



STUDENT
MATINEE
PROGRAM

Discovery Guide

An illustration of a woman in a yellow dress and red hat standing on a dark, rocky outcrop, looking up at a starry night sky. The words 'BRIGHT STAR' are written in large, white, starry letters across the sky. A bright star is visible above the word 'STAR'.

BRIGHT STAR

**“YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT
LIFE WILL BRING ONLY WHAT
YOU BRING TO LIFE.”**

Inspired by a real event, this original musical tells a sweeping tale of love and redemption set against the rich backdrop of the American South in the 1920s and 40s. Literary editor Alice Murphy meets a young soldier just home from World War II. Their relationship awakens her longing for the child she once lost. Haunted by their unique connection, Alice sets out on a journey to understand her past — and what she finds has the power to transform both of their lives.

The story unfolds as a rich tapestry of deep emotion, beautiful melodies and powerfully moving performances. An uplifting theatrical journey that holds you tight in its grasp, *Bright Star* is as refreshingly genuine as it is daringly hopeful.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “FOLLOW YOUR OWN BRIGHT STAR”?

"IF YOU KNEW MY STORY"

Bright Star is about the power of stories and storytellers.

The main character, Alice Murphy, opens the show singing to us about her story. She owns a well-respected literary magazine called the Asheville Southern Journal. (A literary journal usually focuses on creative writing. It can showcase short stories, essays, poems, book reviews and interviews with authors.) Billy Cane desperately wants Alice to publish his stories. She gives him advice:

"...you will write better when you find your voice. You need to find a sweeping tale of pain and redemption. In the people you know and in the people you meet."

★ **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FIND YOUR VOICE? WHY WILL THAT MAKE BILLY A BETTER WRITER? HOW DO YOU FIND YOUR VOICE?**

When Billy returns from fighting in World War II, he brings stories from his military service. Now that he is back in North Carolina, he wants to tell stories about his home.

"...it would be easier to get Lincoln off the face of Mt. Rushmore than to get home out of the heart of a Southern writer."

★ **WHY DO WRITERS FEEL INSPIRED TO WRITE ABOUT HOME? WHAT'S A STORY YOU WANT TO TELL? DOES IT COME FROM HOME? FROM THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE?**

Bright Star explores the idea that you can't judge someone only by what you see. In order to know who they really are, you need to hear their story and understand what they have experienced in life.

★ **IF WE KNEW YOUR STORY, WHAT WOULD WE FIND OUT ABOUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE?**

"I HAD A VISION..."

Steve Martin and Edie Brickell had a vision for the show that they wanted to bring to life.

The musical *Bright Star* was inspired by a bluegrass album that they had recorded together, *Love Has Come For You*. As they worked on the album, they began to imagine one story coming from all of the songs, a story that Ms. Brickell felt "was infused with the spirit of a young girl who's forthcoming and self-possessed." The plot began to take shape when they were introduced to the tale of the Iron Mountain Baby, a real-life incident from 1902. Mr. Martin said about creating this musical, "the characters step up to you and say, 'Yeah, you need me.'"

★ **IS THERE AN ALBUM OR SONG THAT YOU KNOW THAT WOULD MAKE A GREAT MUSICAL?**

★ **WHAT IS THE STORY THAT WANTS TO BE TOLD?**

Written by Lynn Clark

MUSIC

Bluegrass is a type of music that comes from Appalachia, a region in the United States that stretches from the southern part of New York State to Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. It tells stories of the people from this rural, impoverished, mountainous area, describing their everyday joys and struggles. Bluegrass is usually played on unamplified stringed instruments such as the banjo, fiddle, guitar and mandolin and is often called "the high lonesome sound."

Even though *Bright Star*'s musical roots come from bluegrass, it is not only a bluegrass musical. It contains many American musical styles, including roots rock, Broadway show tunes, Americana, folk, country and jazz.



UPRIGHT BASS

ACOUSTIC GUITAR

BANJO

VIOLIN

"WHEN YA GONNA LOVE ME JUST THE WAY I AM?"

When we see Alice Murphy in 1923, she is sixteen years old. Alice and her parents disagree with how she should conduct her life, and they try to shame her into being "a good little girl."

Her friend, Jimmy Ray Dobbs, also has conflict with his father. He wants to go to college, but his father insists that Jimmy Ray stay home to run the family business. His father also objects to Jimmy Ray's relationship with Alice, telling him he needs to marry for money rather than love.

★ **WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR PARENTS, OR SOCIETY, SAY "NO" TO YOUR DREAMS, DESIRES OR APPROACH TO LIFE? HOW DO YOU STAND UP FOR YOUR DREAMS?**

★ **HOW DO YOU BALANCE YOUR VISION OF YOUR FUTURE WITH YOUR FAMILY'S EXPECTATIONS?**

The story takes place in North Carolina and jumps in time between the 1920s and 1940s



“I MUST FOLLOW MY OWN **BRIGHT STAR.**”



Carmen Cusack and Paul Alexander Nolan from the Bright Star Original Broadway Company. Photo by Nick Stokes.

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A special thanks to Macy's for its generous contribution to support the Student Matinee performance of *Bright Star*.

The Student Matinee Program also receives generous support from Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, Diana Buckhantz & Vladimir & Araxia Buckhantz Foundation, Renee & Meyer Luskin, Deena & Edward Nahmias, Laura & James Rosenwald & Orinoco Foundation, Eva & Marc Stern, and the Artists & Educators Forum.

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