about her. As Act 2 culminates, she sings "The Fire Within Me." The motif of fire symbolizes Jo's passion for the craft of writing, her yearning to become "a world-renowned writer,"² and her desire to support her family with the "barrels of money" her publications will earn. Though the flame flickers as the novice writer faces rejection and personal tragedy, it persists throughout the three-year timespan covered in the staged action.

Jo's resiliency is fundamental to the character, and it functions as the linchpin of my directorial concept, the essence of which is captured by the candles that never extinguish.

Jo's strength of spirit also informs my intellectual and emotional orientation to the work. Louisa May Alcott's 1868 and 1869 novels have been described by critics as timeless, durable, and malleable.³ Its categorization as a coming-of-age story accounts for much of these arguments; a growing number of others have posited the narrative's feminist underpinnings as a key to its longevity. I wish to extend these insights by asserting that the story's perenniality can also be attributed to the fact that the Jo Marches of the world—the brave souls, the trailblazers, the creatives—have been, are, and will remain vital.

Little Women transpires within the context of the American Civil War, and the central family's patriarch is serving as an Army chaplain in Washington. Writing to his wife and daughters in Concord, Massachusetts, he speaks of the war: "[It] goes on and on. The end seems nowhere in sight. The days are difficult and long."⁴ These words are germane and emotionally resonant for modern audiences if we reflect on the days of 2020 when the world sheltered at home, separated from loved ones, and awaited the development of a COVID-19 vaccination. Notably, Mr. March's letter includes an important caveat: "But I am well."⁵ When Amy, the youngest of the four March sisters, laments a Christmas without money for presents, I am reminded of our not-so-distant holiday season and the trials faced by individuals and families as unemployment numbers increased while salaries and benefits decreased. Jo bolsters Amy's spirits and rhetorically challenges her sisters, all of whom are dispirited: "When have we let anything defeat us?"⁶

Prominent stage director Anne Bogart proposes that "A great play asks big questions that endure through time."⁷ I believe that Jo's question of her sisters is the foremost question of *Little Women*. I also believe that her question is central to our lives. The musical does not diminish the significance of life's tribulations, and neither does it delude audiences with the suggestion that our circumstances will be righted on our preferred terms. Yet, it does offer the invaluable reminder that we will prevail—even if in "unexpected and unknown," but nonetheless "extraordinary ways."⁸ My sincerest wish for the students and colleagues who contributed to this project is that the fire within them be kindled, and especially in moments of perceived defeat. I wish this for our audiences, too. I trust that, like Jo, you will triumph and be "Astonishing."⁹

— VANESSA CAMPAGNA, PH.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF THEATRE.

¹ Allan Knee, et al. *Little Women* (New York: Music Theatre International, 2005): 57. Bold font added for emphasis.

² Ibid.

³ See <https://www.tpt.org/little-women-a-timeless-story/> (PBS), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2019/08/13/handy-guide-almost-all-little-women-adaptations/> (*The Washington Post*) and <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/09/little-women-louisa-may-alcott/565754/> (*The Atlantic*), among others.

⁴ Allan Knee, et al. *Little Women* (New York: Music Theatre International, 2005): 16.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ Anne Bogart. *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2001): 21.

⁸ Allan Knee, et al. *Little Women* (New York: Music Theatre International, 2005): 67.

⁹ Ibid.

THE MONMOUTH COLLEGE
DEPARTMENTS OF THEATRE AND MUSIC
PRESENT

Little Women

LYRICS BY MINDI DICKSTEIN

MUSIC BY JASON HOWLAND

BOOK BY ALLAN KNEE

Directed and Choreographed by Vanessa Campagna

April 15–18, 2021

Thursday-Saturday 7:30 P.M. | Sunday 2 P.M.

Wells Theater

Produced by Special Arrangement with Music Theatre International

Little Women is dedicated
to the memory of
Mr. Gary Broge.



Monmouth
COLLEGE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JO MARCH	Grace Cornelius
PROFESSOR BHAER	Kenny Broge
AMY MARCH / TROLL	Kylie McDonald
MEG MARCH / TROLL	Gabriela Madu
BETH MARCH / TROLL	Allie Bryan
MARMEE / HAG	Amelia Chavez
MR. LAURENCE / KNIGHT	Richard Eyre
LAURIE LAURENCE / MONK	Noah Harshbarger
AUNT MARCH / HAG	Melanie Delbridge
MR. JOHN BROOKE / KNIGHT'S ATTENDANT	Andrew Cliffl
MRS. KIRK / TROLL SOLOIST	Brooke McCormick
CLARISSA / ENSEMBLE	Kaitlyn McCullough
BRAXTON / ENSEMBLE	Cullen Marshall
RODRICK / ENSEMBLE	Elijah Lind
MONK SOLOIST / ENSEMBLE	Abigail Furness
HAG SOLOIST / ENSEMBLE	Anita Gandara
ANNIE MOFFATT / ENSEMBLE	Bekkah Gebe

ENSEMBLE

Conner Devilder
Phoenix Johnson
Zachary Lundquist
Celeste Lythgoe
Gwenavier Schultz

PIT ORCHESTRA

Conductor	Dr. Stacy K. Dziuk
Reed 1	Larissa Pothoven and Alex King
Reed 2	Meaghan Glenn
Trumpet	Joey Feenstra
Flugelhorn	Joseph Addison
Trombone / Percussion	Eli Kelly
Keyboard	Janell Johnson

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director and Choreographer	Dr. Vanessa Campagna
Vocal Director and Accompanist	Janell Johnson
Conductor	Dr. Stacy K. Dziuk
Stage Manager	Cassidy Wolf
Assistant Stage Manager	Gwenavier Schultz
Dramaturgy	Bekkah Gebe, Emma Wohlstadter, Dr. Vanessa Campagna
ASL Interpreter	Dareann Weber
Technical Director	Professor Doug Rankin
Scenic Design	Professor Doug Rankin and Dr. Vanessa Campagna
Light Design	Professor Doug Rankin and Dr. Vanessa Campagna
Sound Design	Professor Doug Rankin and Skylar Law
Sound Board Operator	Skylar Law
Props Design	Celeste Lythgoe, Skylar Law, Dr. Vanessa Campagna
Properties Painter	Molly Keeling
Costume Design and Costume Shop Manager	Rebecca Bean
Costume Crew	Celeste Lythgoe, Emma Wohlstadter

SET CONSTRUCTION

Students in THEA 173

RUN CREW

Xandru Borst	Andre Parker
Gavin Conway	Johnathon Spence
Nicholas Corman	Noah Tarasi
Stephen King	Madison Walker

HEADSHOT PHOTOGRAPHER

Professor Todd Quick

BOX OFFICE MANAGER

Madelyn Bird

BOX OFFICE ASSISTANTS

Meghan Bird
Brooke McCormick

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Stella Narkiewicz

SPECIAL THANKS

President Clarence Wyatt and First Lady Lobie Stone
Dean Mark Willhardt
Dean Michelle Merritt, Dean Karen Ogorzalek, and the COVID Operations Group
Vice President for Enrollment Management Kristen English
Director of Facilities Sarah Young
College Electrician Mark Ogorzalek
Professor Todd Quick and Professor Janis Wunderlich
Jim Verheyen and Attic Antiques
Rebel Mickelson and the Western Illinois University Dept. of Theatre and Dance
Matt Bean, Don Norton, and Carl Moore
Karen's Kleaners

DRAMATURGICAL NOTE

LITTLE WOMEN IS A 2005 BROADWAY MUSICAL based on the 1868–1869 novels by Louisa May Alcott. In terms of adaptations, the musical exists within a long and rich history. In advance of the debut of Greta Grewig's much-celebrated 2019 film adaption, *The Washington Post* published Sonia Rao's article "A Handy Guide to (Almost) All of the 'Little Women' Adaptations," which highlights fourteen screenplay adaptations. Stage play adaptations are also plentiful; while Kristin Laurence's script and that by Peter Clapham are arguably the most widely-produced, many others have written full-length and one-act adaptations. The musical opened on Broadway at the Virginia Theatre on January 23, 2005, and ran for 137 performances

The staged action spans from 1863 to 1866, and is thus situated within the context of the American Civil War. Because Mr. March is away from the family home serving as an Army chaplain, an important line of research is the impact of the Civil War on American women, in terms of both domestic and civic life. Student dramaturg **Bekkah Gebe** offers the following:

The American Civil war era was one of major contradiction in terms of women's roles. The traditional separate spheres for men and women were disrupted. As men left their homes for service obligations, women had to compensate for their absences by working in factories or managing businesses owned by their husbands or fathers. In Act 1, scene 5 of the musical, Marmee travels to Washington, when her husband is hospitalized. With this plot point in mind, it is important to note that one of the most prevalent ways that women were directly involved in the war was through serving as nurses, whether on the battlefield tending to the wounded or stationed at hospitals to care for the sick. Many women volunteered in other ways that included sewing uniforms and blankets, or gathering other supplies. This receives at least passing mention in the script: "[W]e knitted socks and blankets for the Soldier's Aid Society."¹ In addition to these duties, women were left to raise and discipline their children on their own. These circumstances caused great difficulty for many women.²

Within this world lives Jo March, who aims to become "a world-renowned writer" whose earnings will be put toward giving her family "everything [they've] ever dreamed of."³

¹ Allan Knee, et al. *Little Women* (New York: Music Theatre International, 2005): 12.

² See <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-women-who-fought-in-the-civil-war-1402680/>, <https://www.lib.umd.edu/civilwarwomen/womens-histories/roles-on-the-front>, and <https://encyclopedia.virginia.org/entries/women-during-the-civil-war/>.

³ Allan Knee, et al. *Little Women* (New York: Music Theatre International, 2005): 9.

⁴ See <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-victorian-womens-writing/victorian-women-writers-careers/38E8D853C4DCD946C779429B1589C72B/core-reader>, and <https://commons.trincoll.edu/1862/2012/12/20/1862-the-explosion-of-women-writers/>.

⁵ Allan Knee, et al. *Little Women* (New York: Music Theatre International, 2005): 16.

⁶ Miller, Randall M. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Daily Life in America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009), 40.

⁷ Allan Knee, et al. *Little Women* (New York: Music Theatre International, 2005): 20.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. 66.

¹⁰ Miller, 7.

Regarding women writers during the mid- to late-19th century, **Gebe** continues:

Alongside the challenges of the era were the new freedoms granted to women. While some women detested them and favored tradition, others flourished and began to find professional success. One of the ways this newfound independence coalesced was through writing. During the nineteenth century, there was a rise in print media. Women became journalists for popular women's editorials; these magazines included short fiction stories and sometimes covered topics such as women's rights. In the mid to late-1800s, women also began to have their work published in the forms of novels and stories, even as the print media industry was harsh for women. Female writers had to prove that their stories were worth being published—sometimes even worth being considered for publication. We learn early on in the musical that Jo receives twenty-two rejections in six weeks. At one point, she is forced to jump on a chair in a publisher's office and read her story aloud just to have her ideas and talent presented. There have also been numerous instances of women publishing under a male pseudonym; perhaps this contributes to Josephine March going by Jo. Daring female writers took up the subject of the double standard in the publishing industry, and this led to impactful stories, and very memorable pieces of work from this era. The writing profession was difficult for women but allowed their voices to be amplified in a way that had not been possible in previous eras.⁴

Jo's professional victory is revealed to audiences in Act 2, scene 1, and yet the musical continues because her success is reached only after Jo has "conquer[ed] that which is disagreeable in [her]."⁵ The protagonist's character arc hinges on personal development, which receives the bulk of attention in Act 2. Consequently, interpersonal relationships, and especially marriage, are additional important lines of inquiry. Student dramaturg **Emma Wohlstadter** contributes the following:

Throughout most of the 19th century, as in earlier periods, marrying and having children were the primary expectations of woman. Further, the notion of marrying for love was not common until after the Civil War.⁶ Before that, marriage prioritized bettering one's family name and social class, and this is evident in the musical. In Act 1, scene 3, Aunt March tells Jo, "There are many pitfalls a girl can fall into, and Josephine—you are headed towards all of them! I want to see you shine. Even if you're not rich—you can at least marry well....All girls marry!"⁷ Jo's radical views are articulated in her reply: "I'm not all girls."⁸ At the end of Act 1, she tells Laurie "I'll never marry...I won't!"⁹ Jo rebels against the norms of her time and Aunt March is wary. The pitfalls she refers to are the outcomes typically faced by those who remained unmarried, which included being ostracized by society, being sent to live with an aunt and uncle, or having to take a domestic job in another household. In the staged action, audiences see Jo between the ages of 19 and 21. At the age of 25, women in this period were no longer considered "beautiful,"¹⁰ yet Jo resists any urgency to marry.

Jo is bravely unconventional. The fact that she ultimately develops a love interest should not be interpreted as an acquiescence to social-cultural hegemony. Jo finds a companion and an equal. The song "A Small Umbrella in the Rain" reveals Jo's admancy of maintaining autonomy in marriage. The early feminist ideology in the story is compelling and contributes to the work's ongoing relevancy, accounting (at least in part) for the many adaptations and robust production history.

—BEKKAH GEBE, EMMA WOHLSTADTER
AND DR. VANESSA CAMPAGNA



The Kennedy Center

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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please silence all electronics.

Restrooms are located in the lobby.

Photography and recording of any kind is prohibited.