

***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

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**Dramaturgical Packet**  
**Curated by Melissa Tropa (As of August 2019)**

First Rehearsal: September 3<sup>d</sup>, 2019

Performances: October 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, October 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> 2019



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**Rehearsal Schedule (*Subject to change*)**

For the production of *The Spitfire Grill* rehearsals and tech week will be as follows. The schedule is subject to change at a need-be basis under the direction of director Nick Moramarco, however this chart should be used as a resource and guide for everyday rehearsals and scheduling.

The final musical will be presented on October 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> and October 24<sup>th</sup> - October 27<sup>th</sup> 2019. This leaves a total of 27 rehearsals including tech week to prepare. Please be prompt and ready to rehearse each rehearsal and I hope you are all as excited for this production as the rest of the cast and crew is! Break a leg everyone!

*(August-September p. 3, October next page, p. 4)*

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	23	24	25	26	27	28

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Rehearse 1-4	Designer Run? Rehearse 7-10	Rehearse 7-10		Rehearse 7-10		
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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**Production Biography/History:**

**Book & Lyrics, Music & Book <sup>1</sup>**



*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<sup>2</sup>** 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The history mainly can be found on Wikipedia but find the references for reliable source material [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> 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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**A Powerful Woman-Driven Production<sup>3</sup>**

One of the more unique aspects of this particular musical is its female dominated cast. This was an intentional choice with intentional consequences for the stage and its viewers. According to a production from the Hawaii State Theatre, *The Spitfire Grill* is about woman, woman's lives, pain, spaces, burdens, joys, power, trials, and strength. There is references to abuse and burdens of widows to the challenges of motherhood even into their children's adult lives. These women are working on their own and in the plot of the piece, do not rely on men in the ways often women are portrayed in production and in film. The story itself feels like a familiar tale, a small town, someone trying to escape a troubled past, secrets, transformations, however, there is so much more happening than can be viewed with the lens of a traditional musical. The work takes on the task of representing the economic obstacles of its time as well as its gender inequalities and societal expectations and backlash that come with it. It's been said by the Hawaiian state director of this particular production, Lurana Donnels O'Malley that, "the women of the Grill harness their own creativity to face their problems."

None of the women in *Spitfire* chooses to rely or depend on a man to care for or solve their problems. Instead, they go from dealing with everything alone—from essentially being alone—to sharing the burden with each other—bonding with other women in a way that is practical, nurturing, and empowering.



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<sup>3</sup> See the review of the production referenced [here](#) or below in the additional material section of this packet.

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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 Valcq<sup>4</sup>** – 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 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*

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<sup>4</sup> For playwright and writers biographies, see the playwrights horizons page or read more [here](#).

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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*.

**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.





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**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 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



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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*.

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.

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**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 massed produced and is seeing a rise in production again today in 2019 all across the country.

**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.



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- 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.
- 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*

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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 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.

### **Musical Plot <sup>5</sup>**

Note this is the original plot of the musical, with musical numbers placed in parentheses for reference below. Directors choices may alter the reference below but will not alter the script's intentions.

### **Act I**

Rural Wisconsin. February. A young woman named Percy Talbott 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

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<sup>5</sup> See the actual plot in the script [here](#) for more information.

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Grill, run by a crusty old widow, Hannah Ferguson 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, 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), 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 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

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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. 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 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.

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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")

## **Reviews of the Production:**

### **Playwrights Horizons defines the story of the Spitfire Grill as follows<sup>6</sup>**

“When Percy Talbott, a young woman with an uncertain past, becomes resident of tiny Gilead, Wisconsin, the town welcomes her with suspicion and distrust. Determined to start anew, Percy soon devises a scheme to breathe life into the dying backwater county and to bring solace to a grieving mother. But it's going to take more than good will, she finds, to overcome the unchanging ways of Gilead, a town still haunted by tragedies of the past. A tender, funny, and uplifting new musical from James Valcq and Fred Alley”

*Playwrights Horizons* as one of the original theatres to produce the production acclaims the production with high esteem, and on its page has a list of the productions since awards and accolades in honor of its successful runs over the past ten or so years.

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<sup>6</sup> See review and summary of Playwrights Horizons [Here](#).



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A review from *Variety*<sup>7</sup> during the shows' opening calls the *Spitfire Grill* a production that “schools and rural church groups with a budget for “sound of Music” might warm up to”, because of its small-scale style and innocuous sensibilities, and calls it “doggedly warmhearted and uplifting it might work well as a litmus test- or a corrective- post traumatic New Yorkers, nearly dividing the temporarily emotional from the authentically sentimental”, this being right after the release around 9/11.



The rest of the review remains fairly optimistic however, slightly critical to New York audiences specifically, reviewing it saying, “the characters are predictably typed, and every development among them — and there aren’t too many possibilities — can be seen gleaming from a ways off, as on “the mornin’ when the hickories turn golden,” to borrow one of Alley’s lyrics” However, overall the review is positive and intrigued by the outcome. *Variety* calls it, ““Spitfire Grill” inspires nostalgia not for the changing leaves of Midwestern woods but the rough and tumble of city living. It’s so anodyne it makes the newly sanitized 42nd Street seem an appealingly nasty place.”

**Broadway reviews**<sup>8</sup> also during its time as a fresh new production have similar opinions on the opening of *Spitfire*. This one especially positive, as it sees the show as a great escape from 9/11 and its related troubling times. A review from Broadway reviews by *Mathew Murray*, calls the show, “one of the most heartfelt musicals of recent years, its homespun charms as inviting as a warm winter blanket.” Murray goes on to say, during its 2001 release that *Spitfire* is a nice escape from the troubled world, saying, “If the weight of the world has got you down, *The Spitfire Grill* is just what the doctor ordered.”

A more recent 2019 review of the production has a more objective lens in its critique and admiration for this piece of theatre since its time of the original opening, however remaining

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<sup>7</sup> See the full review from variety [here](#) .

<sup>8</sup> See full Broadway review [here](#).

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positive and uplifting in the review. From the *Detroit review*<sup>9</sup> on Broadway World by Stefani Chudnow, she has nothing but kind words. Saying *Spitfire*, “feels right at home.” Calling it “a hidden gem that deserves recognition.”

The main acclaim for this particular review is its emotional rollercoaster experience which entices and engages audience members such as this reviewer. Chudnow calls it a way to “witness storytelling at its finest, but to also hear great music while doing so”, most importantly celebrating the strength of the female trio in the cast of Hannah, Shelby, and Percy.

This may be because of the strength of the musical or its revival since its original production in 2001 today, when another particularly challenging historical time is among us. It seems *Spitfire* is most popular and most enjoyed during a particularly hard time in society, where a piece like *Spitfire* hits home and warms the soul when the world needs it most, whatever the reason, audiences everywhere look forward to the production again and again and its easy to see why.

## **Imagery and Symbols of The Spitfire Grill**

### **Dramaturgical analysis and interpretations:**

Within the production, reoccurring motifs and symbols exist to help heighten the experience of the show. This includes not only Percy and her storyline but the plot of the work in its entirety for a universal experience for viewers to partake in. These symbols and motifs add to the already moving story of Percy, Hannah, Shelby, the Visitor, and all those in Gilead because it provides viewers with more than one way to interpret the text when seeing it on stage. It is with these tools that the story remains as powerful in its showcasing as it is today. Some of these motifs and symbols include elements of temperature, such as hot and cold references, to the tress and their evolution of seasons, as well as the fascination of the ring around the moon by Percy in particular, to the meaning behind the name Gilead itself. This section of the packet will review these symbols and motifs and analyze them for a better understanding of the production. Some of the terms can also be reviewed more in the glossary section of this packet for analysis as well.

### **Gilead, Paradise**

As the name suggests, Gilead has a biblical implication and in real life is not town in Wisconsin, meaning it was a choice made by the playwrights to create the town of Gilead. Gilead

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<sup>9</sup> For the Detroit review on *Spitfire*, read more [here](#).

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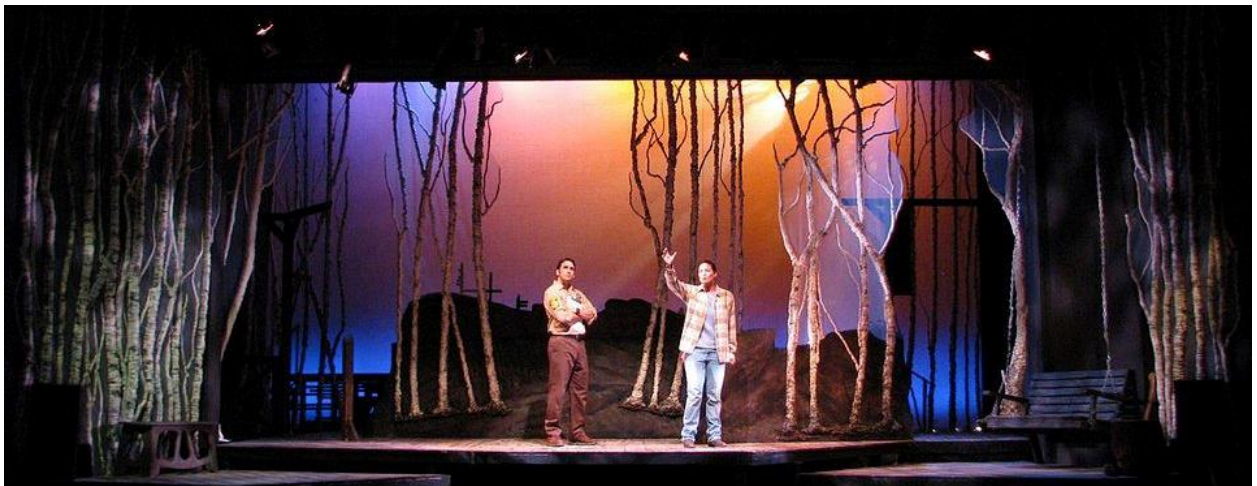
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seems to represent a place for redemption, for repent, as Percy leaves prison and a world which she was surrounded by evil and sin. Percy's obsession with Gilead, its trees and moon, represent the nostalgia for a new beginning that she so desperately is trying to preserve for herself. Like heaven's paradise, Gilead is a retreat from all she's known so she can find all she can be. In addition to the town's name, there is a song where Percy sings about paradise (The Colors of Paradise) which overlaps this theory of symbolism. Gilead ironically in reality, is nowhere near perfect, but the contrast between Percy's perception, the perception of those who write the essays, and the people who live there provide a fruitful interpretation of what paradise means for the individual and what a home can mean to someone, especially for someone in particularly difficult times.

### **Trees**

Trees are also a continual motif in the production and help visually parallel the narrative arch of the musical complimentarily. To start we see Percy daydreaming about Gilead and the colorful leaves, as if to symbolize beauty and hope where dull nothingness surrounds her in prison as she is being released. We see that the trees start out in color but quickly change to winter where the conflict of the plot commences, since the setting is at the end of fall. As the relationships bloom among everyone in the show, the winter melts into spring, and we see again the shifting of tensions. However, Percy doesn't get to see the true colorful fall leaves she has wanted since Act I, until the end of the work when she receives the grill with Shelby, because the story's arch is finding its resolution. It seems she sees the leaves when she is finally ready, because Percy finally lets' go of her past as she reveals her experiences in the emotional climax



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of the piece, and it is then her “sins’ are forgiven, and the colors of hope and paradise commence visually.

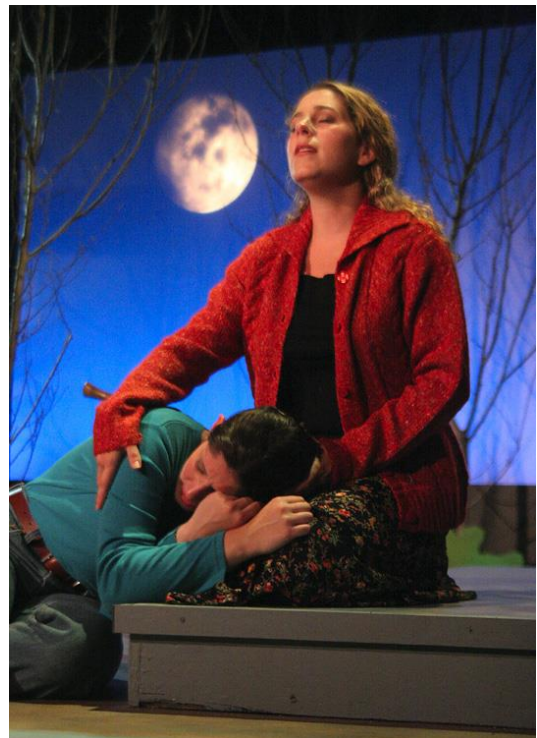
References to the woods amongst her love interest and parole officer, Joe, also add to the necessity the trees play in the work. They act as a necessary theatrical tool too, because the trees also represent new roots, new beginnings for Percy since arriving in Gilead as well as her relationship with Joe. Sheriff Joe isn’t sure if he wants to leave or stay, but as his love for Percy blooms so do the trees and the land he owns from his inheritance. The trees also act to the nostalgia Percy feels because she originally is from West Virginia but never got to see the trees before moving to the city of Detroit. Rural land also acts as a paradise from the chaos of city and temptation as well as the main setting in the production as Percy reveals the death of her father in the coal mines and forced removal from West Virginia to the city.

Trees symbolize life with their oxygen and continual growth for hundreds of years, they represent the strength of the town as they surround the setting, as well as Joe’s hope to build a life and family instead of leaving, when he goes to seek more of the land and Percy idolizes her surroundings.

### **Shooting the Moon**

Shooting the Moon is an idiom Percy sings about in the production and also adds to the dramatic depth of the shows’ intentions and narrative arch. The ring around the moon is a reference to the way the moon can appear at particular times in the season, usually late fall, before a particularly difficult winter. In the glossary of this packet more on the term can be defined, however, scientifically, similar to how rainbows are created, rings around the moon do exist, and could be what Percy is speaking to.

To the more connotative perspective, a ring also is an infinite symbol, which could reveal the circle of life, the infinite dreams that Percy has, or a foreshadow to a literal ring, as Joe attempts to give Percy later in the show in Act II to start a new life together. A ring around the moon is also beautiful and physically appealing, adding to Percy’s nostalgia for a better life and a more beautiful future. Seeing a ring on the moon in particular is interesting as



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well, because moons are seen before a new day, before sunrise, so this could aid in Percy's aspirations for a new life as well.

**Economic references**

Another obstacle this work tries to tackle is the growing economic obstacles that small towns endure when people move to bigger cities, for industrialization, globalization, revitalization, or more opportunities. When people leave, they leave smaller regions to take the pain of the aftermath in order to struggle to survive. Caleb and Joe's characters specifically tackle this conflict in their own dialog and repetitive language, as Joe contemplates staying and Caleb struggles to sell Hannah's grill café. Caleb's old fashion point of view on marriage with Shelby, also adds to the economic realities of the town, because it implies the commons stereotype of small-town small mindedness, as well as the gossip references in the songs. This all



reveals why people tend to leave small towns, because small mindedness means less growth or development, making it more tempting for people to leave.

It is mentioned on page 37 of the script that the town is suffering because there was a highway build on mineral point instead of Gilead, taking away opportunities for growth and sustainability. Hannah's grill hasn't sold in ten years, all of this contributes to this crisis

being examined in the work. Today, we see this parallel in modern America as people move to the West and East Coasts, Chicago, and New York, and away from places like Missouri or Illinois towns leaving little room to thrive when no one is around to sustain the economy. The ending where Shelby and Percy own the café as a result of the raffle and Hannah's kindness, provides a positive take on this struggle, because it makes the town appear as if it still has a fighting chance to survive, and that there is hope for growth despite the obstacles the town of

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Gilead has faced. This is also seen by the eager letters for the essay raffle prize as people idolize the quaint positive traits small towns do possess as well.

**Cold/Hot and Spitfire**

The cold and hot references of the musical add to these tensions of conflict in the piece not only in the script but also for the visual choices of the production. For instance, if you reread the script with these motifs in mind, they pop up everywhere and for good reason because they are a phenomenal tool for the insight on the musical. It is already mentioned by the trees section, however, the weather itself regarding temperature parallels the emotional tensions of characters in the piece. In addition, the title of the grill itself, *Spitfire*, represents a sense of stubborn determination, of fire, spark, hope. Light is hope in the musical, representing a new beginning from darkness, like the heat of spitfire grill, warm and comforting. Whereas the cold winter and dire need to find a home for the café, acts as a foil to this hopeful message. Spitfire, as mentioned later in the glossary, is also a term for someone who is stubborn but strong, like Hannah, the owner. Spitfire was Hannah's husband's café before he died and was the name of the plane he flew in WWII. This adds depth to Hannah and her late husband's shame when their son is revealed as a Vietnam deserter, however, it is because of the term spitfire we see Hannah not give up entirely on her son either.

Songs like "Color Paradise", also add to this symbolism, because color represents revitalization, hope, emotion, dreams. Where the empty trees of winter have none, the song "Digging Stone" being an example of this. Stones are cold, dark, and grey, and Caleb struggles with his manhood and identity as it becomes clear his purpose to provide no longer will last. The song "Shine", in Act II, is a prime example of the positive connotative meaning that color and physical warmth provide this production. She is finding herself free from her past and looking to find a new self and place to call home.



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**Wild bird and Bread**

A wild bird is also an important symbol in the work of *The Spitfire Grill*, and acts for the needs of multiple characters. When Hannah and Percy leave bread for “the visitor” or Hannah’s son Eli, it is symbolic, because like birds, he gets bread. He had fallen from the nest, like a bird, but still remains attached to his mother, even if only for the means of survival. Bread is also a biblical term which parallels the biblical name Gilead, because it is a reference to the body and blood of Christ. Daily bread is a chance and symbol for salvation, resurrection, and forgiveness. So, by giving Eli bread, it is a symbolic gesture for this outcome, and foreshadows this resolution before it even occurs. Like daily bread, which Hannah and Percy provide, it is a chance for renewal for Eli despite his deserter status past.

In addition to the use of the bread in the production, the concept of the bird is also incredibly important. Percy refers to herself as a wild bird, uncommitted and with no nest in the script, especially after revealing her abuse she went through which led her to jail. Shelby sings about wild birds in the song, “Wild bird” after Percy tells her secret, because once this secret is revealed Percy can let go. She belongs in the trees with the rest of those who live in Gilead, as Percy lets go of her troubled past and accepts Gilead as her new home. Like birds, they also live in the trees, like the trees that surround Gilead, where Percy has found her roots, and she no longer feels a need to fly away anymore.

**Definition of terms<sup>10</sup> and key words for Reference:**

**Character Names<sup>11</sup>**

- 1. Perchance Talbot-** “Perchance”, used with a statement in the past or present indicative, rendering it hypothetical, sounds like “per chance, or purchase,” value Unknown, in a statement of fact; by chance; as it happens or happened. The suffix or “chance” aspect of the name “perchance” is English: from Old French chea(u)nche ‘(good) fortune’ (a derivative of cheoir ‘to fall (out)’, Latin cadere), a nickname for an inveterate gambler, for someone considered fortunate or well favored, or perhaps for someone who had survived an accident by a remarkable piece of luck. Americanized form of German Tschantz or Schantz.

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<sup>10</sup> All definitions in the Glossary section can be found at the OED website or other dictionary sources, see websites [here](#) or [here](#) for more details.

<sup>11</sup> All character names originally off of ancestry site, see more [here](#).

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**“Talbot”**- English of Norman origin, of much disputed origin, but probably from a Germanic personal name composed of the elements tal ‘destroy’ + bod ‘message’, ‘tidings’, i.e. ‘messenger of destruction’. In this form the name is also found in France, taken there apparently by English immigrants; the usual French form is Talbert. Talbert French and English: from a continental Germanic personal name composed of the elements tal ‘valley’ + berht ‘bright’.

2. **Hannah Ferguson**- Scottish, northern Irish, and English, from the 1840’s, meaning a byname of uncertain meaning, from the medieval female personal name Hannah or Anna, from Hebrew “He God has favored me”, (with a child), the name is in the Bible by the mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 1: 1-28) name of the mother of virgin Mary, this is also referred to from St. Anne as a popular figure in medieval art and legend.

**“Ferguson”**- Scottish: patronymic from the personal name Fergus. Fergus meaning Irish: reduced Anglicized form of Gaelic Ó Fearghuis or Ó Fearghasa ‘descendant of Fearghus’, a personal name composed of the elements fear ‘man’ + gus ‘vigor’, ‘force’, or possibly ‘choice’. This was the name of an early Irish mythological figure, a valiant warrior, also of the grandfather of St. Columba. Scottish: from the Gaelic personal name Fearghus.

3. **Shelby Thorpe**-English: of uncertain origin; perhaps a variant of Selby, or a habitational name from an unidentified place named with the northern Middle English elements schele ‘hut’ + by ‘settlement’, ‘farm’ (Old Norse býr).



**“Thorpe”**- English: habitational name from any of the numerous places in England named with Old Norse þorp ‘hamlet’, ‘village’ or the Old English cognate þrop.



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4. **Caleb Thorpe**-reduced and altered form of Scottish and Irish McKillip, a Gaelic patronymic from Philip. The form of the name, originally Killip, has been assimilated to that of the Biblical personal name Caleb. English and Welsh: from the Biblical Hebrew personal name Caleb, the name of one of the only two men who set out with Moses from Egypt to live long enough to enter the promised land (Numbers 26:65). This name, which is derived from a Hebrew word meaning ‘dog’, was popular among the Puritans in the 17th century and was brought by them as a personal name to America.

“**Thorpe**”- English: habitational name from any of the numerous places in England named with Old Norse þorp ‘hamlet’, ‘village’ or the Old English cognate þrop.

5. **Sheriff Joe Sutter**- English, German, French, and Jewish: from the personal name, Hebrew Yosef ‘may He (God) add (another son)’. In medieval Europe this name was borne frequently but not exclusively by Jews; the usual medieval English vernacular form is represented by Jessup. In the Book of Genesis, Joseph is the favorite son of Jacob, who is sold into slavery by his brothers but rises to become a leading minister in Egypt (Genesis 37–50). In the New Testament Joseph is the husband of the Virgin Mary, which accounts for the popularity of the given name among Christians.

“**Sutter**”- English and South German: occupational name for a shoemaker or cobbler (rarely a tailor), from Middle English suter, souter, Middle High German suter, sutære (from Latin sutor, an agent derivative of suere ‘to sew’)

6. **Effy Krayneck**- “**Evelin**” -English: from the Middle English, Old French female personal name Aveline, a double diminutive of the Germanic personal name Avo, from the element avi, perhaps meaning ‘desired’, ‘wished for’.

“**Krayneck**”- Sounds like “crank your neck”, someone who is snooty. Its seen as the Americanized spelling of Slovak Krajnák, a topographic name for someone who lived on the edge of a village, from kraj ‘end’, ‘border’.

7. **The Visitor (Eli Ferguson)**- **Eli aka Elijah**- Welsh, Jewish, and American: from the personal name Elijah, the usual English transliteration in the King James Bible (Old Testament) of the Hebrew name Eliyahu ‘Jehovah is God’, name of one of the Biblical prophets (see Elias). As a Welsh surname, this is a comparatively late adoption of the

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personal name, adopted after Old Testament given names became popular among Nonconformists.

**“Ferguson”- “Ferguson”-** Scottish: patronymic from the personal name Fergus. Fergus meaning Irish: reduced Anglicized form of Gaelic Ó Fearghuis or Ó Fearghasa ‘descendant of Fearghus’, a personal name composed of the elements fear ‘man’ + gus ‘vigor’, ‘force’, or possibly ‘choice’. This was the name of an early Irish mythological figure, a valiant warrior, also of the grandfather of St. Columba. Scottish: from the Gaelic personal name Fearghus.

## GLOSSARY

### ACT 1<sup>12</sup>

1. **Taycheedah Prison p. 9**<sup>13</sup>(1<sup>st</sup> pg. of script) An all adult female correctional facilities. A women’s prison in Wisconsin, originated in the 1800’s, and in 1850 the female offenders were held in the Wisconsin state Prison, known today as Waupun Correctional institution. In 1912, the women’s facility first began construction, and in 1921 the Industrial Home for Women was opened. In 1931 the Wisconsin Prison for Women was created and completed in 1933. The prison referenced in the show is this prison which changed the name from Prison for Women in 1975 to the Taycheedah Correctional Institution.

2. **Spitfire p.9**<sup>14</sup>-That spits fire; fire-spitting; *figurative* irascible, displaying anger or hot



temper. A spitfire satirist, or moody misanthrope. One whose temper is fiery; an irascible, passionate, or quick-tempered person.

3. **A cappella p.9** -without instrumental accompaniment, just music using ones voice.

4. **“Ring around the Moon” p.9**<sup>15</sup> a “ring around the moon” or lunar halo is caused by the refraction, reflection, and dispersion of light through ice particles suspended within thin,

<sup>12</sup> Terms in glossary if not noted otherwise come from the Webster dictionary or Oxford English Dictionary see sources [here](#) and [here](#).

<sup>13</sup> Prison term read more [here](#)

<sup>14</sup> Spitfire term OED (Oxford English Dictionary) find more [here](#).

<sup>15</sup> Scientific meaning of ring around the moon found [here](#), read to learn more.

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wispy, high altitude cirrus or cirrostratus clouds. A prism effect of light passes through crystals and a double halo sometimes with spokes, may be seen on rare occasions when light reflects off water or ice.

The halo is a result of the light pushing through six-sided ice crystals that separates the light into various colors, like a rainbow, colors appear that are pale, with red on the inside and blue on the outside. Folklore says lunar halos are the precursor of impending or unsettled weather, especially during winter months.

They are fairly common at night so look to the stars as Percy does to find them.

5. **Gilead p. 9**-mountainous region of ancient Palestine east of the Jordan River; now in Jordan, referenced in the Bible, this place in the musical is fictional, nonexistent to Wisconsin.
6. **“Olly Olly Oxen Free” <sup>16</sup>p.9**-a phrase used in children’s games like capture the flag, kick the can, and hide and seek, which is generally used to indicate that people who are hiding. The origin is debated today, derived from “all ye, all ye outs in free, all the outs in free” phrase, which means that all who are out may come in without penalty, the phrases origin may be German.
7. **Perchance Tolbott p.10-** (See character names list above)
8. **Warden p.10**-One who guards, protects, or defends; occasionally a guardian angel: One who has the care of something specified; a keeper.
9. **“Cripes” p.10-** “goodness” a form of exclamation, slang. In the exclamation *(by) cripes!* aka “Christ” n.

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<sup>16</sup> For more on Olly Olly Oxen Free phrase meaning, learn more [here](#).

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**10. Ghost town p.10**-a town partially or completely devoid of its inhabitants.

**11. Copper Creek<sup>17</sup> p. 11**-a stream in Sauk County, Wisconsin.



**12. “burning the midnight oil”<sup>18</sup> p.11**- a phrase meaning to stay up late working long hours into the night, where at the time a candle would burn its oil. It was first written in the book “Emblems” by author Frances Quarles in 1635.

**13. Housebroken p.12** -trained to excretory habits acceptable in indoor living —a phrase used often for a household pet, also meaning to make tractable or polite

**14. Dawdle p.13**-to waste time, be slow. Move slowly and idly, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, related to dialect daddle, doddle, dally.

**15. Spartan surroundings p.13** -a person of great courage and self-discipline, a native or inhabitant of ancient Sparta in Greece, marked by strict self-discipline or self-denial. Used in these scene directions as a description of the grill’s toughness.

**16. “Look what the Cat Dragged in”<sup>19</sup> in p.14**-To look exhausted, worn out, untidy, or dirty. The expression *look what the cat dragged in* means *Look, everyone, acknowledge this person*. It can have a negative connotation, or it could be an instance of gentle teasing. The exact origin for this expression is unclear. However, digital records seem to indicate that this expression began to appear in the early 1900s.. The idea behind this idiom is clear to anyone who has owned a pet cat with access to the outside and inside of the house. Despite being domesticated, cats love to hunt. They will often bring back the bounty of their hunts to the house. It is possible they mean to offer their kills as gifts to their human owners.

**17. Early bird p.15**- an early riser, one that arrives early and especially before possible competitors

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<sup>17</sup> Copper creek, is a real creek in Wisconsin, see more on the geological info [here](#), and an image [here](#).

<sup>18</sup> Definition found [here](#) for this phrase.

<sup>19</sup> Learn more [here](#).

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- 18. White trash p. 15-** a member of an inferior or underprivileged white social group.
- 19. Quarry p.16-**is a type of open-pit mine in which dimension stone, rock, construction aggregate, riprap, sand, gravel, or slate is excavated from the ground. The word *quarry* can also include the underground quarrying for stone, such as Bath stone.
- 20. Foreman p. 16-**The principal juror, who presides at the deliberations of the jury, and communicates their verdict to the court
- 21. Evasion p. 16-**The action of escaping from confinement or danger; escape.
- 22. Poised p. 16-**Of a person, behavior, etc.: composed, self-assured. C
- 23. Cacophony p.20-***Music.* A discordant combination of sounds, dissonance. Also, *figurative.* Moral discord.
- 24. Solitary p.21-**One who lives by himself in seclusion or retirement; one who avoids, or is deprived of, the society of others
- 25. Bussing tables p.21-<sup>20</sup>**In North America, a busser, more commonly known as a busboy or busgirl, is a person who works in the restaurant and catering industry clearing tables, taking dirty dishes to the dishwasher, setting tables, refilling and otherwise assisting the waiting staff.



- 26. Corn beef hash p.24<sup>21</sup>-**Corned Beef Hash. A dish prepared with chopped corned beef, potatoes, vegetables such as peppers, onions, celery, or carrots, and various seasonings. The ingredients are usually fried together until they are browned. Corned beef hash is often served with a sauce, gravy, or eggs.

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<sup>20</sup> Restaurant terms can be defined more [here](#).

<sup>21</sup> Read more about this classic dish [here](#).

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**27. Ax p.25**-a cutting tool that consists of a heavy edged head fixed to a handle with the edge parallel to the handle and that is used especially for felling trees and chopping and splitting wood

**28. Raring p. 27**-full of enthusiasm or eagerness

**29. Whitewash p. 28**-an act or instance of glossing over or of exonerating

**30. “booby prize” (in the Lion’s Club raffle) p.29**-an award for the poorest performance in a game or competition



**31. Ice testing rod p. 30**-a rod which tests the ice, its thickness and depth.

**32. Groundhog p. 30** – a woodchuck, an animal used in the United States that predicts the weather before spring to determine the length of winter using its shadow.

**33. Pertneer p. 31**-accented way to pronounce, “about near”

**34. Pea pods p. 31**-the pod which surrounds growing peas, a vegetable plant which is a tendril climbing plant.

**35. Dodgeville (Wisconsin<sup>22</sup>) p.32**- a real location in Wisconsin, which is home of the oldest Court House, and has 4,692 residents.

**36. Reverie p. 34**-the condition of being lost in thought.

**37. Cripes p. 37**-used as a euphemism for Christ, also used as a mild oath

**38. “Hair trigger anger as sympathy<sup>23</sup>” p. 39**-the phrase hair trigger temper, it refers to someone who reacts strongly when angry, it’s a common phrase for anger. As an

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the city of Dodgeville go [here](#).

<sup>23</sup> For more on this particular phrase or psychology behind it, look [here](#).

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adjective, it means “easily activated or set off, reacting immediately to the slightest provocation or cause”

**39. Postmistress p.46-**a woman who is a postmaster, or someone who has charge of a post office or station for the accommodation of travelers or who supplies post horses.

**40. Gangway p. 49-**a clear passage through a crowd —often used as an interjection

**Act II**

**41. Applejack drink p. 51-**is a strong apple-flavored alcoholic drink produced from apples. Popular in the American colonial era, the drink's prevalence declined in the 19th and 20th centuries amid competition from other spirits. Applejack is used in several cocktails, including the Jack Rose.

**42. Till p. 52 -**a money drawer in a store or bank, as a verb it means to work by plowing, sowing, and raising crops, to cultivate.

**43. Parcel p. 57-** a tract or plot of land; a fragment or portion, a unit of salable merchandize.

**44. “Nickle tour<sup>24</sup>” p. 58-** an idiom meaning to show someone around a place, also phrased as “fifty-cent tour”

**45. Johnny B. Goode song p. 59-** a 1958 rock and roll song by Chuck Berry, which was named by rolling stone as the 7<sup>th</sup> greatest song ever on their list of all-time greatest songs.

**46. Rye p. 60-** a hardy annual grass (*Secale cereale*) that is widely grown for grain and as a cover crop.



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<sup>24</sup> For more on this idiom look [here](#) .

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**47. Genessee Depot** <sup>25</sup>**p. 61-** a town in Wisconsin in Waukesha County, it is in the southeastern region between Milwaukee and Madison and named for the train station or depot.



the hair.

**48. Transfixed p. 62-** to hold motionless by or as if by piercing

**49. Sin's river water p. 62-**a idiom or phrase to mean, sins which one commits against God that flow with a person or persons.

**50. Cowlick p. 65-**a lock or tuft of hair growing in a different direction from the rest of

**51. Abated p. 67-** to decrease in force or intensity; to become defeated or void in value

**52. Resolutely p.67-** marked by firm determination; bold, resolved, steady.

**53. Procures p. 67-** to get possession of (something): to obtain (something) by particular care and effort

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<sup>25</sup> For more on the town of Genessee see the town website [here](#) or see more on its origins [here](#).



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**Additional Points of Interest: Read, Watch, Listen:**

- Full stage production example, see here from Asheville School in 2015.
  - <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Spitfire+Grill+Musical&&view=detail&mid=041294C42A7DFFA9A00D041294C42A7DFFA9A00D&&FORM=VRD GAR>
- See the trailer of Spitfire, another staged production from Lyric Arts (lyricarts.org)
  - <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Spitfire+Grill+Musical&&view=detail&mid=0910484B5163827540D50910484B5163827540D5&&FORM=VRD GAR>
- Johnny B. Good reference to the song:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFo8-JqzSCM>
- History on Johnny B. Good song and Singer:
  - <https://www.last.fm/music/Chuck+Berry/.+Johnny+B.+Goode/+wiki>.
- Review on Women’s perspective in the production: The Hawaii State Theatre Counsel Review:
  - [http://manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/wp-content/uploads/Spitfire-Grill-Review\\_Hitting-the-Stage\\_Svaton.pdf](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/wp-content/uploads/Spitfire-Grill-Review_Hitting-the-Stage_Svaton.pdf)
- Working the musical from a musician’s perspective, see article and facts on music of the show:
  - <https://strumpit.org/2019/08/04/playing-the-spitfire-grill-guitar-mandolin/>
- Film’s trailer of Spitfire Grill
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKKdkqnAX4o>
- Full movie available to rent or buy on YouTube here:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQj82MJLuTs>
- Article review from Playbill on the cast album read here from 2002:
  - <http://www.playbill.com/article/spitfire-grill-cast-album-gets-exclusive-release-via-playwrights-horizons-april-29-com-105319>

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**Words from the Dramaturg**

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 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.

This show and packet act as a way to investigate how we view others and ourselves, and how we take our 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 packet is meant help determine *The Spitfire Grills* history, as well as its current popularity and resurrection, and why this is, so that we as a production, we can cast a light on the fire that is already burning in the Spitfire Grill.

-Melissa Trepa