

2014 TONY AWARD-WINNER!
BEST SCORE

Welcome to the national tour of

*The Bridges of
Madison County,*
one of the most romantic
stories ever told.

THE
BRIDGES
OF MADISON COUNTY
~ THE BROADWAY MUSICAL ~

The Bridges of Madison County is the unforgettable story of two people caught between decision and desire, as a chance encounter becomes a second chance at so much more.

The story of Iowa housewife Francesca Johnson and her life-changing, four-day whirlwind romance with traveling photographer Robert Kincaid,

The Bridges of Madison County first captured the nation's attention over 20 years ago as a best-selling novel by Robert James Waller, then as a film starring Meryl Streep and Clint Eastwood.

You may be one of the over 50 million readers of the book, or one of the many who loved the movie, or perhaps you are brand new to *The Bridges of Madison County*. Whatever your relationship, now is your chance to experience this love story live as the two-time Tony Award®-winning Broadway musical sets out across the country.

DISCOVERY GUIDE



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WHY DOES THIS STORY STRIKE SUCH A CHORD?

What draws us to Francesca and Robert's love story? *The Bridges of Madison County* paints a picture of a deeply felt, romantic love that ultimately cannot be. It is a tale in which individual desires are placed side by side with family and community. Director Bartlett Sher said: "It's always a struggle between freedom and security, between 'Do I stay where I am with my family because I love them or do I follow the thing that makes my heart feel the greatest?'"

The musical features a soaring Tony Award-winning original score by Jason Robert Brown which *The New York Daily News* called "the beating heart of the show." And this beating musical heart is our guide through the roller coaster of emotions in the show. Love, loyalty and loss, choices and children, romance and responsibility all tumble together onstage as they do in life and come back again and again and again to love.

The musical is not about categorizing the love that Robert and Francesca found and judging whether it was right or wrong. Rather, the story celebrates that they were able to find such a love during their lives at all. It invites all of us in the audience to reflect on and to celebrate the many loves in our own lives.

Thank you so much for joining us for *The Bridges of Madison County*. We can't wait to see you at the theatre!

“But what we did is that **WE LOVED AND LOVE IS ALWAYS BETTER.**”

— Francesca, *The Bridges of Madison County*

SYNOPSIS

by Marsha Norman,
writer *The Bridges of Madison County*, *The Broadway Musical*

Spoiler Alert: If you want take a romantic journey and not know the destination; please don't read the following.

A BEAUTIFUL ITALIAN WOMAN walks onto the dark stage and sings the story of her journey from wartime Naples to Winterset, Iowa with her new husband, an American soldier. As Francesca sings, her new home fills with neighbors, children, crops and chores, everything you need "To Build a Home."

Then one morning, Bud and the kids leave for the State Fair in Indianapolis. Francesca stays at home, knowing, as Bud promises, that they will be "Home Before You Know It."

But later that afternoon, a photographer from *National Geographic* arrives, needing help finding the Roseman Bridge, the last of the covered bridges he has been assigned to photograph. Francesca rides with him to the bridge, listening as he explains his comfort in being "Temporarily Lost." As he studies the bridge, she studies him, wondering, "What Do You Call a Man Like That?"

Back at her house, Francesca offers Robert some iced tea, and he stays for supper. As they eat, his ex-wife Marian sings "Another Life," detailing her failed attempts to connect with this handsome loner. But as Robert leaves Francesca's house, they both find themselves "Wondering" what will happen.

The next morning, singing "Look at Me," Francesca goes into town to shop and ends up at the bridge, where Robert is happy to see her. He sings "The World Inside a Frame," then gives her a copy of the *National Geographic*, in which his photographs of the restoration of Naples bring her to tears, and she invites him to dinner again.

Meanwhile, at the 4H Finals, Bud finds himself at a bar and sings "Something Like a Dream," realizing he needs to pay more attention to his wife.

That night, Robert asks Francesca to dance, the envious neighbor Marge sings "Get Closer," and Act One ends as Robert and Francesca embrace and sing "Falling Into You." At last, she leads him up the stairs, neither of them able to resist what they feel.

Act Two begins at the Indiana State Fair, a bluegrass band sings "State Road 21," and Francesca and Robert wake up in bed and sing "Who We Are and Who We Want to Be." As they drive to Des Moines she sings "Almost Real," about her life in Italy and the devastation of the war. Later that night, Robert asks Francesca to come away with him. She realizes her world is now divided into "Before and After You," and they sing "One Second and a Million Miles to Go."

The next morning Francesca panics at the knowledge that her family will arrive in a matter of hours. Robert says he must leave town at 6, and she promises to meet him by then. He promises that all she ever has to do is call him, and he will come get her. She sinks to the floor in tears as he leaves, just managing to get back to the table before the family bursts through the door.

Carolyn has won a blue ribbon for her steer, and Michael has declared he doesn't want to be a farmer. Francesca begins to tell Bud she is leaving with Robert, but the moment is interrupted as fight breaks out between Michael and Bud. Hoping to make peace, Francesca suggests they go into town for ice cream.

But in town, Carolyn sees a stranger across the street and asks, "Mom, who is that man?" It is Robert, and Francesca runs into his arms, telling him she wants to go with him. Then she sees her family and knows she can't leave them. When she returns to her family, Carolyn says, "Mom, who is that man?" And we realize the exhilarating moment with Robert was only in Francesca's mind. This time, she answers the question simply, saying Robert is a photographer who asked her for directions one day.

Years pass, and the neighbors are getting dressed for Carolyn's wedding. Marge's husband Charlie begins to sing "When I'm Gone," and the song carries us through the next 10 years, as Michael graduates from medical school and Bud dies.

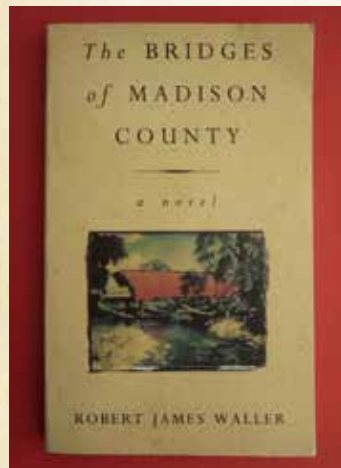
A year later, as Francesca is thinking of him, Robert appears, older now, but we feel their love as strong as ever as he walks through her kitchen to his office. He calls the *National Geographic*, and we learn that he is gravely ill. He packs his cameras in a box, then encloses a letter to Francesca and sings "It All Fades Away." When she receives the box, she goes back to the Roseman Bridge to read the news of his death and hear his final eternal declaration of love. She sings that love is "Always Better." Then she walks up on the bridge and he comes up behind her, his youth restored, singing the refrain from "One Second and a Million Miles." He wraps his arms around her, she leans back into him, he kisses her neck, and with this radiant moment of memory, as vivid as life itself, we have the end.

THE JOURNEY

“...ONE OF THE
MOST ROMANTIC, STIRRING
TALES OF TRUE LOVE...”

—Oprah Winfrey

The Bridges of Madison County has been told in three different genres—originally as a novel, then a film and now as a musical.



THE BOOK

The Bridges of Madison County was written by Iowa native and University of North Iowa economics professor, Robert James Waller. It was a mash-up of Waller's personal experiences - his time as an amateur photographer taking pictures of Madison County's covered bridges and a song that he wrote about a woman named Francesca who wanted love and a better

life. Told from the third person, the novel uses simple and plain language to evoke the passion and longing of the story. The focus of *The Bridges of Madison County* is Robert Kincaid. Francesca, her life and family are something that Robert discovers on his journey. He has been all over the world but the most exotic place he discovers is the love in his heart for a one woman. The novel would dominate the publishing world and capture the popular imagination of the 1990s, but it had a bumpy start.

First, Waller's agent was skeptical. He was concerned about the book's length; at 42,000 words it was too short for a novel. He also thought the style was odd and the theme wasn't the kind of stuff that sells.

Yet, Warner Books purchased the novel and published it in 1992. Initially, big chain books stores were wary of *Bridges*, the untraditional length plus the mixed reviews did nothing to dissuade their reluctance. Then summer came and something began to happen. Chain and independent book stores were noticing a spike in sales. Customers were buying multiple copies of the novel to pass out to friends and relatives.

By the beginning of 1993, *The Bridges of Madison County* was a sleeper hit. It was rising to the top of the best seller list from word of mouth, by readers who fell in love with the story and told their friends. Then came Oprah.

In 1993, The Oprah Winfrey Show was the highest-rated talk show in America with a viewership of about 8 million. On May 23, 1993, Oprah filmed her show at Cedar Bridge in Winterset, Iowa. The episode was entitled "Bridge of Love," where guests talked about their real-life *Bridges* love stories. Reportedly, during taping of the show, Oprah leaned over to Waller on a commercial break and said, "By the end of this weekend, you won't be able to buy a copy of *The Bridges of Madison County* in America."

The novel, *The Bridges of Madison County* would spend 164 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list, selling over 50 million copies world-wide and be translated into 23 languages. But the story was far from over.



THE MOVIE

“I believe that a lot of people have the potential to fall in love with any number of people. You don't know what fate has in store.”

—Kathleen Kennedy, Co-Producer, *The Bridges of Madison County* (Film)

The film, *The Bridges of Madison County* was shot in Winterset, Iowa in the late summer of 1994. Clint Eastwood co-produced, directed and portrayed Robert Kincaid. Meryl Streep starred as Francesca. The script was written by Richard LaGravenese, who wrote the fantastical and touching *The Fisher King*.

Unlike the novel, the film tells the story from Francesca's point of view. Her longing and her choices propel the action of the film. Francesca is the heart of the story. It was a rarity in a Hollywood film to have a middle-aged woman's journey at the center. The role of Francesca would earn Streep an Academy Award® nomination. According to Janet Maslin in a *New York Times* review (June 2, 1995) Streep, "looking sturdy and voluptuous in her plain housedress...embodies all the loneliness and fierce yearning Andrew Wyeth captured on canvas."

Through his direction, Eastwood created a subtle and lush film. Incorporating jazz tracks from Johnny Hartman, Dinah Washington, and Irene Kral, Eastwood used music to underscore the rising tension and deep emotions of the two lovers. Richard Corliss writes in *Time* magazine (June 5, 1995) "*The Bridges of Madison County...is about the anticipation and consequences of passion—the slow dance of appraisal, of waiting to make a move that won't be rejected, of debating what to do when the erotic heat matures into love light. What is the effect of an affair on a woman who has been faithful to her husband, and on a rootless man who only now realizes he needs the one woman he can have but not hold?*"

THE MUSICAL

The Bridges of Madison County, the musical, first premiered at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in August 2013 and was followed by a critically acclaimed run on Broadway at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre in 2014. The Broadway production featured Tony Award® winner Kelli O'Hara as Francesca and Steven Pasquale as Robert. *Bridges* would win the 2014 Tony for Best Original Score and Best Orchestrations.

Reflecting on where the musical sits along-side the book and the movie, writer Marsha Norman said "...*What we've built is an expansion on the book and on the movie...the novel has nailed an iconic idea, which is: What if you had a week that didn't count? What if you discovered your soulmate in the middle of a fading marriage and having children? What would you do? And from what we've seen from audiences, enough people have had those experiences...And not only did they respond, they cried. They talked to us. They grabbed us. There is something in this piece that causes people to go into their personal lives and respond from what's happened to them and to connect with the people on the stage.*"

And the love continues. In the fall of 2015, a national tour begins in Iowa and travels across America, to bring the story that has been beloved for two generations to die-hard and new fans alike.

“The essence of musical theatre is conveying an emotional experience, an illumination of some aspect of human life.”

—Marsha Norman; Book Writer, *The Bridges of Madison County*; Notes on the Musical Book

🔗 A novel, a film and now a musical. What is it about *The Bridges of Madison County* that continues inspire audiences? Why do you think this story keeps getting told?

MEET THE PEOPLE OF WINTERSET, IOWA



FRANCESCA "Suddenly there's a world I never knew.../And evermore divided me: Before and after you." Late 30s/early 40s — An Italian woman who came to Iowa as a war bride. She is hard working and diligent. Life has not unfolded the way Francesca has expected but she has made a family and life for herself.

MICHAEL "I gotta know about life in the real world." Francesca and Bud's son, age 16 — He is restless. He wants out of Iowa. His energy is on the edge of propelling him into life of either productivity or trouble.



RICHARD "BUD" JOHNSON "To me she's still like something from a dream./And to her. I'm like the guy who keeps the lights on." Francesca's husband — mid 40s, an Iowa farmer, rigid and dependable. He is a 'good guy' but always exhausted and irritated that life hasn't gotten easier.



CAROLYN "I ate seven corn dogs and I think I might die.../I can hold it together and I will not cry." Francesca and Bud's daughter, age 14 — Prone to nervousness. Hard-working. She knows her own mind. Her determination and grit is masked by sweetness.



ROBERT KINCAID "No, this isn't what always happens. I never let this happen. I never go into this world where people belong to each other." 40-50 — A photographer. A loner and a seeker. He is well-traveled and world smart.

MARGE "I just wanted to check and make sure you didn't get carried off by that photographer." 45-60 — Francesca's neighbor. Nosy, but she will be there for you if you need her. She will keep your secrets.



MARIAN "Find a picture of a woman. Wearing four years of confusion like a scar." 40s — Robert's former wife, a musician.



CHARLIE "Marge, I'm not at the fair. You're not in the truck. We're right where we want to be.../Do we have any of that cake left?" 60s — Marge's husband. Salt of the earth. The best example of mid-western sturdiness and kindness.

CHIARA "Chiara would squeeze ev'ry drop of attention wherever she'd go." Francesca's sister still living in Italy.



We're standing beside you/ Reach out and we'll guide you through the great unknown:
YOU'RE NEVER ALONE.

—Company, *The Bridges of Madison County*

❧ COSTUME DESIGN ❧

"As designers, it is our responsibility to search for those **KEY VISUAL ELEMENTS** that guide our journey through the story."

—Catherine Zuber, Costume Designer, *The Bridges of Madison County*.



Francesca

Robert

THE OLD CLICHÉ — "First impressions are everything" — is true; especially on the stage. Another cliché that theatre keeps alive — "Clothes make the man." The full quote reads "Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society." Thank you Mark Twain! In theatre, costume design is an indispensable tool that helps an audience navigate the world of the play.

Reflections from Six-Time Tony®-Award Winning Costume Designer CATHERINE ZUBER

How would you describe what a costume designer actually does? A costume designer creates the first impression the audience has regarding a character. They assist and collaborate with the actor and the director to bring to life the exterior definition of the character they are portraying.

How does the costume design help tell the story of *The Bridges of Madison County*? How do the costumes help the audience understand the people in the play? In *The Bridges of Madison County*, the costumes strive to capture Iowa in the mid-60's. Some of the characters would have dresses that would have been home-sewn, or from a mail-order catalogue, or a dry-goods shop in the local town. It is the summertime, so the clothing contributes to creating those wonderful sultry August days.

You said about the costumes in *The Bridges of Madison County*: "This isn't the groovy side of the mid-'60s. There is nothing urban about the clothes." Can you talk about how the costumes help tell the time and place of the story? When we go to the state fair, we see a world outside of Madison County. However, it still is not the urban mid 1960's 'mod' drifting into 'hippie' aesthetic of a big city. I was hoping that the costumes convey a world that is a hard-working, rural environment. The characters have dignity and care about their appearance, but not at the price of comfort and practicality.

Theatre is a collaborative medium. How do you work with the director and your fellow designers? Can you give us a glimpse into that collaboration? Our director gives us his priorities for the story-telling. He encourages us to visually assist his vision by illustrating the emotions the audience should take away from the experience. As designers, it is our responsibility to search for those key visual elements that guide our journey through the story.

Can you share something about the costumes for *The Bridges of Madison County* that an audience member could look for while watching the show? What is part of the design they will see that could only happen onstage rather than in the film or book?

Francesca starts out in our story wearing pretty but simple and practical shirt-waist house-dresses. As Robert awakens in her romantic feelings that she didn't realize were still possible, we see her making a choice that is out of character for her. She purchases a shoulder-baring dress in a deep shade of pink. Her hair is worn down.

Regarding costume design, the progression that occurs in 'When I'm Gone' happens before our eyes, during the course of the song. This could happen in a film, but the theatricality of the amount of information that transforms us through 15 years of time in less than 5 minutes on stage is thrilling.



Francesca

Robert

Young Bud

Chiara

Italian Waiter

Paolo

American Officers

ARE YOU A TRIPLE THREAT?

IN SHOWBIZ, a triple threat is a performer who can sing, dance and act. Think Catherine Zeta-Jones, Hugh Jackman, Vanessa Williams, Neil Patrick Harris, James Cagney.

The Bridges of Madison County could be considered a triple threat. It has been a novel, a movie and a musical.

What about you? Do you own the book? Is it hardcover, special and always dusted? Do you have a copy in paperback? Do you have multiple paperbacks to pass out to friends — because they need to read it?

Do you own the movie? On VHS? DVD? Both? Do you have an electronic copy on your laptop? Do you always watch *Bridges* when you stumble upon it on cable? Do you watch it until the end and cry every time?

Now you can enjoy *The Bridges of Madison County* through the power of song. Reconnect with characters you know and love. See how they have been re-imagined. Meet new characters. It is time to go back to Winterset. It is time to fall in love all over again. It's time to become a Triple Threat!

“There are a lot of things you won’t find in Iowa. But CARE is not one of them. People care about each other here.”

—Francesca, *The Bridges of Madison County*

“We were very much inspired by Thornton Wilder and wanted the show to be as theatrical as possible,” said Jason Robert Brown. “So we thought we should take the opportunity to build a home and a community right there on stage.”



COMMUNITY

PERFORMERS IN A MUSICAL production must work together. The ensemble of artists must coordinate the movement, music and words with the lights, set and costumes. Like a community bringing in the harvest, or building a barn, an ensemble works together to tell the audience a story.

One of the primary differences between *The Bridges of Madison County*, the musical, and previous versions of the story is the prominence of the Winterset, Iowa community. Taking on multiple roles, an ensemble of twelve actors create Francesca’s family and the community that surround the intimate world of Francesca and Robert.

In songs like “To Build a Home” and “You’re Never Alone”, director Bartlett Sher’s staging further explores the theme of community by having the actors move the set pieces — literally building the town. They also sit silently in chairs at the edge of the action through much of show. “I think it is a Greek chorus,” Sher said of the device. “What do the citizens of Thebes think about what’s happening to Oedipus, or in this case, what do the citizens of Winterset, Iowa, feel about this relationship?”

Having the community of Winterset witness the love affair deepens the tension between passion, freedom, security and responsibility. The chorus of citizens contrasts with Robert’s isolation and highlights what Francesca is risking to be with Robert.

In the musical, community is happening in many ways. There is the community in the story - the people of Winterset. There is the community of performers, technicians and musicians working together to create the story on stage.

And there is the community of the audience who are the ultimate witnesses.

🔗 *How does having the larger community on stage impact the story for you?*

🔗 *Does meeting Francesca’s family shift the way you feel about the love story? About her decision?*



PLACE AND TIME

PLACE AND TIME are important parts of a musical. Place and time determine the choices that characters make. The scope of their possibilities. A change in place and time can alter a story profoundly.

🔗 *Imagine if *The Bridges of Madison County* was set in 1965, San Francisco or New York City. How would the change of setting alter the story?*

🔗 *Do you think that Francesca would face the same choices if the story took place in 1975, 1985 or 2015?*



THE REAL BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY

Cedar Bridge

THEY ARE IN THE TITLE of all three incarnations of the story. They are a character in their own right. A focal point and instigator of the action of the novel, film and musical. They are the real bridges of Madison County and they have a rich history.

In the mid-1880s as the population of the Midwest grew and demand for the goods rose, farmers needed a way to get their products to market. In response to this need, counties began to improve rural roads and install bridges. These bridges were most often built using timber. It was quickly realized that timber bridges would rapidly deteriorate if left exposed to the elements and it would be much cheaper to cover the bridges rather than repair them.

Madison County, Iowa, located southwest of Des Moines, once boasted 19 covered bridges. Only six remain today, five of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Five of the bridges: Roseman, Holliwell, Cedar, Imes-Cox and Hogback were built between 1870-1880 by Benton Jones. The Cutler-Donahol was built by Eli-Cox in 1870.

The Roseman Bridge — featured in the love story - is also known as the “haunted bridge.” In 1892 two sheriff’s posses trapped a county jail escapee and it is rumored that the man rose up straight through the roof of the bridge, uttered a wild cry and disappeared. The escapee was never found.

The bridges became nationally known because of the success of Robert James Waller’s novel *The Bridges of Madison County*. The bridges reached super stardom after the release of the film, in 1995. And according to the website roadtrippers.com the bridges of Madison County are the number one make out spot in Iowa.



Roseman Bridge

Robert Kincaid doesn't work here

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE NOVEL AND MOVIE, National Geographic headquarters in Washington, D.C. began receiving requests for copies of the May 1966 issue that contained the photos of the bridges of Madison County taken by Robert Kincaid.

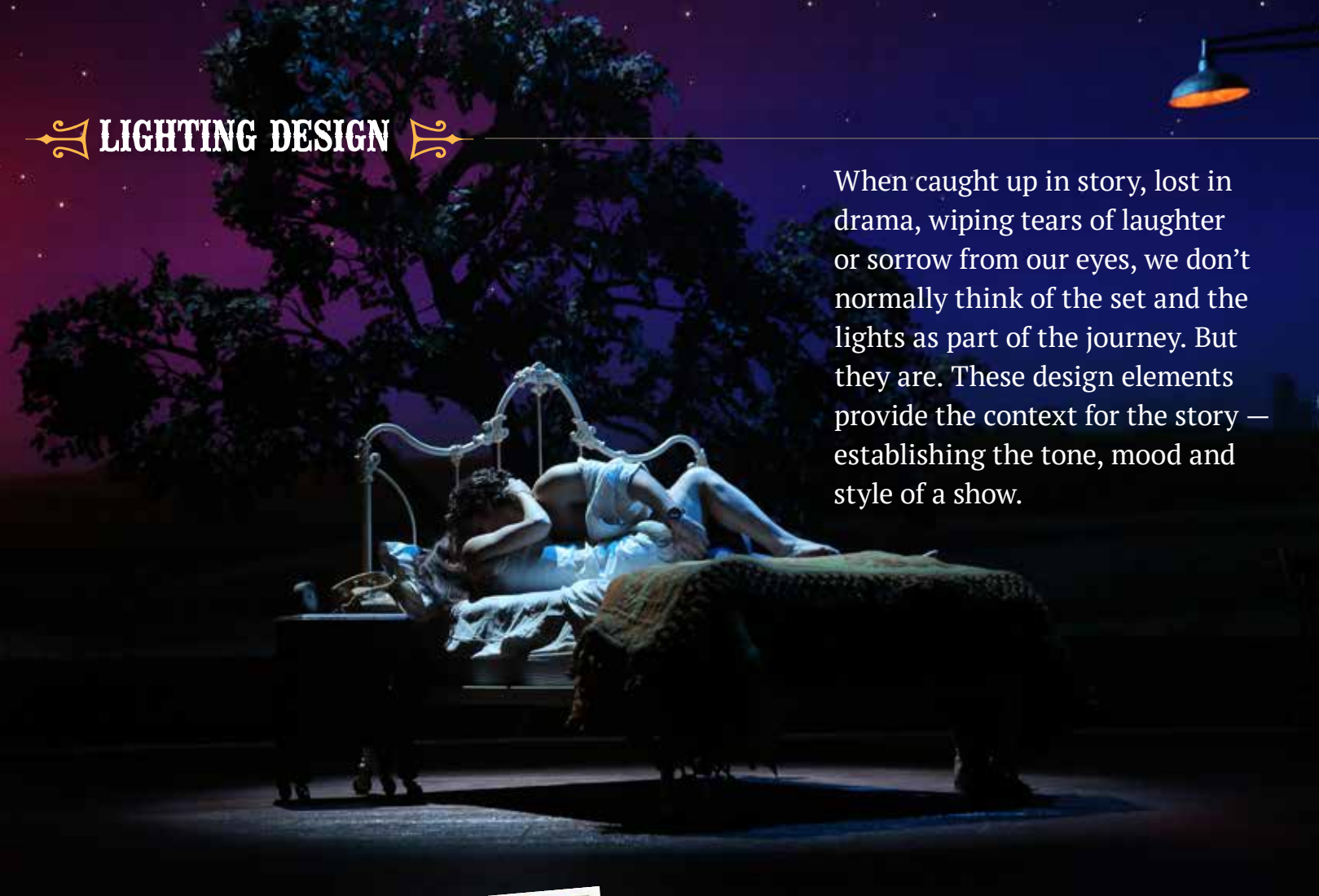
National Geographic told the *Bridges* enthusiasts that since Kincaid was a fictional person, he didn’t work for the magazine nor did he take any pictures of the covered bridges of Madison County. The magazine seen in the 1992 film was fake. The real May 1966 cover photo was of the Golden Gate Bridge.

The requests kept coming so National Geographic embraced *Bridges’* fans enthusiasm and paid tribute to the movie by including a copy of the “Robert Kincaid” cover in its museum.

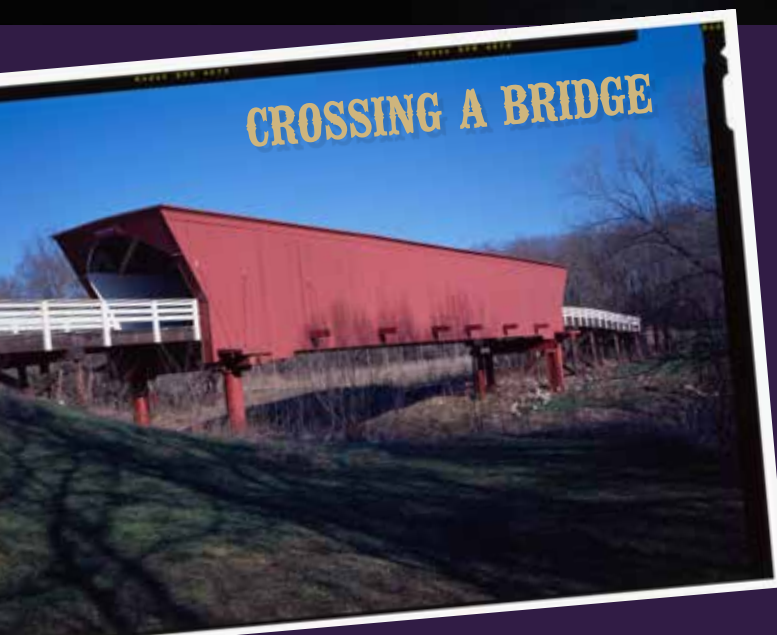


“There is the world through a small small window/ You thought it was a bridge/ You thought it was the water/ You thought it was sky/ It’s the world inside of the frame.”

—Robert, *The Bridges of Madison County*.



When caught up in story, lost in drama, wiping tears of laughter or sorrow from our eyes, we don't normally think of the set and the lights as part of the journey. But they are. These design elements provide the context for the story — establishing the tone, mood and style of a show.



bridge (brij), *n.* 1. a structure spanning and providing passage over a river, chasm, road, or the like. 2. a connecting, transitional, or intermediate route, phase, etc.

The Bridges of Madison County are a real-life place as well as the physical catalyst that brings Francesca and Robert together in the story. Bridges are often used as a metaphor for life's journey. Our language is filled with bridge imagery — we build bridges, we burn bridges, we bridge the gap. A bridge can symbolize a transition or a change. Crossing a bridge can be a transformation — we are not the same person we were on the other side of the bridge.

🔗 **Why do you think bridges are used to symbolize Robert and Francesca's love story?**

🔗 **If it had been a different physical structure — like a road or a lighthouse — would it have been a different story?**

🔗 **Are there bridges you have had to cross in your own life? Where did that crossing take you?**

“And I've been looking for something at every bridge that I crossed.”

—Robert, *The Bridges of Madison County*

“To cross a bridge, a river or a border is to leave behind the familiar, personal and comfortable and enter the unknown...”

—Jean-Pierre Vernant

Reflections from Two-Time Tony Award®-Winning Lighting Designer DONALD HOLDER

How would you describe what a lighting designer actually does?

A lighting designer “reveals the world of the play or musical,” and is responsible for not only what the audience sees, but “how they see it.” Light provides the visual context for a theatrical event, or the lens through which a play is seen. It informs style, and has a clear subliminal effect on perception. Working with a strong understanding of the intentions of the director and his fellow collaborators, a lighting designer manipulates light to tell a particular story or to evoke a particular emotional response.

How does the lighting design help tell the story of *The Bridges of Madison County*?

The story of *The Bridges Of Madison County* unfolds on a relatively open space, in front of a vast expanse of Iowa sky, and takes place over the course of just a few days. Although much of the story is told in a linear fashion time-wise, there are several flashbacks that provide important context and deepen our connection with the characters. The passage of time is central to the telling of the story, and the sky, as rendered through light is the principal device used to communicate this, constantly changing during the course of the evening.

We experience sunrise, sunset, dawn, twilight, moonlight, starlight. And the color of the sky and the direction of the sun or moon has a strong influence on all the other light that is introduced in the space. It's a world filled with ever-changing natural light, ebbing and flowing to respond to the emotional temperature of a scene or song. During the flashbacks, the sky takes on a surreal quality with very rich and intense colors, thus providing an important clue to the audience that we have stepped back in time.

Theatre is a collaborative medium. How do you work with the director and your fellow designers?

Because light can be so influential about how everything is perceived, it's very important that a lighting designer understands the intentions and objectives of the director and his design collaborators. Early conversations that get to the heart of the production and its overall vision are really crucial. And a great deal can be learned by studying the set design, as it will always provide a lot of information about how the show has been conceived and will be staged. Because lighting and scenery share the same stage space, the two disciplines must work in close collaboration. In the case of *Bridges*, Michael, Mikiko (scenic and associate scenic designers) and I spent a great deal of time working out the proper spatial



“A lighting designer “reveals the world of the play or musical,” and is responsible for not only what the audience sees, but “HOW THEY SEE IT.”

—Donald Holder, Lighting Designer, *The Bridges of Madison County*

relationships between lighting positions and scenery to get the sky looking just right. We also collaborated on the layout and details of the star field you'll see throughout the course of the evening, and the kinds of materials that were used to create the spectacular skies that really are the visual centerpiece of the production.

Can you share something about the lighting design for *The Bridges of Madison County* that an audience member could look for while watching the show? What is part of the design they will see that could only happen onstage rather than in the film or book?

In Act One, Robert and Francesca meet at dawn as he photographs the sunrise at the covered bridge. It's a special moment in their relationship, I speculate it's when they fell in love. As all of this unfolds, the sky takes on a brilliant surreal red, with a single onstage tree silhouetted by a bright golden sun. It's a dramatic and poetically heightened moment that we see once again in Act Two. During the song “It All Fades Away,” as Robert considers his own passing, he remembers Francesca vividly and the sky returns to that same intense red and yellow at the musical and emotional zenith of this song. To me, it's one of my favorite images in the entire production.



A CONVERSATION WITH PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING WRITER
MARSHA NORMAN
 by Journalist/Teaching Artist Marcos Nájera

Marcos: Thank you for taking the time to talk with us Marsha. We want to give people a chance to learn a little about this story and you — a member of the creative team — before they experience The Bridges of Madison County.

Marsha: Sounds good. This isn't simply the story of Francesca and Robert. This is the big difference [between our musical] and the book and the movie. This is the story of the town. This is the story of the family. And the story of this couple in the course of a family, in the course of a town. It's more like *Our Town* than the original material is. We really zoomed back so we can see the family life and the town life and we can learn Francesca's history in Italy.

We zoomed back and we panned around. I invented the neighbors. We invented the town. We invented the people who would really care about Francesca and who would be aware, in this small town, that she was going through something.

That is wonderful. You mentioned Our Town by playwright Thornton Wilder. How did Our Town inspire your take on The Bridges of Madison County?

I love *Our Town*. I don't even know how many times I've seen it. I think it's one of the great, inspiring pieces of American literature. It's clear in the cemetery scene of *Our Town* how much they've all taken care of and watched out for each other.

I also know that in a small town — as *Our Town* makes clear — a small town, like where Francesca and Robert are, everybody knows what's going on. So everybody knows that the kids and Bud are headed off for the State Fair. And everybody knows that Francesca is there by herself. And everybody knows that there is a photographer, in town taking pictures. And everybody knows that she took him over to the bridge. Everybody knows everything. What I really wanted to do was to make it clear that Francesca makes her decision in the context of her family and her town and her history.

Jason [Robert Brown, the composer] and I were eager to hop from Iowa all the way back to Italy — to show what the end of the war was really like in Naples and what she experienced as a girl. And why she is here [in the United States] and what kind of things she's never really come to terms with as a human being. Because she's spent her time adjusting so quickly.

She came here, she was newly married, she didn't speak much English. She learned English, she learned to farm, and she learned to be a wife, to be a mom, and presto! Somebody shows up at

the door and she realizes she does feel like an outsider. And now, she does need to think about how she has spent her life and she does need to feel alive again as she did as a girl. What Robert does is cause her to take a deep breath in and look around; to connect with herself and to connect to him, but mainly herself.

It's this moment that people have when they think, "What about that other path? What about that love that I had to turn away from? What about that? What would have happened if I married that guy who went to the University of New Mexico?"

What would have happened?

We can't help but wonder those things, right? The people that I see crying the hardest in the audience are the people that have obviously left great loves behind. That's something a lot of people respond to — including a lot of people on the creative team. Everybody, I think! (Laughing)

So yes, we have these questions. We all deal with this thing. We can't have absolutely everything that we want to have in life. Because some of these things conflict.

Robert's description of [what his and Francesca's] life would be is so seductive and wondrous. Whether she would actually be happy with him or not, it doesn't even matter. She makes the decision to honor her responsibilities and she knows that if she leaves, her son is going to be in trouble. [Her daughter] Carolyn is going to be fine. But [her son] Michael? She still needs to stay to take care of Michael. To make sure Michael does okay. That's why we see Michael's graduation from medical school. She did have that effect. Michael was ready to bolt out of there and get in trouble with the law and his dad or whatever — and she saw that. She knew that he wasn't going to be a farmer. She knows she has to stay.

We sometimes have to make those really hard choices between the things that we care about.

I wonder about the danger of the town watching all this happen. It seems like the stakes rise so much higher if everybody can see that she is talking to this stranger while Bud and the kids are away. Isn't Francesca scared?

She is scared. The fact that we don't do any of that — [Francesca] having a dangerous conversation with [the neighbor] Marge or Marge almost finds out [about the affair] — that seemed a little cheap to us in terms of the excess drama.

But yes, it's on her mind. Especially when she goes into town to buy a dress. Certainly, she knows that Marge knows. And there's a whole conversation — unwritten and unspoken — that goes on between Marge and Francesca about what's going on. That's why Marge arrives at exactly at the right moment with the lasagna. Marge knows exactly what's happened.

It's almost as if Francesca's all-knowing neighbor, Marge, is cheering her on!

She is. She certainly is not judging. The friendship with Marge is deep and powerful. For me, the most wondrous moment in the whole show is right there at the end when [Marge] leaves from Bud's funeral and says, "See you tomorrow!" It's like, "Things continue here and I'm going to see you tomorrow [Francesca]."

You feel such a loss right now. You've lost both of these men now and here you sit. And I will see you in the morning." (Laughing)

That's the kind of thing, the comfort that women can provide to each other. I was very interested in writing that in the piece. It is Francesca's story. But it is [also] a story of what women can do for each other.

That's why I mentioned *Our Town*. Two generations ago, Thornton Wilder wrote about Grover's Corner. Now, Jason and I are writing about Winterset, Iowa. It's a continuing interest and dream that we all have of belonging to a place and belonging to a group of people and belonging in the family.

To me, one of the awful parts of the virtual world is that, okay, we have a virtual family. But is that really okay? Is that good? Is that enough? Or do you want to know enough people so that if you make a pie, like that one I made last night that's that good, you can call other houses and get the whole pie eaten? This pie last night was so remarkable that I thought, "I do not need to let it sit around here in the house where just my daughter and I are. I need to call three people to have some!"

The pie should be enjoyed! Life should be enjoyed right? It makes me think about the scene in the Bridges movie where Meryl Streep is in the truck. And the camera focuses in as the muscles in her right hand tighten as she grips the handle and she's about to open the door and go off to Robert. Do you think we live in a world now that is progressive enough for her husband Bud to just let her go?

The piece brings up all this "what would happen," that's fun to suppose about. But for Francesca she's got to make that decision in-that-moment. The truck moment [from the film] is so crucial that we worked really hard to find something that would give us a sense of the truck moment. That's what we call "The Rewind."

That's where she appears to go to Robert. Suddenly, she turns around and stops and sees her family and knows what they would feel if she did that. And she walks back to them. And then time picks up again and she goes on into the Soda Shop.

In that moment that she chooses her family — it's Robert's world that falls apart. That's our theatrical way to investigate the "what-would-happen-if-I-did-this?" What I was able to do was give voice, give character, give personality, give wishes to every single person in this family. I think [Francesca] does the right thing. I totally think she does the right thing. But man, do I understand the struggle. That sense of being alive put up against the sense of being connected in a family or being responsible. This passion of feeling alive is pretty powerful, but the sense of being useful and being loved beats it every time.

The book really tells the story from Robert's point of view. Why did you decide to focus on Francesca's point of view for this musical?

The Francescas of the world are the 70% of the people buying the tickets to the theater. So women should have a story where they're the lead. I have a picture that's on my wall. It was taken at Samuel French. Kelli O'Hara [who played Francesca on Broadway] is standing there with no make-up and she's holding a piece of paper on which is written "I

need stories by women on stage because my daughter will hear the echo of their voices." It's an extraordinary picture.

I'm the President of the Lily Awards, which is an organization that celebrates and honors the contributions of women in the theater and works for gender parity. Kelli received an award from us the year before last. I mean, she's certainly played all the glorious [female leads on Broadway], but for [Bridges] to be the first time she has ever said words on stage that were written by a woman?

I was hearing this for the first time as she was saying this on the stage [at the Lily Awards]. And it was a staggering experience for me and I think for the audience. I suddenly felt the significance of my staying alive in order to write. And my activism and the importance of this mission of gender parity, so the voices of women can be heard and the stories of women can be told.

“People come to musicals to watch that glorious search for home...”

—Marsha Norman

In regard to gender parity, if life worked the way the theater does, 4 out of every 5 things you heard would be said by men. In working for gender parity we are working to hear all the voices of the human chorus on the stage. All the voices. All the stories. In not hearing the voices of women, it's almost as if theaters have chosen to only tell stories about things that happen in the daytime. It's eliminating half of the experience of life on the stage.

We need to hear all the voices in the human chorus.

So yes, if an all-male team had written this — I'm sure it would have been the Robert story. I'm totally sure. And what is the Robert story? I came into town, I met this woman. We had a thing, I had a couple of thoughts of whether or not to haul her off in the truck with me and then I left. Got back to New York and saw the

Hare Krishnas. So there's not a musical in the Robert story. There's only a musical in the Francesca story.

As in Oklahoma, so it is in Iowa. The loners have to go on their way. It's true with musicals in general. I teach musical book-writing [at Juilliard]. This is one of the big rules. The loners go on their way. But people come to musicals to watch that glorious search for home in song. It's like *The Wizard of Oz*, where does Dorothy end up? It's the Francesca story, it's the Tevye story, it is every musical there is.

[The playwright Jerome] "Jerry" Lawrence told me this: "All musicals are about the conflict between two worlds." It's *Guys & Dolls*, it's *West Side Story*, it's *Oliver...* you can go on down the list, *The King & I*. Two worlds. In this case, it's the life of passion versus the life of family and community.

If you think about us as a country — there are things that we've lost. And yes, we mourn them. We had to give them up in order to go forward towards the other things we believe. This making of choices is something that people respond to and in this case they get to really watch a big one, a big choice and it's kind of the most elemental one.

It's a story about choice.



MUCH OF THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY centers around a kitchen table — it is an intimate lovers space. But beyond the table, beyond the farm, there is a lot going on in the world. This love story takes place in the middle of Iowa, in the middle of America, in the middle of the transformative 1960s, in the middle of the turbulent 20th century.

ON THE AVERAGE...
 Cost of new house: \$13,600.00
 Income per year: \$6,450.00
 Gas per Gallon: 31 cents
 Cost of a New Car: \$2,650.00
 Loaf of bread: 21 cents
 Rent per month: \$118.00

ON THE BIG SCREEN
The Sound of Music
Dr. Zhivago
A Few Dollars More
The Greatest Story Ever Told

ON THE TV
Batman
The Andy Griffith Show
Hogan's Heroes
Charlie Brown's Christmas Special

ON THE RADIO
"I Got You Babe"
 Sonny and Cher
"(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"
 The Rolling Stones
"Cara Mia"
 Jay and the Americans
"Stop In The Name Of Love."
 The Supremes

ON THE STAGE
Carousel
Guys and Dolls
The Odd Couple
The Glass Menagerie

IN THE NEWS

LOCAL - THE MIDWEST

- Willie Stevenson Glanton of Polk County and James H. Jackson of Black Hawk County were the first African Americans to be sworn and seated in the Iowa Legislature.
- Palm Sunday Tornado Outbreak. Forty-seven tornadoes hit in six Midwestern states killing up to 271 people and injuring some 1,500 more.
- The Mississippi River Flood. The flooding resulted in 14 fatalities, drove nearly 15,000 people from their homes. One of the hardest hit towns was Clinton, Iowa.
- Sandy Koufax of the Los Angeles Dodgers pitches a perfect game against the Chicago Cubs.

NATIONAL

- President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- Bob Dylan "the voice of his generation" shocked fans and critics when he performed with an electric band at the Newport Folk Festival.
- In *Griswold v. Connecticut*, the Supreme Court strikes down the one remaining state law prohibiting the use of contraceptives.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission begins operation. The only female commissioner — Aileen Hernandez would go on to head the National Organization for Women (NOW).
- The Watts Riots/Watts Rebellion took place in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts. Police abuse of a black motorist sparked six days of rioting, resulting in 34 deaths and millions of dollars in property damage.
- The Beatles play live at Shea Stadium.
- The Newark Museum exhibit "Women Artists in America: 1707-1964."

INTERNATIONAL

- The first American combat troops arrive in Da Nang, South Vietnam.
- Mini-skirts and Mod fashion from Swinging London spread across the world.
- USSR launches Voshkod 2; Alexei Leonov makes first spacewalk.
- Israel and West Germany exchange letters beginning diplomatic relations.
- Tibet is made an autonomous region of China.
- Arno A, Penzia and Robert W. Wilson confirm the "Big Bang" theory with their discovery of cosmic background radiation.

THE POWER OF MUSIC

"The lyric theatre felt like the perfect vehicle to tell the story of Robert and Francesca."
 —Jason Robert Brown, Composer, *The Bridges of Madison County*

Composer's Notes

I had been writing comedies for several years, and the longer lines of romance and yearning and fantasy had been building up, swirling around my head unchanneled, imprecise. When Marsha and I did *The Trumpet of the Swan*, big music started to leak out, expansive music, something beautiful. I was afraid of turning off the tap, so I told Marsha we should look for a project that would be serious and intense and overflowing with unrestrained passion, which is not the kind of thing I say very often. I said I was ready to write *La Traviata*. We set out to find a story.

The story found us. Robert James Waller's agent approached Marsha to adapt *The Bridges of Madison County*, and she immediately knew this would be our project. I had never read the novel but I regarded it warily — I was a 22-year-old single guy living in Manhattan when it first came out, and I was not, to put it mildly, the target audience — but Marsha saw in it a deeper resonance and a fiercer moral energy than I would have perceived, and she sold me on the struggles of these two broken characters who each see a piece of themselves trapped inside the other. I suggested we conceive it as an octet, a piece for eight lonely voices on a large stage.

The piano reflects my energy back at me, neurotic and complicated — I know the instrument so well by now that I sometimes have to wrestle with it to make it surprise me, and I knew that the skittery and dense music that the piano and I traditionally made together wasn't the right sound for this piece. I'd played guitar the way most guys who hang around rock bands play it — I knew a couple of chords and I could keep time relatively well — but I felt the guitar was my way in to the world of the Johnson family in Winterset, IA in 1965, so I bought a black Takamine and hoped for the best.

From the beginning, the music flooded out of me, music that I didn't entirely recognize as my own but that was clearly speaking some revelation I had yet to confront in myself. I felt myself sometimes butting up against the corny, the cheesy, the sentimental, but I decided in those moments to push harder through it, not to be cynical about love or family but to sing about them with ecstatic truth.

We can love in many different ways, and we can love different things simultaneously. It is hard — it is insane — to place one love above another. With every show I've written, I begin thinking it's just a job, the story doesn't have anything to do with me, and I end by realizing I have exposed some deep scary part of myself. I am unspeakably grateful to my beautiful family for holding our lives together while this score got pushed out into the world — I spent four years learning about Robert and Francesca and figuring out how and why they made the choices they did, and this show celebrates, in many ways, the staggeringly high price and the even greater value of the commitments and the choices we make to build a home.

Jason Robert Brown
 March 28, 2014 New York, NY

WHAT IS IT ABOUT MUSIC THAT CAPTURES OUR HEARTS AND IMAGINATIONS?

Maybe we are born to respond to music. Sound is one of the first senses we develop in the womb. Before we see, taste or touch — we hear. The rhythm of our mother's heartbeat is our first connection to another person and the outside world. Music is an intimate act. The sound of a melody enters the ear and moves the ear drum. The texture and tone of the music is literally touching you.

Music can capture the depth, sweep and complexity of pure feelings. It goes beyond language. It needs no translation. Music speaks the unspeakable, voicing the richness of the heart when words fall flat. Like love — how do you describe the feeling of love? The word itself fails to convey the intricacies, the fear, elation, longing, befuddlement, tenderness, sadness, joy.

Eight words to get somewhat of an approximation of what it is to be in love.

Maybe being in love is like a musical? That moment when language is not enough. When the emotion has to be expressed and it is too grand for the rigidity of syntax and grammar. That's when the music begins to swell and the chorus hums. The hero or heroine opens their mouth and emotions float on melodies that we understand instantly, viscerally. Before our brains decipher the words, we know that Francesca is in love with Robert and we know from the tug the minor chords give our hearts that this love will be bittersweet. A song, a mere string of notes captures it all. Straight from our ears to our hearts and we understand what love is.

What is the power of music? Why do humans need music?

What kind of music gets you through a tough time? What music plays when you celebrate?

Love is always better



“BUT WHAT A CHOICE! AND WHAT A GIFT!
AND WHAT A BLESSING!”

—Francesca, *The Bridges of Madison County*

IT CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS. It is a many splendid thing. It makes the world go round. The material of poems and ballads. It causes foolish extravagances and profound acts of tenderness. All encompassing. In its embrace you can find yourself, you can forget yourself, you can eat a whole chocolate cake. It explodes fireworks in the soul and brings tears to the eyes. It tingles in the toes. Flowing across cultures; it is not bound by language, distance or time. Love. It is what makes *The Bridges of Madison County* a timeless story. Not only the romance of Robert and Francesca; but the love of family; community; art; are the heartbeat of the musical.



At first sight.

IN THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY, Robert and Francesca have an instant connection that blooms into an intense love affair. How is that possible? Can love appear in an instant?

According to Plato, when the soul descends from heaven it is split in two. So that immediate spark when shaking hands with a stranger at a party, that moment your heart catches in your throat, when the world collapses to a single vision of ‘the one,’ this profound sense of connection, may be the reunion of two halves of the same soul.

The ancients were not the only ones to believe in love at first sight. A 2014 survey in *The Wall Street Journal*, by the dating site Match.com; polled more than 5,000 singles ages 21 to 70-plus. They found that: 59% of men and 49% of women said they believe in love at first sight. And 41% of men and 29% of women say they have experienced it.

🔗 *Do you believe in love at first sight? Have you experienced it?*

The Science of Love

MAYBE LOVE IS NOT THE MYSTICAL MEETING of soul mates after lifetimes of separation but the meeting of hormones and neurotransmitters. Can science explain the instant attraction and intensity that Robert and Francesca experience? Some believe love is biology.

Scientist Helen Fisher of Rutgers University proposed 3 stages of love, each driven by different hormones and chemicals.

Stage 1: Lust

This is the time of intense sexual desire and physical longing, driven by the hormones testosterone and estrogen.

Stage 2: Attraction

This is the amazing time when you are love-struck and can think of little else. Scientists posit that three main neurotransmitters are involved in this stage: Adrenaline — sweaty palms and racing heart. Dopamine — the rush of pleasure when in the presence of or thinking about a beloved. Lastly, Serotonin — which controls mood, appetite, digestion, sleep, memory and sexual desire. Serotonin is why you can’t get a lover out of your mind. Why you can’t sleep or eat for thoughts of love.

Stage 3: Attachment

Attachment is the territory of commitment, Facebook® status changes, rings and weddings. Two hormones help with in this stage: Oxytocin — the cuddle hormone and Vasopressin. Both are released by people when they make love. These hormones deepen feelings of closeness and devotion.

Scientists learned the importance of Vasopressin when studying the Prairie Vole. Prairie Voles are small rodents found in the grasslands of North America. Like humans they indulge in recreational sex and form fairly stable pair-bonds. When scientist gave male Prairie Voles a drug that suppresses Vasopressin, the bond with their partner deteriorated immediately. They lost their devotion and failed to protect their partner from new suitors.



Want to Fall in Love During Intermission?

IN A STUDY ON HUMAN CLOSENESS AND INTIMACY, Psychologist and Stony Brook Professor Arthur Aron composed the following experiment. He asked his subjects to carry out the three steps listed below and found that many of his couples felt deeply attracted after the 34 minute experiment. Two of his subjects later got married.

There were 36 questions in the study, broken up into three sets. Each set is intended to be more probing than the previous one. Sample questions:

5. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
21. What roles do love and affection play in your life?

33. If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?

So you if you'd like to find your Robert or Francesca...

- Find someone you don't know.
- Reveal to each other intimate details about your lives for half an hour.
- Then, stare deeply into each other's eyes without talking for four minutes.
- Congratulations you may be in love!

If you'd like to know more:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/fashion/modern-love-to-fall-in-love-with-anyone-do-this.html>

One Love Above Another

AT THE HEART OF *The Bridges of Madison County* is the excruciating choice Francesca has to make between romantic and family love. It is impossible. How do you choose? Regarding this dilemma, Francesca sings: "It is hard/It is insane/to place one love above another."

Are all loves equal? Is there a hierarchy of love? Romantic love often seems to be at the top. Yet there are many kinds of loves in *The Bridges of Madison County* — the love of family, community, art. What if the love of your life is a vocation, a calling? Can you not sleep or eat for the desire and need to make pottery, dance, bake the perfect cake, travel to the most wonderful and far off lands? Does serving others — through medicine, religion, activism or teaching move you to heights of fulfillment and satisfaction?

For *Bridges* Composer Jason Robert Brown, "Love was always music. When music would go certain places, that sounded like love. I was really just about what happens when the guitar comes in on beat three or what happens on the downbeat and the keys change and all of the sudden the violins are soaring — that's love to me."

🔗 **Is there a love you would choose above all others? Have you ever had to make that choice?**

🔗 **What does love mean to you? How do you define love?**

"I love how complicated people are."

—Bartlett Sher, Director,
The Bridges of Madison County



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All production photos featured in this guide are of the 2014 Original Broadway Company of *The Bridges of Madison County*. Photos by Joan Marcus. Page 9: Cedar Bridge photo by Julie Feirer, Roseman Bridge photo by Larry Young



“The only things that mattered
were the four days in your arms,
'cause, it all fades away but you.”

—Robert, *The Bridges of Madison County*

Footnotes

1-3. “Of Bridges & Lovers, 1992-1995.” Jack Doyle. June 25, 2008. PopHistoryDig.com; 4. “Bridge of Tears: Jason Robert Brown and Marsha Norman delve into their writing process for *The Bridges of Madison County*.” Moderated by Suzy Evans. www.tcg.org; 5. Your Amazing Brain. www.youramazingbrain.org/lovesex/sciencelove.htm; 6. Broadwaybox.com

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