

The Spitfire Grill
Music Book & Lyrics by James Valcq and Fred Alley
Based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff

Fontbonne University- Fall Musical Production
St. Louis, MO 2019

Production Notebook

By Melissa Tropa

First Rehearsal: September 3^d, 2019

Performances: October 17th-19th, October 24th-27th 2019



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The Spitfire Grill Fall 2019 Cast

Music & Book by **James Valcq**

Lyrics & Book by **Fred Alley**

Based on the film by **Lee David Zlotoff**

Director **Nick Moramarco**

Assistant Director/Dramaturg **Melissa Trep**

Production Stage Manager **Amanda Brasher**

Assistant Stage Manager- **Jordan Chazen**

Costume Designer- **Jane Sullivan**

Props Master- **Morgan Fisher**

Sound Engineer- **Kareem Deanes**

Lighting Designer **Michael Sullivan**

Percy Talbott- **Maria Dietrich**

Hannah Ferguson **Kathy Fugate**

Shelby Thorpe **Rachel Simone Mitchell**

Caleb Thorpe **Antonio Barnum**

Sheriff Joe Sutter **J' von Halbert**

Effy Krayneck **Grace Sellers**

The Visitor **Kane Carpenter**

Ensemble **Dori Baldwin, Kailey Finnern, Hailey Krupp, Kane Carpenter, Kayla MaGraw, and Nia Owen**

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Introduction

During the Fall of 2019, the Fine Arts Building at Fontbonne University, which holds the Undergraduate and Graduate Theater Arts Studies programs, began preparations for the 2019-2020 season for the University's annual productions. Of these productions, Faculty and Director correspondent, Nick Moramarco, began preparing for the fall musical and corresponding arts programs with the production of *The Spitfire Grill* musical. The musical, with its Music & Book written by James Valcq, Lyrics & Book written by Fred Alley, is based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff. The choice for this current production was developed as a way to take the stories central themes and historical problems and bridge it with present day problems due to its relatability which *The Spitfire Grill* possessed.

The piece had previously been done off-Broadway and on many stages around the country since its initial opening, and Fontbonne University was ready to take on the tasks necessary to produce it as well. The musical has had others produce its material over the past ten years at a variety of institutions around the globe, however, this was the first time a book production had been produced at Fontbonne University in five years, with previous shows relying more on music review material than book shows. Through the collaborative efforts of artistic mentors and students in casting and artistic roles alongside Director Nick Moramarco,

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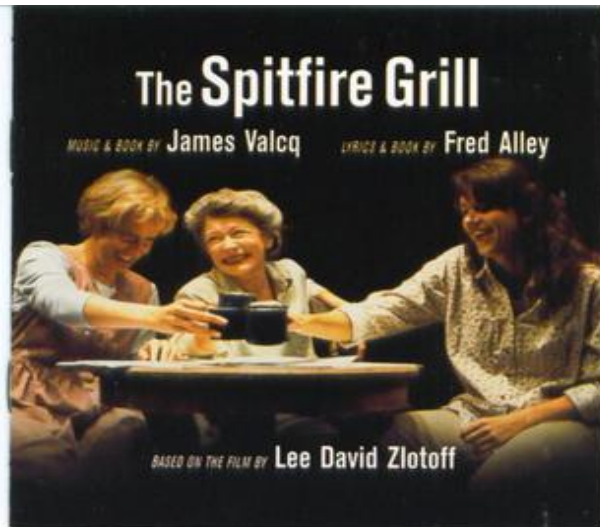
Fontbonne University put up the fall musical of *The Spitfire Grill* at the end of October of 2019 in the fall season. The musical was presented over four days over a late October weekend. Melissa Trepas aided the show as the Dramaturg and Assistant Director of the production as a current graduate student in the department. The production aided in acting as one of Trepas's independent studies for her coursework as well, providing her applicable practice as a production dramaturg.

As the production dramaturg, primary tasks included the development of research for the cast and creation of proper feedback at rehearsals to the director and cast while the musical was in development. A research packet alongside daily reflections aided the entire cast in collaborative insights as well as at production meetings with the design team. In addition, some work on several other projects for the show also aided the team in preparation for the musical's debut. Director Nick Moramarco paid attention towards my insights and inquiries which helped him in his own directorial process alongside the rest of the creative team. This material reflects the show's seasonal production process as it took place in the 2019 fall season.

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About the Production: Background



The Spitfire Grill is an American musical with music and books by James Valcq and lyrics and book by Fred Alley, based on the 1996 film of the same name by Lee David Zlotoff. The Off-Broadway production by Playwrights Horizons began previews at the Duke Theatre on 42nd Street on September 7, 2001 and concluded its scheduled run on October 14, 2001. It won the *Richard Rodgers Production Award*, administered by The American Academy of Arts and Letters.

The musical depicts the journey of a young woman just released from prison who decides to start her life new in a rural Wisconsin town. She participates in a journey within the town itself toward its own reawakening where gossip and friendship break and bind her adventures at the town's famed Spitfire Grill café.

Type of Production

The Spitfire Grill is a chamber theatre musical, with Bluegrass and Broadway style ballads, and a predominately female dominated cast. Themes of the musical include, hope, dreams, forgiveness, fresh starts, determination, and overcoming against adversities. **Chamber Theatre**¹ is a form of group production. It was defined and developed in the early 1940's from Robert S. Breen of Northwestern University, where this form of production is used as a guide for staging of prose fiction texts like short stories or novels, or in this case, a film. Chamber refers to the original August Strindberg chamber plays, which demanded small, intimate productions and is a popular form of staging today.

¹ The chamber information can be found in the book, *Experimental theatre, creating and staging texts* by Judy E. Yordon, for ways to order this book see [here](#).

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The Spitfire Grill Playwrights and Director:

Playwrights

The original playwrights of *The Spitfire Grill* are James Valcq, Fred Alley, and Lee David Zlotoff. The Musical is based on the 1996 film but was adapted into a musical by Valcq and Alley from Zlotoff's original film. Alley and Valcq met in the 80's but didn't collaborate together until 1994 with the production of *The Passage* for Alley's American Folklore Theatre in Wisconsin. New York-based Valcq was seeking a follow-up project for the pair after his *Zombies from The Beyond* closed Off-Broadway in 1995. They wanted to create a piece of populist theatre with elements of myth and folktale. Upon seeing the film, *The Spitfire Grill*, they had found their inspiration. Actual writing of the musical commenced in October 1999 before it was produced by 2001. For more about the writers, read below.

James Valcq² – is a musical theatre composer, lyricist, and librettist, best known for his contributions to *The Spitfire Grill*, which won the Richard Rodgers Production Award presented by the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received Best Musical nominations from the Outer Critics Circle and Drama



² For playwright and writers biographies, see the playwrights horizons page or read more [here](#).

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League, as well as two Drama Desk nominations. Also, Off-Broadway, Valcq wrote the book, music, and lyrics for *Zombies from The Beyond*, which opened to great critical acclaim in 1995. Both *The Spitfire Grill* and *Zombies from The Beyond* have become staples in regional theatres, particularly *The Spitfire Grill*, one of the most frequently performed recent musicals with more than 350 productions to date, not only in every major American city but in Canada, Germany, South Korea, Australia, and Japan as well. Other New York credits include *Fallout Follies* at the York Theatre, *Songs I Never Sang For My Father* at the Village Theatre, and *The Last Leaf*, a collaboration with Tony-nominee Mary Bracken Phillips. He holds an MFA from NYU's Musical Theatre Program and a BFA (on full scholarship) from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In addition to musicals, Valcq has composed song cycles and choral pieces which have been performed in

Fred Alley (1962–2001) was an American musical theatre lyricist and librettist who died unexpectedly just as his work gained national recognition. His collaboration on the musical *The Spitfire Grill* with composer James Valcq won the American Academy of Arts and Letters' prestigious Richard Rodgers Production Award for 2001. Alley was the co-founder and artist-in-Residence at American Folklore Theatre (AFT) in Door County, Wisconsin, a theatre with a seasonal audience of 50,000 performing original musicals that further the knowledge and appreciation of the heritage of the United States with local and regional settings and themes. He was honored posthumously with the 2002 Mark R. Sumner Award for distinguished achievement in the U.S. outdoor drama movement. Alley was also an actor and singer who performed on the AFT stage for 20 consecutive seasons. His tenor voice can be heard on his recordings *The Lake*, *Door Christmas*, and the posthumously released collection *It Would Be Enough For Me*.

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Lee David Zlotoff- is a producer, director and screenwriter best known as the creator of the TV series *MacGyver*. He started as a screenwriter writing for *Hill Street Blues* in 1981. He then became a producer of *Remington Steele* in 1982. He wrote and directed the 1996 film *The Spitfire Grill*, on which the musical is based upon, and won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize.

Director, David Saint



The original director of the Off-Broadway Showing of *The Spit Fire Grill* was **David Saint**. David Saint is now in his fifteenth season at as the Artistic Director of the George Street Playhouse. Most recently he directed Ken Ludwig's *The Fox on the Fairway*; the NJ premiere of the Broadway hit *God of Carnage*; the world premiere of Joe DiPietro's *Creating Claire*; Boyd Gaines, Rachel Dratch, Kathleen McNenny and Stephen DeRosa in A.R. Gurney's *Sylvia*; Marlo Thomas and Keith Carradine in Arthur Laurents' *New Year's Eve*; Matthew Arkin in Donald Margulies' *Sight Unseen*; Jack Klugman and Paul Dooley in Neil Simon's *The Sunshine Boys*; William Finn's landmark musical *Falsettos*, the film noir musical *Gunmetal Blues*, *Inspecting*



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Carol, the world premiere of Arthur Laurents' *2 Lives*; *The Last Five Years*, *Lend Me a Tenor*, the world premiere of Charles Evered's *Celadine* starring Amy Irving and Jonathan Larson's *tick, tick...BOOM!*.

Mr. Saint's time in New Brunswick has been marked by collaborations with such artists as Uta Hagen, A.R. Gurney, Arthur Laurents, George Grizzard, Chita Rivera, Eli Wallach, Frances Sternhagen, Anne Meara, Dan Lauria, Stephen Sondheim and Jack Klugman. An ardent advocate for new work, Mr. Saint created the Next Stage Festival of New Plays at George Street where the recent Broadway hit and Tony Award-winner *Proof* by David Auburn was developed before moving on to Manhattan Theatre Club and Broadway, becoming the longest-running play in two decades and the most produced play in the nation during the 2002-03 season.

Another success story emerging from the Festival is ***The Spitfire Grill***, which won the prestigious Richard Rodgers Award for New American Musicals and was produced under Mr. Saint's direction at Playwrights Horizons in New York, winning Drama Desk, Drama-League and Outer Critics Circle award nominations, before becoming one of the most produced plays in the nation during the 2004-05 season, generating more than 100 productions across the country.

Another new work which began its life at George Street Playhouse is *The Toxic Avenger*, the musical by Joe DiPietro and David Bryan that moved to New York, won the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best New Musical, and has gone on to multiple productions worldwide.

Mr. Saint has directed on Broadway, off-Broadway, and at most of the leading regional theatres around the country. Recent credits include directing the first national tour of the recent Broadway revival of *West Side Story*, A.R. Gurney's new play *The Fourth Wall* at Primary Stages, starring Sandy Duncan, as well as the world premiere of Mark St. Germain's *The God Committee* at Barrington Stage.

Other regional credits include Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, McCarter Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Paper Mill Playhouse, Bay Street Theatre, Walnut Street Theatre, and Seattle Repertory Theatre, where he served as Associate Artistic Director to Daniel Sullivan, directing many productions including the West Coast premiere of Wendy Wasserstein's *An American Daughter*.

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Other productions include two Anne Meara plays: *After-Play*, in New York and Los Angeles, and *Down the Garden Paths*, which began at George Street Playhouse and moved to New York; the national tour of *The Cocktail Hour*, with Fritz Weaver and Elizabeth Wilson; *Fame: The Musical*; *The Fourth Wall*, with Betty Buckley and George Segal; *Fourplay*, with Elaine May and Gene Saks; *Sons and Fathers*, with Holly Hunter; and the West Coast premiere of *Lend Me a Tenor*, as well as world premieres by such authors as Jonathan Larson, Peter Parnell, Jonathan Marc Sherman, Aaron Sorkin, Wendy Wasserstein and others.

Mr. Saint was recently a panelist for the Philadelphia Theatre Initiative for the Pew Charitable Trust, has taught at Bennington College, and directed the short film *Celebrity*. He is the recipient of the Alan Schneider Award, Helen Hayes Award, Los Angeles Drama Critics Award, and several Drama-Logue Awards.

Background on Musical's History:

The Beginning

Authors James Valcq and Fred Alley had been friends since high school music camp in 1980, where they created the musical together later in the late 90's. They wanted to create a piece of theatre with elements of myth and folktale. Upon seeing the film, the playwrights used this medium to create something for the stage. The actual writing of the musical commenced in October 1999, with which the ending of the musical is entirely different from the ending of the film (to most critiques delight) Since the creation of this production, the musical has been mass produced and is seeing a rise in production again today in 2019 all across the country.



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Awards:

The show received Best Musical nominations from the Outer Critics Circle and Drama League, as well as Drama Desk nominations for Garrett Long as Outstanding Actress in a Musical and Liz Callaway as Outstanding Featured Actress in a Musical.

All awards mentioned:

- The New York/Off-Broadway Production received an Outer Critics Circle Award nomination for Best Off-Broadway Musical.
- The New York/Off-Broadway Production received a Drama League Award nomination for Best Off-Broadway Musical.
- The New York/Off-Broadway Production was nominated for two Drama Desk Awards: Outstanding Actress in a Musical (Garrett Long) and Outstanding Featured Actress in a Musical (Liz Callaway).
- The London production received Best New Production of a Musical (Fringe/Regions) in the Broadway World UK Awards.
- The Washington DC production received 2 Helen Hayes Award nominations.
- The Los Angeles production received a Dramalogue Award nomination for Best Musical.
- The Laguna production won the OC Award for Best Musical. Actor Misty Cotton (as Percy) received a nomination for Best Performance in a Musical.
- The Chicago production received 3 Joseph Jefferson Award nominations.
- The San Francisco production won the Bay Area Critics Circle Award for Best Musical.
- The Dallas production received 4 Leon Rabin Award nominations including Outstanding Production of a Musical and won 2.
- The Florida production received 3 Carbonell Award nominations.
- Since the Playwrights Horizons production, *The Spitfire Grill* has been produced over 500 times worldwide in regional theatres, festivals, stock, community and school productions. Foreign language versions have been produced in Germany in 2005, in South Korea in 2007, 2012, and 2015, and in Japan in 2009.

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- Notable American versions include a co-production by American Folklore Theatre (co-founded by Fred Alley) and Skylight Opera Theatre (2002) which featured Phyllis Somerville as Hannah, the West Coast premiere at Laguna Playhouse (2002) which won the OC Award for Best Musical, and the Idaho Shakespeare Festival production in 2006 which was conducted by James Valcq.
- In 2011, American Folklore Theatre produced a 10th Anniversary production which was directed by the composer.

Foreign/Global premieres and productions:

The musical had its UK premiere at the 2008 Edinburgh Festival Fringe in a production by the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and its Australian premiere in July 2010 by The Margaret River Theatre Group. The show premiered in Singapore at the Creative Cube in September 2012. The musical was performed by LASALLE College of the Arts with direction by Tony Knight and musical direction by Ben Kiley. The cast consisted of Erin Clare (Percy Talbott), Alison Eaton (Hannah Ferguson), Timothy Langan (Joe Sutter), Kelly White (Shelby), Emma Etherington (Effy), Vanessa Powell (Caleb) and Brett Khaou (Eli).

The show received its London Premiere at The Union Theatre, Southwark in a production starring Belinda Wollaston as Percy Talbott and directed by Alastair Knights in July 2015. This production was acclaimed as a "Top 10 Critic's Choice" musical by BritishTheatre.com and was awarded Best New Production of a Musical (Fringe/Regions) in the Broadway World UK Awards. In 2018, *The Spitfire Grill* premiered in The Netherlands at the *Fontys School of Fine and Performing Arts* for a limited run, with direction by Yannick Plugers and musical direction by Rick van den Belt.

The Narrative Arch of the Musical:

The Spitfire Grill begins with the troubling relationship between Percy and her Parole Officer and her Boss Hannah as she finds herself in Gilead, Wisconsin. As time goes on however, the town too begins to question her motives and intentions. This tension

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begins to create the rising action of the piece, the mysterious past of Percy heightens this action and the conflicts between characters, characters like Effy and Caleb. However, in addition, Hannah's own mystery man (the visitor) whom Percy helps to feed at night also adds an interesting twist to the plot of the production.

The climax, however, appears to be right when the café is being raffled off and Eli's identity comes to the forefront. However, it can be argued the emotional climax, which differs from the structural climax, is when Percy finally reveals her past, her reason for being in prison, and the aftermath of what her experience has brought her because it is so emotionally charged. Therefore, the falling action to the resolution is when Hannah accepts Percy and forgives her for outing Eli's identity and allows for Percy and Shelby to own her grill once and for all.

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Schedule *Original Schedule*

PRODUCTION CALENDAR AUG-OCT 2019

DRAFT 3

8-21-19

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
AUG	26	27	28 Auditions 2-4 & 7-9	29	30	31
SEP 1	2 LABOR DAY	3 Rehearse 7-10	4	5 Rehearse 7-10	6	7
8 Rehearse 1-4	9 Rehearse 7-10	10 Rehearse 7-10	11	12 Rehearse 7-10	13	14
15 Rehearse 1-4	16 Rehearse 7-10	17 Rehearse 7-10	18	19 Rehearse 7-10	20	21
22 Rehearse 1-4	23 Designer Run? Rehearse 7-10	24 Rehearse 7-10	25	26 Rehearse 7-10	27	28

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29 Rehearse 1-4	30 LX Hang starts? Rehearse 7-10	OCT 1 Costume Parade? Rehearse 7-10	2	3 Rehearse 7-10	4	5
6 Rehearse 1-4	7 Rehearse 7-10	8 LX FOCUS? Rehearse 7-10	9 LX FOCUS?	10 LX FOCUS? Sitzprobe 7-10	11 Dry Tech 6-10	12
13 WET TECH 2:00-10:00	14 DRESS TECH 6:00 call 7:30 go	15 DRESS TECH 6:00 call 7:30 go	16 FINAL DRESS (with band) 6:00 call 7:30 go	17 OPENING 6:00 call 7:30 go	18 6:00 call 7:30 go	19 6:00 call 7:30 go
20 <i>(Fall Break)</i>	21 <i>(Fall Break)</i>	22 <i>(Fall Break)</i>	23	24 6:00 call 7:30 go	25 6:00 call 7:30 go	26 6:00 call 7:30 go
27 12:30 call 2:00 go 4:00 strike	28	29	30	31		

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Phase A: August 2019,

Script/Auditions

After the production was picked for Fontbonne University, and the schedule was set for the fall season, Director Nick Moramarco with the assistance of Artistic Director and faculty, Deanna Jent, collaborated to find their Assistant Director and Dramaturg. While emailing in preparation for the fall semester course load, Professor Jent connected Professor and Director Moramarco with Melissa Trepa for her independent study to fulfill this position for her graduate class and for the production. Nick Moramarco sent the schedule and script material via email, and they met to plan auditions and dramaturgy materials on Friday, August 23d, 2019. On this day, Trepa was officially assigned the role as Assistant Director and Dramaturg. The Production's packet for the cast would be due the following Friday, a week from the meeting, on August 30th. Auditions would be held Wednesday on August 28th from 2-5 pm and 7-9 pm at the Fine Arts Building at Fontbonne University. The following was Trepa's original notes following her first read through of the script.

Spitfire Grill Initial Notes
8/22/2019

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Dramaturg/ Assistant Director Melissa Trepia
Fontbonne University St. Louis, MO
Mustardseed Theatre

Post Script Read:
Originally a book, then a film, on stage 2001, continued in season on/off since
Musical based off the film, Off-Broadway production

History:

- ***The Spitfire Grill*** is an American musical with music and books by James Valcq and lyrics and book by Fred Alley, based on the 1996 film of the same name by Lee David Zlotoff.
- The Off-Broadway production by Playwrights Horizons began previews at the Duke Theatre on 42nd Street on September 7, 2001 and concluded its scheduled run on October 14, 2001. It won the Richard Rodgers Production Award, administered by The American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Summary:

- The musical depicts the journey of a young woman just released from prison who decides to start her life anew in a rural Wisconsin town. She participates in a journey within the town itself toward its own tenuous reawakening.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spitfire_Grill_\(musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spitfire_Grill_(musical))

Background on Musical's history

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- Authors [James Valcq](#) and [Fred Alley](#) had been friends since high school music camp in 1980, created the musical together later in the late 90's.
- They wanted to create a piece of **populist theatre with elements of myth and folktale**. Upon seeing the film *The Spitfire Grill*, they had found their vehicle. Actual writing of the musical commenced in October 1999.
- **The ending of the musical is entirely different from the ending of the film. -find out why**

Awards:

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Why College/ Why St. Louis, why this audience?

Production History/globally:

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Plot Points:

Act I

Rural Wisconsin. February. A young woman named Percy Talbott (played by Libby Belitsos) gazes out the window of her prison cell. She's about to be released. In her pocket is a photograph clipped from a travel book. The caption reads, "Autumn colors along Copper Creek near Gilead, Wisconsin". ("A Ring Around the Moon") Arriving in Gilead, Percy reports to the local Sheriff, Joe Sutter (played by Zak Kline). He leads her through the deserted streets to a ramshackle diner called the Spitfire Grill, run by a crusty old widow, Hannah Ferguson (played by Sylvie Williams), who has a bad hip and sharp tongue. Joe persuades Hannah to take Percy on board and give her work as a waitress.

Percy sets to work in a swirl of small town suspicions led by Effy (played by Willa Lane), the postmistress who's also village busybody. ("Something's Cooking at the Spitfire Grill") In the face of all the gossip and Hannah's constant haranguing, Percy begins to wonder whether she made a mistake in coming to Gilead. ("Coffee Cups and Gossip") Her thoughts are interrupted by a cry from Hannah, who has tripped on the stairs and broken her leg. Against the better wishes of her fiercely protective nephew Caleb (played by Arthur Anderson),

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Hannah has Percy take over the Spitfire. But when it comes to cooking, Percy is clueless. ("Into the Frying Pan") That night, without explaining why, Hannah reluctantly asks Percy to wrap a towel around a loaf of bread and to leave it near the old stump out back of the Grill.

Percy is joined at the Spitfire by Caleb's wife Shelby (Karli Robertson) an excellent cook. In the heat of the kitchen the two women are drawn together. Shelby tells Percy about Hannah and Gilead's past – the day her childhood hero went off to war and her hometown changed forever. ("When Hope Goes")

Wanting to escape painful memories, Hannah has had the Grill on the real estate market for ten years with no takers. In a moment of inspiration, Percy proposes a way for Hannah to get rid of the Spitfire and make some money at the same time: a raffle. For a hundred dollars and an essay about why they might want the Grill, anyone can enter. At first Hannah resists, but slowly, something about the craziness of the idea convinces her that it just might work. As the rest of the town watches the long Wisconsin winter stubbornly give way to spring ("Ice and Snow"), the women at the Spitfire plan the details of the contest. Percy and Shelby share a vision of life as they wish it were while writing the advertisement for the raffle. ("The Colors of Paradise")

Caleb spots the contest ads as they begin to appear in out-of-town papers. Without a decent job since the local quarry closed, Caleb has been left trying to sell real estate that no one wants. His frustration turns against a world where it is no longer enough to be a hard-working man. ("Digging Stone")

During a parole session with Sheriff Joe Sutter, Percy tells something of her bleak past growing up in the West Virginia coal mines. Joe in turn spills out his dissatisfaction with life in Gilead. ("This Wide Woods")

As summer approaches, the very first raffle entry arrives in the mail, complete with a hundred dollars and a rather depressing essay which stirs up some of Hannah's old wounds. ("Forgotten Lullaby") That night, while placing the usual loaf of bread out back, Percy encounters a silent visitor (Noah Witke-Mele). She attempts to make conversation but the mysterious man merely takes the bread and flees. Weeks go by and essays begin to pour into the Grill from far and wide. ("Shoot the Moon")

Act II

Hannah, Percy and Shelby sit in the Grill after hours, reading essays and drinking from a jug of Hannah's infamous applejack. As they read the letters, some funny, some sad, Hannah expresses her appreciation for what Percy and Shelby have done. ("Come Alive Again") Before

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long it seems everyone in town is helping Hannah to sift through the letters, and a magical shift occurs not only at the Spitfire, but throughout Gilead as well.

Late one October night on the back porch, Joe tells Percy that he no longer wants to leave Gilead. He plans to build a house on a plot of land his father has given to him. ("Forest For the Trees") Deeply troubled, Percy abruptly rejects Joe's proposal of marriage and confides to Shelby the harsh details of her life. Impregnated by her stepfather when she was 16, Percy suffered untold abuse resulting in the loss of her unborn child. While on the run, she killed her stepfather with his own straight razor. Shelby comforts Percy and gently sings her to sleep. ("Wild Bird")

When Percy awakens, she sees the mysterious visitor and at last realizes he is none other than Eli, Hannah's own son. Eli leads Percy deep into the forest and then to a clearing atop a hill. The leaves have turned to autumn colors and as the sun rises, they burn like flame. ("Shine")

Transformed by her hilltop vision, Percy leads Eli back to the Grill to re-unite him with Hannah after so many years. In a painful confrontation, Shelby and Caleb recognize Eli and react with such shock at his battered appearance and broken demeanor that Eli flees. Hannah finally admits that Eli had been a deserter in the Vietnam war. The shame of it killed her husband. And though Hannah has taken care of Eli's basic needs, she has kept his presence in the woods a secret from the entire town. Percy pleads with Hannah to express her forgiveness to Eli. Day passes into night and Hannah calls out to her son. ("Way Back Home") Out of the shadows, Eli appears in the Grill once more. Hannah reaches out her hand to welcome him home.

On the last day of the contest, everybody reads their favorite essay. Finally Hannah reads the words that have touched her the most: the ad describing the Grill, written by Percy and Shelby. In gratitude for their role in reuniting mother and son, while admitting she's not offering much in return, Hannah turns over the Grill to Percy and Shelby. They celebrate with some saucy pizza ("Finale")

Research:

Focus on Imagery and metaphor of scene - fire/ice, cold/heat
Title and its relationship to the musical
Meaning of character names

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Terms: ring around the moon
Historic relevance listed below
Gilled name and meaning biblically
Music and Appellation tone and connotation

Act 1

- Town in Wisconsin
- 1960's rural American culture
- The original book/ film - watch the film
- Gilead, Wisconsin
- Women's rights in prison in the 60's and release process for prisoners
- 60's diners
- Hip anatomy
- Widow legal practice of owning a business at the response of a death to a spouse
- What a postmistress is and define it
- Leg injury what specific kind occurred and impact on an older women's health of Hannah's age
- How to properly cook fresh bread
- How to cook items mentioned in the script Percy can't cook
- Gilead's role in the war
- War in 1960 Vietnam
- Weather in Wisconsin in winter/spring, esp. During 1960's
- Economics of the 1960's and real estate history
- West Virginia coal mines of the 1960's
- All weather in Wisconsin

Act 2

- Applejack drink
- Family dynamics of the 60's gender expectations, divorce rate, marriage stats etc. -check the census

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- Incest, abuse, miscarriages during the 60's
- Research how setting of weather impacts emotions and shift in plot, fall like fire, etc.
- Deserters of the Vietnam war
- Hannah's husband - suicide? If so, how, research how, shame killed him?
- Pizza, history, and preparation

Auditions/Research Process

After the initial research and meeting together, the next step was to pick the cast and remaining production team during the audition process and work through the intentions of the script to continue to create the dramaturgical production packet for the cast. Auditions were held on August 28th, Wednesday night, from 2-5, and 7-9 pm at various 10-minute time slots. That upcoming Thursday, August 29^h, the cast list was posted via email to those who auditioned. The process had students audition the third day of classes, and to have students either bring their own music material to sing and to cold read side material from the script, or they would practice scales and cold read sides given for the audition. Of those who auditioned, over 12 came to try out. Those who were not casted as main leads were given the remaining ensemble roles, due to the size of the fine arts department and need for assistance in the department. There was a variety of skillsets, all of those who auditioned were prepared and enthusiastic about working on a new

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production, since it had been years since the last musical production at Fontbonne University. The cast which was chosen is as follows which includes Kathy, a theatre alumni, and two graduate students amongst the remaining undergraduate students.

The cast list which was given 8/29/19 via email by Director Nick Moramarco:

Dear All:

Thank you so much for auditioning for *The Spitfire Grill*.

Congratulations! I am pleased to announce the following cast.

Please reply letting me know whether you accept your role.

Our first rehearsal will be next Tuesday, September 4th at 7:00pm in the theatre.

A more detailed rehearsal schedule will be announced soon, but for now, plan on Mon, Tue, and Thu at 7p, and Sundays at 1p.

If you have ANY additional conflicts that weren't on your audition forms, please get them to Amanda, our stage manager

(Amanda.jo.brasher@gmail.com)

I will have scripts available tomorrow in my office, or you can get it on Tuesday's rehearsal.

Thank you all again, and I am so excited to begin work on this piece with all of you!

CAST:

- Percy - Maria Dietrich
- Shelby - Rachel Simone Mitchell
- Hannah - Kathy Fugate
- Joe - J'von Halbert
- Caleb - Antonio Barnum
- Effy - Grace Sellers

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- Visitor - Kane Carpenter
- Ensemble - Dori Baldwin, Kailey Finnern, Hailey Krupp, Kane Carpenter, Kayla MaGraw, Nia Owens

Research Process for Packet

Melissa Trepa continued to assist Nick where needed, helping people sign in, and work on the cast dramaturgical packet that Wednesday for auditions. After auditions she took the next few days to complete the packet, which she turned in that Tuesday morning before the first rehearsal after the labor-day weekend. Trepa did the majority of her research on the symbolism and imagery found in the musical as well as the research behind the musical's history and current relevance. Some of the notes from the original read-through did not get expanded into the packet due to the limited time frame to create the packet, where the main focus was given to understand larger narrative development and intentions, so some research was left undone, since the packet was already 34 pages in its completion. In the packet, it was completed with insights from reading through the script several times and starting with finding terms, then expanding to larger intentions and then later research on the existence and history of the Musical as it has made a comeback today. The final packet had the following main concepts seen here by the *table of contents*.

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The initial read through of the script was full of intrigue but also questions. The themes and its application to this current audience in the St. Louis region at the college level of production were my main concerns, why these characters, why now, why has its popularity returned from its original 2001 showing, and what about its message is applicable to people and why. I used the script as a base point to develop the research packet for the team, specifically the actors which would aid the cast in the rehearsal stage and production process and created the final product afterwards. Due to the extensive research, it was completed over the labor-day weekend, where it was printed for the first rehearsals which were held on Tuesday, September 3d, 2019 at 7 pm until 10pm.

Phase B: Rehearsals, September 2019

First rehearsal

The first rehearsal was held on Tuesday September 3d at 7pm until 10 pm, where the cold read of the script commenced, where the cast worked on practicing the majority of the songs and familiarizing themselves with the

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production and script. At the first rehearsal the entire cast and crew arrived to meet one another first before reading, where costumes even got measurements from actors, and the schedule was given for the walk through, the dramaturgical packet was given, and the cast introduced themselves and the part they were casted for. The next step was to sing through the scripts' main songs, since the majority of the production is more music heavy compared to dialog heavy. The lines were also cold read alongside the songs, but the focus was on learning notes.

Next Steps for Rehearsals:

Melissa Tropa spoke with Director Nick Moramarco about her role as his assistant director, and they discussed the next steps following the production packet during the first rehearsal. Tropa would mainly be helpful after the second week of rehearsals onwards as a guide for blocking and decisions so that choices maintain the dramaturgical integrity that the script and the dramaturgical packet reflect. The upcoming week of rehearsals she would not be needed for the majority of rehearsals would be music focused for the actors' benefit.

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After the first rehearsal ended, everyone was dismissed where rehearsals would resume on Thursday September 5th. The following is the loose schedule with casting included.

Rehearsals: Schedule-

9/5/19: Singing-7 pm: Joe, Caleb, Effy, Ensemble,
Dramaturg/ Assistant Director **8:30-10:** All

*(Note: Dramaturg/ Assistant Director not needed this
week until 9/15/19- onward)*

9/8/19: Singing -1 pm: Hannah, **1:45-2:15:** Hannah,
Percy, Shelby, **2:15-3pm:** Percy, Shelby **3-4:00 pm**
Shelby

9/9/19: Singing- 7 pm: Joe, **7:35-8:15:** Joe, Percy,

8:15-10: Percy

9/10/19: Singing- All

9/12/19: Sing-Through- All

9/15/19: Blocking-All (*Dramaturg/ Assistant
Director included, blocking begins*)

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9/16/19: Blocking-7 pm: Percy, Shelby, Hannah, Joe,

Caleb, Effy, **8:30-10:** Percy, Shelby, Hannah, Joe,

Caleb

9/17/19: Blocking-7pm: All, **9-10pm:** Percy, Visitor

9/19/19: Blocking-7 pm: All, **8-9 pm:** Percy, Shelby

Joe, Effy, Hannah, **9-9:30:** Joe, Effy

9/22/19: Stumble-through-All 1-4 pm

9/23/19: Off book goal/ designer run-All 7-10 pm

9/24/19: Act I cleaning- All 7-10 pm

9/26/19: Act II cleaning- All 7-10 pm

9/29/19: Act I Running-All 1-4 pm

9/30/19: Act II Running- All 7-10 pm

10/1/19: Costume Parade-All 7-10 pm

10/3/19: Full Run- All 7-10 pm

10/6/19: Full Run- All 1-4 pm

10/7/19: Full Run- All 7-10 pm

10/8/19: Scene Work- All 7-10 pm

10/10/19: Sitzprobe- musicians rehearsal- All 7-10

pm

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10/13/19: Wet Tech- All 2-10 pm

10/19/19- Performance

10/14/19: Dress Rehearsal- All 6 call, 7:30 go

SHOW-(All) 6 call, 7:30 go

10/15/19: Dress Rehearsal- All 6 call, 7:30 go

10/24/19- Performance

10/16/19: Final Dress- All 6 call, 7:30 go

10/25/19- Performance

SHOW-(All) 6 call, 7:30 go

10/26/19- Performance

10/17/19- Performance

10/27/19- Performance, 12:30 Call, 2 go, 4-6 Strike

10/18/19- Performance

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Blocking and Rehearsals: September

9/15/19

After a brief week off from rehearsals where Director Nick Moramarco worked on the music material for the Musical, the blocking work has begun starting today, September 15th, 2019. Melissa Trepá documented more notes from rehearsal and worked on giving notes where choices were needed now that she was back to assist with rehearsals.

On Sunday, we worked through the first three scenes on blocking through page 26 while making dramatical choices for actor's characters while working through the songs and scenes. In the opening scene, we worked the first several scenes, including where the spotlight for Percy in the introduction will be and where the prison imagery will reflect onto her in the opening of the song, as well as, where the bus will be placed by the ensemble. We worked this introduction as well as the creation of the bus using chairs off stage right. In addition to this

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opening, the cast worked at the Grill introductions with characters which was blocked with sitting, singing, and finally Percy's admission of her time in prison. The most challenging aspect of blocking being, creating Hannah's space since the space on stage is limited and is mainly dedicated to the Grill set.

Stage right has the outdoor deck, however, which works with the staging, and Stage left is the imaginary upstairs where the guest rooms and Hannah's space. This is indicated by when Hannah sits in a chair off Stage left after she breaks leg, as well as during exists. The conflicts that arose when blocking was figuring out the placing for characters in the scene during the *Something's Cooking at the Spitfire Grill* and trying to decide who will sit where, and when to move Percy with new characters as she is introduced to them. The cast was focused and productive and told to remember the first few scenes because they wouldn't be rehearsed again until the following Sunday.

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The next day on Monday, Melissa Trepa was absent, but Tuesday the cast worked the next few scenes and props have begun to appear alongside the set as well.

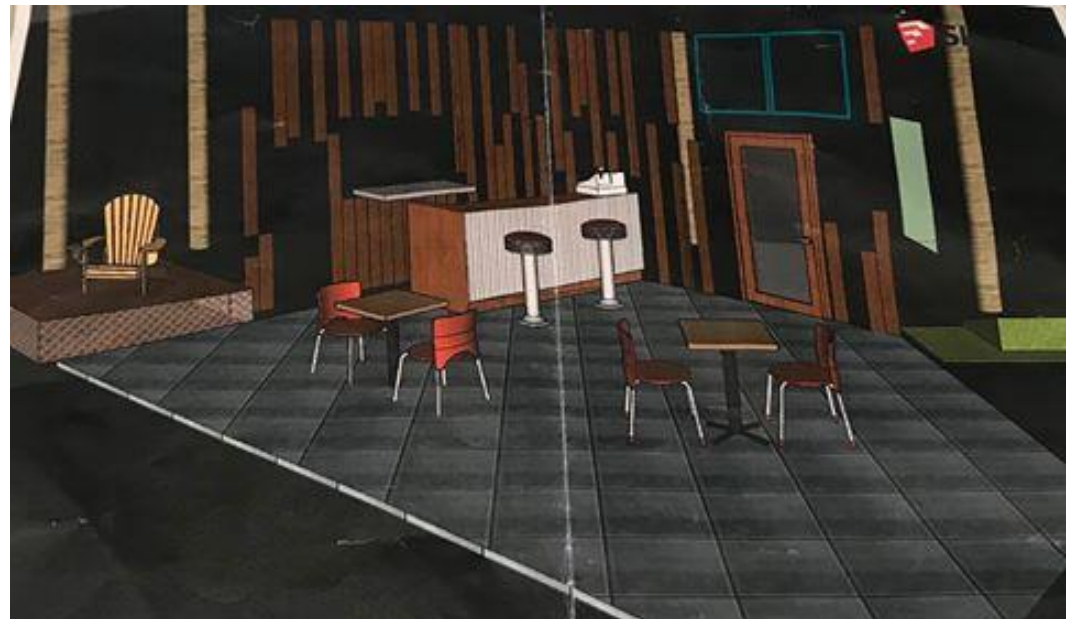
Set so Far

The first week of rehearsals, the set began to appear on stage for rehearsals and is roughly in place as of this week, on week two. Wood panels have been artistically hung for the grill, the sign is up, but facing upstage since the sign is referencing outside. The counter and chairs are out, and several kitchen props are at the back at the kitchen counter as of today. There are plans to use a real bell for the door like a diner has, but it is being debated if the sound will be from the booth yet or not. The door has been built and is functioning and the trees are up in the background. The stage is a proscenium arch stage, except the first row is flat with the stage, and there is no pit. The seats are around approximately 100 for seating and the seating is structured like a theatre where they go up rather

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than the stage being at an angle with a literal upstage or downstage. It is functional for rehearsal purposes and grows daily.



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9/17/19

As for Tuesday's rehearsal today, the set is coming together, and the cast is working on pages 46-56 in the script with *Shoot the Moon* in Scene 9 into Act II. Amanda, the stage manager, was a few minutes late today, so we started at 7:05 pm. Let it be noted that J'von was a bit late, and Rachel is sick and won't be here today. The address for the Grill regarding the letter props has been decided on which will be at 501 Main St. in Gilead, Wisconsin. Gilead being the fictional part, the zip code and address, being a real place.

Today on page 46, Percy weaves between the tables as Hannah and Percy sing *Shoot the Moon* which was a suggestion by Melissa Trepas as Percy connects with Hannah but keeps her distance due to her past from a dramaturgical standpoint. As the song concludes the staging for the grill was worked during rehearsal, with the cast in new seating in the grill than in the previous three scenes, during the song. Joe's character pushes the barrel which also had to be choreographed for the song as the letters are passed out, and the entire cast is choreographed

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for dancing and waving during the lyrics of *Shoot the Moon* with constant movement. After this was blocked, rehearsals focused on Act II and the song *Come Alive Again*.

Pages 65-68 with Eli's reveal in the grill was also worked today but the ensemble was released to go home. The main blocking which was important was when Hannah explained her ritual with Eli and her secret of his existence, where she sits below the Spitfire sign. Hannah glances at it in reference to her husband Jack, who flew a Spitfire plane in WWII which was the choice for the name of the grill, and a symbol of Jack after his death. Being beneath parallels the relationship to Hannah who was always below Jack in their relationship and carrying his burden of the grill even after she takes over the restaurant. She is mad at Percy but staging it this way gives the audience a chance to connect the backstory of Hannah and reveals her aging as she sits with her still healing injury. Bread which Hannah gives Eli in the show, also represents daily bread, and a mothers' caretaking nature despite

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the shame of his desertion. Percy ends the scene with a reveal about her miscarriage which is an important end to the scene as well. We worked the song with Eli last before ending for the day.

9/19/19

Rehearsals today began with *Ice and Snow* rehearsal sung through before blocking. The cast worked starting on page 33 of Act I. The staging of Ice and Snow was blocked, with the singing, to work in the speaking sections with the ensemble. After the ensemble left, the rest of the main cast worked p. 57-61, and 69-70, as well as 64,65, and 43. Nick and Melissa worked with Percy and Joe's characters in their song about the significance of the trees metaphor during their relationship development of the song. Melissa wants Percy to have more hesitancy in the scene, due to her traumatic past on page 57 so they reworked it to have more depth reiterated for the audience. When Shelby's character and Caleb scene on p.61 was worked, Melissa helped Caleb's character hone in on his

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characterization to go for the physical slap in the scene, and how Shelby responds in defense. She is empowered and Caleb is threatened by her empowerment.

9/22/19

Today we are running through the whole production, tomorrow is off-book, and the cast is visiting with our costume volunteer, Jane while working during rehearsal. To start, the cast sang to warm up. Then we contacted late cast members, Rae, Kayla, Kane, some of whom had excused absences. So far most of the cast was memorized, with Percy and Shelby characters needed a little help with lines, but the others were fairly memorized. The most common error was using new props and remembering exists. Tomorrow, the full designer run will occur for rehearsal.

9/23/19

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Today was the run-through with the design team and our official off book night with lines and scenes. The lighting, costumes, and full acting cast, stage management as usual, and dramaturg were here today. We tried to get through the whole production for rehearsal's sake including lines and blocking for remembrance sake, detailed notes for actors were withheld for after the stumble through was completed Sunday and at today's rehearsal. Notes for actors include the following which I emailed to the cast for practice:

Dear Spitfire Cast,

Great job today at the first full run through off book! Let me start out by how proud and impressed I am by how well you all did! That being said I know emails are annoying but I have some more detailed notes for you all now, now that you're all doing so well with lines and blocking, that I want to share via email in case we run out of time to cover it in rehearsal.

Attached below are my notes from today: look for your name or character name, or "cast" and remember to refer to the research packet as you refine your characterization and intentions as actors and ensemble! If you have any questions please feel free to talk to me anytime! Email or in person! Thanks great work team! (Ps I'm making these notes because you're doing so well, that I'm already to get lucky, I hope that's clear! Great job!)

Sincerely,

Melissa Trepá

Assistant director and dramaturg

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Notes from today: 9/23/19

Act 1:

Opening:

Joe:

Slow down Joe when speaking to Percy during the song, so we can understand you.

Percy:

Try to remember to respond to Joe rather than just react, you still love Gilled, and don't know it's flawed so reflect that idealism in this first scene with Joe.

Cast: Great job cast on the song they're really coming together keep up pacing and blocking.

Shelby: great work but speak up generally your soft voice is hard to hear sometimes

Percy: the line when you say, "I guess I didn't make it a secret where I've been" it's a joke not a defensive response, it read that way today

Cast: work on your facial expressions during the songs your voices are evoking the lyrics but not your face it's not matching quite yet. If you're on stage you're acting so be careful even if you're "just in the ensemble" or "in transition" to remember you matter and to project your characters role when you're on stage, don't let your own posture or facial expressions, take away from your characters.

Shelby: great job with songs keep working on getting off book overall!

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Cast: ice and snow, careful to get to places on time and keep pace up for blocking. This is a place where I saw hands in pockets and eyes everywhere but the audience, be sure no matter your character that you're in the moment when on stage. Show worry at the winter and hope during the spring references.

Hannah: great work on intentions, after ice and snow when you talk about agreeing to the contest careful not to let your arms hang. You can shrug feel free to try things. You're hopeful, so show it with your body a bit more.

Colors of Paradise: Shelby and Percy-
Beautiful harmonies be sure Shelby that you look at Percy when she starts suggestions before jotting notes down.

Caleb: Antonio, great emotions in Digging stone and great work on Caleb's character overall, follow your intentions they're working well.

Joe: when you tell Percy, you're looking at "my woods" you like her at this point and are showing off here slightly so look at her when you say it, you're not sure if you want to stay for yourself yet. Review the trees metaphors for the plot in the packet, and p.40-42.

Percy: review trees info in the packet when speaking with joe by p. 40, you and joe are falling slowly for each other I need to see that connection a bit more.

Hannah: careful on p.44 that your legs still injured and limping when singing about your wounds, you lost the limp by the song.

Eli: Kane careful not only stand when you appear to Percy on p.46, use your body to evoke your nerves at being near another person, are you hunched, arms behind your back? Make some choices.

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Cast: Shoot the moon went well but during the letter passing be sure to have an intended few people you pass too so that you're not all clumped up and too often back faced to the audience, I like the crowdedness but it's too messy at this stage.

Antonio: great catch with the gazette line remember it next time

Act II:

Ladies Shelby, Hannah, Percy; great genuine laughter and lines, remember that Apple drink is alcoholic too, you're having fun.

Joe: with the song "one last passenger"- and "I'm already used to your cooking" when the proposal happens, be careful not to rush lines and build the tension with Percy. That line is supposed to be enduring, your also slightly scared she doesn't feel as strongly about you.

Percy: when Joe says this line to you and you reject his proposal, remember you still like him but you're afraid to trust after everything that's happened.

P.59: Percy: review this monologue. Find a moment you can connect with. Make sure each line is felt a little differently, you should say, my baby with a pause, why do you think that is? Is she mad, sad, confused, all of the above, why is she now ready to share this with Shelby now? Revisit this and make sure the lines feel sincere this is a powerful moment not just important to the plots' narrative but all of Percy's motivations for wanting to come to Gilled.

Caleb and Shelby: on p.61, your abusive encounter was strong, but it took until Antonio raised his voice for me to feel the building tension, Shelby you should feel fed up and no longer passive, Caleb you should feel threatened. Careful Shelby not to anticipate the slap and over react hitting the counter, Caleb make sure you give yourself time to feel the need to raise your hand to begin with before you pause and stop yourself.

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After this page I know Nick had some notes but good job overall making choices. Keep working on retaining your blocking and knowing your exists. I was so proud of seeing the progress great run through!

Overall, the cast did a great job this rehearsal, they just need to work on not going with the motions and remember what the meaning is when they speak or sing as their characters.

9/24/19

Today we worked on Act II cleaning and continually working on lines are memorized as well as blocking. The most important notes aside from clarifying notes for songs, was intentions between each scenes with the characters. Helping them to break habits and to stop going through the motions. We helped Caleb's character who needs to indicate the foreshadow of his anger for his character, to make sure he isn't overly angry when being confronted by Shelby before *Digging Stone* begins. We fixed exists in the intro of Act II. After, this we worked on transitions of songs to work as well. Then we worked ensemble as they work on singing about their letters with the *Come Alive* song all together. In addition, we also worked a lot on Percy and Joe's chemistry and their romantic dynamic in the

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proposal in *Forest for the Trees*. It was awkward because Joes' character was reading too pleasing previously. Percy wasn't responding as uncomfortable as her character would've, so we cleaned this and worked on character motivations and intentions. It worked better with block revisions and character development. The next scene we worked was Percy's monologue on p. 59 when she reveals her past. She needs more emotional intention. The production is considered naturalism, so it is more character study focused, so the backstory is really important, which we worked extensively on as a result. We went through *Wild Bird*, then worked the confrontation with Caleb and Shelby on page 61. After we worked Eli's appearance with Percy, and his motivations. Then we finished the rest of the Act II. It is becoming really polished and motivation driven, as anticipated.

9/29/19

Trepa was sick for Thursday's rehearsal, but she returned on Sunday. Today after all the notes for Act I and Act II, the cast is now rehearsing again from the top after much cleaning through all run-throughs.

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Phase C: Rehearsals, Performance, October 2019

October Rehearsals:

After much cleaning at the end of September, October was dedicated to cleaning and focusing on dramaturgical intentions for the last rehearsals. Most of the rehearsals and dress rehearsals focused on small details to fixate cleaning such as costumes and when to pause for applause, as well as remembering props and to remain rejuvenated for each performance as if it was fresh and not anticipated. Dress rehearsal was when sound and music was added to regular rehearsals and through the productions all actors had mics when both singing and speaking. The band was completely assembled from the directors' connections of professional musicians from the St. Louis metro area. The following emails are Melissa Tropa's assistant directorial notes she gave the cast at several different points in the October session.

Emails to the Cast:

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Dear Spitfire Cast,

Great job again today as always! Now that costumes are in and most props, I hope the show feels real now, we are only a few weeks away now! Below are today's director notes. Take my notes with a grain of salt, though, because you know what you need to work on. That being said, I just want you to all know I am very impressed with the show, I know I tend to stay fairly quiet in person, but I appreciate your hard work! Great job, keep cleaning, keep working hard.

Notes for today:

Percy:

- *Great job today but careful with the rhythm in Ring around the Moon.*
- *Facial expression is much more engaged with your character as you sing though, so good work.*
- *When you first bump into Shelby though, careful I can't hear that line.*
- *When you say your Prison line, in Something's Cooking, careful to say it as the music pauses, not too soon.*
- *In Scene 3, when you're singing, careful to stay on pitch as well as the rest of the song in Out of the Frying Pan.*
- *On page 26 when Joe startles you careful, it felt a bit aggressive today, a bit anticipated, but I liked the surprise aspect.*
- *Great job harmonizing with Shelby in Colors of Paradise. When you are on the back porch, what will you do with your hands, make sure its different than Shelby does, they were both at your sides today, before you hold hands.*
- *Nice job on Wide Woods*

Ensemble:

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- *Great job being ready for the bus, it is looking great now. For the transition into the grill once J'von enters, be careful to be swift but quiet, so we can still hear Joe's character.*
- *Also, when you are in the grill, make sure your face has an expression on it that is intentional and that you leave as characters rather than yourself, it looked casual into the wings.*
- *Good job to the flag flyers, it worked much better today, and felt more sincere to the song, just careful not to drop your character when you exit, leave slowly, not in a rush.*
- *In Ice and Snow, great work, but some ensemble needs to be more intentional with posture, you look lost, some of you are outdoing each other but I know you all know it. Remember your entrance back in too, go at the cue "nothing." When you are using the instruments on the ground, careful not to keep your heads down the whole time, you can be sad about the cold without losing your face. When you come back the other times, be sure to stay just as engaged, the song is a seasonal shift as much as it is a character shift, so show that change each time you reenter and exit.*
- *For Shoot the Moon, great opening, Effy did well projecting, keep going, remember your entrance to the rest of the ensemble, better job interacting with props and staying engaged but help people who have been gone to catch them up a bit*

Joe:

- *At the start, good work, but careful with slowing and articulating, you are getting better, but I missed most of your introduction.*
- *Joe, when you startle Percy, and end your line by saying "damn" it landed especially well and I appreciated your response, great job.*
- *When you confront Percy in Scene 7, p.39, it was easier to hear you but slightly too quiet. But I appreciated your pacing. Also, good job remembering the notes for blocking. Watch how close to the wall you get when you are by the porch though, it'll be hard for some audience members to see you that far over.*
- *Nice job on Wide Woods*

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Hannah:

- *Great job just be sure you are still projecting even when you are saying lines under your breath in various scenes.*
- *Hannah when you say, "Shelby will fix everything I am sure" after you hurt yourself, be careful it seems sincere and reassuring, it read sarcastic today.*
- *In Ice and Snow when you lose your second cane, careful to remember to only enter with the one.*
- *Keep working on lines, you are close to remembering all of them*
- *Great job in your song of Aches and Pains on p.44 today especially*
- *Careful with lyrics and your cane in Shoot the Moon*

Caleb:

- *Good work today, careful to project some of your lines, they are getting mumbled behind the other characters and piano here and there. I like your posture for your character though, it is more developed.*
- *Caleb, when you confront Hannah about the contest, it worked well, your aggravation was believable.*
- *Careful in Shoot the Moon to keep going even if the phone falls out of your hands*

Effy:

- *Good job with your entrance, and posture, it works well for the audience, so they understand the person Effy is.*
- *I liked the matching facial expressions, it adds depth to her as a character as well. When you call Sarah, good job leaning into the light.*
- *Effy when you come in on p. 43 with the letter, careful to project, I couldn't hear your lines there.*

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Sarah-

- *Good work today on the phone with Effy's character, but be careful to not look at Nick, to act as you will perform when you exit.*

Shelby:

- *Good work today, especially since being gone sick.*
- *Your physicality is really doing well to match your character.*
- *I liked how you are working with Percy and Caleb the relationships seem natural.*
- *Keep working on your lines, you will get there!*
- *Careful when speaking to Percy now and again, not to turn your back completely to the audience, cheat out a bit.*
- *Amazing work in When Hope Goes and Colors of Paradise harmonizing. When you are on the back porch, what will you do with your hands, make sure it's different than Percy does, they were both at your sides today, before you hold hands.*

Eli:

- *Good job with posture and attention to detail, you seem scared when you meet Percy, but more in an ashamed way which worked for this moment on p. 45*
- *Be sure to remember the new note about taking the bread in this scene*

Great job everyone, just try to remember new notes, your lines, and how you will keep going in the real performances if anything doesn't go to plan. Practice how you'll perform and remain in character until you leave the wings off stage. It is working well so keep up the good work, focus where you know you need it while we still have time to fix it. Thanks!

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Dear Spitfire Cast,

Great rehearsal today on Sunday the 29th of Act I review! Sorry I was sick Thursday! Here are a few big notes for everyone to please read. If you notice someone is missing from this email chain as well, please forward this to them as well, I think I got everyone but just be sure, if you could do that that would help, thanks.

I would like to remind everyone to just do some general reviewing outside of rehearsals. Be sure to take some time to reread all your notes from the script we've been giving you, review lines you might be paraphrasing, and the order of scenes and props. It is a lot to remember, but we are about two weeks away from opening night, so it will be easier to keep cleaning the scenes as you continue to review your individual tasks.

Try to rely less and less on Nick and Amanda for cues, because they can't help you during the performances as well.

The main notes I would like you all as well is to consider is to remember your basic cues, review forgotten lines, and know all your individual exists. It may seem obvious, but these moments make the show flow and help the audience connect the narrative for themselves, so don't let yourself be late or forget lines the best you can.

Also, main actors, remember all the directors' notes from Tuesday and Thursday. Why is your character behaving the way they are? What are their motivations? Try not to anticipate what is about to happen, and to try to do your best to stay in the moment, it helps the audience connect the plot together for themselves and stay engaged. Sometimes it feels as if you are going through the motions, and I lose the intentions of your interactions.

Individual notes:

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Joe:

Slow down your lines in general and project, it is hard to understand what you're saying, careful not to mumble unintentionally. Be sure to remain in character, you weave in and out with your posture, but you are a parole officer who wants love, remember how that would reflect in your staging.

Percy:

Be intentional with your lines, why is your character behaving the way they are, review what her motivations are and when they shift and why. It isn't consistent yet although it has very much improved. Also review the rhythms of the songs, you are doing well, but sometimes you still come into early when you are singing or forget where you come in, which is understandable, but we just need to keep cleaning things.

Hannah:

Great job with your character and the limp, careful to review forgotten lines, and what you are doing when you are working with Effy or Caleb in the Grill as they enter in the door as well as the rest of the ensemble it is a bit stumbled right now.

Effy:

Be sure to project sometimes you are loud enough, other times I can't hear you. And if you don't have your fork, or a prop, try to improvise the way you would if something goes wrong in the show, that way you are prepared if it ever happens during the show. Careful not to talk to Nick, you won't be able to do that in dress rehearsal or show as you know.

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Caleb:

Great work staying engaged with your character, but don't forget the lines that are cues for your other cast members and review paraphrased lines. And the new blocking as needed, your voice is great and it just needs to resonate in your physical choices too, keep practicing.

Cast/Ensemble:

Great job with the songs, they are getting cleaner. Just try to anticipate what scenes come next as well as the lyrics. Sometimes you appear lost, and even if you are, try to practice the way you'll perform if you mess up, by being able to keep going, and to try to not make it obvious if you make a mistake. They happen, so just keep going, the show must go on.

Right now, about half of the ensemble look like you are in the scene while the rest of you look like you are spacing in the distance, intentional or not, try to be aware of how you are being perceived. The audience is paying attention to the whole cast, not just Percy or other ensemble members, so remember you all matter and to be engaged whenever you enter the stage!

All:

Practice the way you want to perform. Great work keep working hard! See you Monday!

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Great job today at the first full run through off book! Let me start out by how proud and impressed I am by how well you all did! That being said I know emails are annoying, but I have some more detailed notes for you all now, now that you're all doing so well with lines and blocking, that I want to share via email in case we run out of time to cover it in rehearsal.

Attached below are my notes from today: look for your name or character name, or "cast" and remember to refer to the research packet as you refine your characterization and intentions as actors and ensemble! If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to me anytime! Email or in person! Thanks, great work team! (Ps I'm making these notes because you're doing so well, that I'm already to get lucky, I hope that's clear! Great job!)

*Sincerely,
Melissa Trepa
Assistant director and dramaturg*

Notes from today: 9/23/19

Act 1:

Opening:

Joe:

Slow down Joe when speaking to Percy during the song, so we can understand you.

Percy:

Try to remember to respond to Joe rather than just react, you still love Gilled, and don't know it's flawed so reflect that idealism in this first scene with Joe.

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Cast: Great job cast on the song they're really coming together keep up pacing and blocking.

Shelby: great work but speak up generally your soft voice is hard to hear sometimes

Percy: the line when you say, "I guess I didn't make it a secret where I've been" it's a joke not a defensive response, it read that way today

Cast: work on your facial expressions during the songs your voices are evoking the lyrics but not your face it's not matching quite yet. If you're on stage you're acting so be careful even if you're "just in the ensemble" or "in transition" to remember you matter and to project your characters role when you're on stage, don't let your own posture or facial expressions take away from your characters.

Shelby: great job with songs keep working on getting off book overall!

Cast: ice and snow, careful to get to places on time and keep pace up for blocking. This is a place where I saw hands in pockets and eyes everywhere but the audience, be sure no matter your character that you're in the moment when on stage. Show worry at the winter and hope during the spring references.

Hannah: great work on intentions, after ice and snow when you talk about agreeing to the contest careful not to let your arms hang. You can shrug feel free to try things. You're hopeful, so show it with your body a bit more.

Colors of Paradise: Shelby and Percy-

Beautiful harmonies be sure Shelby that you look at Percy when she starts suggestions before jotting notes down.

Caleb: Antonio, great emotions in Digging stone and great work on Caleb's character overall, follow your intentions they're working well.

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Joe: when you tell Percy, you're looking at "my woods" you like her at this point and are showing off here slightly so look at her when you say it, you're not sure if you want to stay for yourself yet. Review the trees metaphors for the plot in the packet, and p.40-42.

Percy: review trees info in the packet when speaking with joe by p. 40, you and joe are falling slowly for each other I need to see that connection a bit more.

Hannah: careful on p.44 that your legs still injured and limping when singing about your wounds, you lost the limp by the song.

Eli: Kane careful not only stand when you appear to Percy on p.46, use your body to evoke your nerves at being near another person, are you hunched, arms behind your back? Make some choices.

Cast: Shoot the moon went well but during the letter passing be sure to have an intended few people you pass too so that you're not all clumped up and too often back faced to the audience, I like the crowdedness but it's too messy at this stage.

Antonio: great catch with the gazette line remember it next time

Act II:

Ladies Shelby, Hannah, Percy; great genuine laughter and lines, remember that Apple drink is alcoholic too, you're having fun.

Joe: with the song "one last passenger"- and "I'm already used to your cooking" when the proposal happens, be careful not to rush lines and build the tension with Percy. That line is supposed to be enduring, your also slightly scared she doesn't feel as strongly about you.

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Percy: when Joe says this line to you and you reject his proposal, remember you still like him but you're afraid to trust after everything that's happened.

P.59: Percy: review this monologue. Find a moment you can connect with. Make sure each line is felt a little differently, you should say, my baby with a pause, why do you think that is? Is she mad, sad, confused, all of the above, why is she now ready to share this with Shelby now? Revisit this and make sure the lines feel when the proposal happens, be careful not to rush lines and build the tension with Percy. That line is supposed to be enduring, your also slightly scared she doesn't feel as strongly about you.

Percy: when Joe says this line to you and you reject his proposal, remember you still like him but you're afraid to trust after everything that's happened.

P.59: Percy: review this monologue. Find a moment you can connect with. Make sure each line is felt a little differently, you should say, my baby with a pause, why do you think that is? Is she mad, sad, confused, all of the above, why is she now ready to share this with Shelby now ? Revisit this and make sure the lines feel sincere this is a powerful moment not just important to the plots narrative but all of Percy's motivations for wanting to come to Gilled.

Caleb and Shelby: on p.61, your abusive encounter was strong but it took until Antonio raised his voice for me to feel the building tension, Shelby you should feel fed up and no longer passive, Caleb you should feel threatened. Careful Shelby not to anticipate the slap and over react hitting the counter, Caleb make sure you give yourself time to feel the need to raise your hand to begin with before you pause and stop yourself.

After this page I know nick had some notes but good job overall making choices. Keep working on retaining your blocking and knowing your exists. I was so proud of seeing the progress great run through!

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Performances

In the final stages when performances occurred, the cast met for call at 6, ran mics, costumes, mic checks and checked props while waiting for the house to open. Once open, the cast prepared for the show and began by 7:30 pm. The last night was a call time of 12:30 and show at 2 pm. The show ran for 53 minutes in the first half, had a 15 min intermission, and a 43-minute end half of the production. The show ended with clean run-throughs and was well performed overall with few mistakes from night to night, mostly jumbled lines or minor note errors from the songs overall. The notes given in rehearsal were well implemented especially by the dress rehearsal stage. The productions of The Spitfire were rehearsed and well prepared by a passionate group of predominately college-age students and it is with the hard work with the entire cast and crew that the entirety of the fall musical was successful for the viewing of the public sphere.

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Special Thanks and concluding remarks:

What excites me most about this material is the way in which it engages women at the forefront of the work being created as well as the incredibly important tropes on hope and renewal that the production provides. I am honored to be a part of an initiative that this production is partaking to give people hope in these current times. A musical like *The Spitfire Grill* takes folktale nostalgia and brings it to the forefront and gives us something more.

I am thrilled to be a part of this particular production, because St. Louis has a thriving theatre community and extensive dramatic history that deserves continual support and exposure on the stage that a production such as this is able to provide. A great deal of the conflicts which face the town of Gilead can parallel are neighboring Missouri neighborhoods, and the trials and tribulations that Percy and the other characters embark on are also emotionally charging because there are many elements of universality to the struggles of conflict that they all go through. From abuse to needing a place to belong, everyone can relate on multifaceted levels. Finding yourself, finding home, and knowing where you belong, are all incredibly important lessons that this production embarks on and I am thrilled to be a part of it. I truly believe theatre is a transformative experience not only for the entire cast and crew, but every audience member and that is what makes musicals so impactful. It is a unique form of storytelling, and this show's story needs to be told once again. We are guided in this musical to take an opportunity to explore humanity at its core intentions and to look throughout time and history at what it means to live in a community, to start anew.

Through the work of the production of *The Spitfire Grill*, my focus will be on an examination of the musical in its final script, and to facilitate our team's absorption of the text in order to reflect what the playwrights had to say. The goal with this packet is to educate, inspire, and challenge our team to learn the musical on both intimate and universal contexts and to incorporate all timelines, locations, and backgrounds to the meaning of the script. It

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is also my intent to help establish the unity of all characters as they interact with one another for the benefit of the story's arch. As well as to assist the director in whatever aspects of the production that he deems necessary for the success of this show.

I want to thank the entire cast and crew for the opportunity to not only assistant direct, but also assess the dramaturgical elements that a musical like this provides. I feel truly blessed to be welcomed into this community and to work on this show. This show and production notebook act as a way to investigate how the show was produced and how we dissected dramaturgical themes and elements of the characters and ourselves. We do this in order to search the identities and oppressions which imprison us and find a way to be free in order to activate and ignite something within all of us. There is an interrelated bond in all of us, all living beings, which not only unite us in this production but with one another beyond time and history. This notebook is meant to help determine *The Spitfire Grills* story and how we brought it to life, so that we can cast a light on the fire that is already burning in the Spitfire Grill.

-Melissa Trepa

Assistant Director and Dramaturg 2019