

SEATTLE
REPER



LITTLE WOMEN



YOUTH GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	A Note from Seattle Rep
3	Who is Kate Hamill?
4	Who is Louisa May Alcott?
6	Character Breakdown
9	Detailed Synopsis
18	Finding the "Now" in <i>Little Women</i>
20	ARTICLE: "Did the Mother of Young Adult Literature Identify as a Man?"
21	Contemporary Approaches to Gender Inclusion
24	Glossary
25	Opportunities for Youth at Seattle Rep
27	There's More to Experience in Our Lobby!
28	Coloring Page

A NOTE FROM SEATTLE REP

Welcome to Seattle Rep and this production of *Little Women*! I am thrilled that you are here to experience this stage adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's beloved 1868 novel.

As a teenager, I was a very big reader. We didn't have any money for entertainment, smartphones didn't exist, and the library was free. As a result, I spent a LOT of time with authors like Madeline L'Engle, Julia Alvarez, Toni Morrison, Carson McCullers, and of course, Louisa May Alcott. Because I had to picture every story in my head as I read, it was easy to imagine myself in every story. In McCullers' *A Member of the Wedding*, I was Frankie; in Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, I was definitely Yolanda; and in Alcott's *Little Women*, I was Jo—at least I was the first time I read it.



Creative, mouthy, and a bit impatient, Jo and I questioned the societal norms around us. Upon a re-read in my 20s, now married with young kids, I was shocked that I identified with maternal Meg. When Greta Gerwig's film adaptation of *Little Women* came out in 2019, I was skeptical that I would have the same sort of ability to identify with any of these characters, given they were all going to be played by conventionally beautiful Hollywood actresses. But Alcott's story was there, and through Gerwig's filmmaking talent, I empathized with Amy for the first time (I was usually so mad at Amy!). Now, with nearly-grown daughters of my own—my little women—I'm solidly Marmee.

This is the beauty of storytelling: to help us understand and process aspects of ourselves and others. Years ago, BuzzFeed anchored itself in popular culture by publishing quizzes to help readers identify seemingly silly identities, like "Which Bikini Bottom Restaurant Are You?" At peak Harry Potter fandom, everyone could tell you their Hogwarts house. Fans of "Sex in the City" would call each other "Carrie" or "Miranda." We have a natural desire to be told more about ourselves and use stories to do so. As we identify with fictional characters, we highlight and claim their characteristics within ourselves.

As you watch this production of *Little Women*, notice which character most draws you in. Who do you empathize with? Who do you root for? Which characteristics in that character do you see in yourself? How did the directing, acting, and design help you identify with any one character?

I'm so excited to have you here with us at Seattle Rep, and to know that you'll be asking these questions as you experience the show. I'm excited to experience the show as well—maybe I'll finally be a Beth!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deanna Martinez".

Deanna Martinez

Director of Arts Engagement

WHO IS KATE HAMILL?



Kate Hamill is the playwright and adaptor of Seattle Rep's production of *Little Women* and many other works. Her patron-favorite adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* hit Seattle Rep's Bagley Wright stage back in 2017.

Originally from the farms and fields of upstate New York, Kate is an award-winning NYC-based actor/playwright. She still knows how to milk a cow—albeit not well (both she and the cow get verrry nervous).

She is deeply passionate about creating new feminist, female-centered classics, both in new

plays and in adaptations—stories that center around complicated women. Her work as a playwright celebrates theatricality, often features absurdity, and closely examines social and gender issues—as well as the timeless struggle to reconcile conscience/identity with social pressures. As an actor, she tends to play people with intense drives and desires—truth-tellers, oddballs, and misfits.

Kate was named 2017's **Playwright of the Year** by *The Wall Street Journal*. **She has been one of the 10 most-produced playwrights in the country for the last 5 years, from 2017–2022.** In both 2017/18 and 2018/19, she wrote **two of the top 10 most-produced plays in the U.S.** Many of her plays have been produced internationally.

Her plays have been produced Off-Broadway and at American Repertory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater, Portland Center Stage, **Seattle Rep**, PlayMakers Rep, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Dallas Theater Center, Folger Theatre, and more. She is currently working on an adaptation of *The Odyssey* and a Christmas play called *Scrooge for Senate* as well as several new original plays. Kate is also a trained actor with a B.F.A. in Acting from Ithaca College.

Learn more at kate-hamill.com

WHO IS LOUISA MAY ALCOTT?

By **Arlisha R. Norwood**, *National Women's History Museum Fellow*, 2017

Famed author Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) created colorful relatable characters in 19th century novels. Her work introduced readers to educated strong female heroines. As a result, **her writing style greatly impacted American literature.**

Alcott was born on November 29, 1832 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Alcott's parents were a part of the 19th century transcendentalist movement, a popular religious movement. Their religious and political beliefs deeply inspired Alcott as a child. Her father, Bronson Alcott, was a popular educator who believed that children should enjoy learning. Therefore, at an early age, Alcott took to reading and writing. While most of her schooling came from her parents, she also studied under famed philosopher **Henry David Thoreau** and popular authors **Ralph Waldo Emerson** and **Nathaniel Hawthorne**. Much like her novel *Little Women*, Alcott was one of four daughters and she remained close with her sisters throughout her life. Many times, Alcott's family suffered from financial woes, forcing her to attend school irregularly.

She took many jobs to help alleviate financial struggles, working as a teacher and washing laundry. She turned to writing for both emotional and financial support.

Her first poem, "Sunlight," was published in a magazine under a pseudonym. Her first book, a compilation of short stories, was published in 1854. When the Civil War started in 1861, Alcott served as a nurse in a Union hospital. After the war, Alcott published several other works and gained a following. Her audience included both adults and children. She also released many of her earlier works under the name A.M. Barnard.



WHO IS LOUISA MAY ALCOTT?

During this time, one of Alcott's publishers asked her to write a novel for young women. To do so, she simply reflected back on to her childhood with her sisters. **In 1868, Alcott published her most popular work, *Little Women*.** The novel was published in a series of short stories but was eventually compiled into one book. *Little Women* was an instant success and the book cemented Alcott as one of the foremost novelists of the 19th and early 20th century. In 1870, with one successful book, Alcott moved to Europe with her sister May. There she published another classic, *Little Men*. She also joined the women's suffrage movement. Throughout her life, she would contribute to several publications which promoted women's rights. She was also the first woman to register to vote in Concord, Connecticut.

Alcott never married nor had any children, however, when her sister died, she adopted her niece. Afterwards she moved to Boston, Massachusetts and continued publishing more works that followed the characters from *Little Women*. Alcott suffered from bouts of illness throughout her life. She attributed her poor health to mercury poisoning, which she believed she contracted while she worked as a nurse during the Civil War. In 1888, she died at the age of 56 in Boston, Massachusetts. Today, readers continue to enjoy Alcott's writings and her novels still appear on bestseller lists throughout the world.

Source: [National Women's History Museum \(NWHM\)](#)

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Get to know the March siblings and the people inhabiting the world of this new adaptation of *Little Women*.



SPOILERS AHEAD!

Marmee March:

The mother and matriarch of the March family; the head of household while Papa (Robert) March is away. She carries the family through tough times with strength and love. Marmee encourages her daughters to play their part in sharing the spirit of giving during Christmas.

Aunt March:

Is described as “a nasty old cat” by Jo. She is wealthy, unmarried, and cold. Aunt March hires Jo to help around the house with the promise to take her to Europe if she behaves like a “proper lady.”

Meg March:

The oldest March sibling. She is responsible, loving, and acts like a second mother to the rest of the March siblings. In the beginning of the play, Meg wants to appear in society as a decent young lady. Forced to take Jo to a social dance, as she cannot go without a chaperone, Meg ends up losing her glasses and changing herself to fit in with what’s popular. As the play progresses, Meg gets closer to Brooks and realizes that being “all grown up” is not all it’s cracked up to be.

Jo March:

The second-oldest March sibling. Jo seeks stories, adventure, and freedom outside 19th-century social norms. Jo wants to be a writer by profession, which is not common or acceptable for women in this time. She writes a play for her siblings to perform at home. When Laurie joins the theatrical group, Jo is ecstatic to have someone who understands the struggle of not fitting into the gender roles they are expected to fill. Jo dreams of publishing her own book one day and making her mark on the world.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Beth March:

The third March sibling, who is very shy, sweet, and quiet. She loves listening to stories and spending time with her family. Throughout the play Beth inspires her siblings to be selfless. An unlikely friendship forms between Mr. Laurence and Beth due to their shared love of the piano. Beth's love runs deep until the very end.

Amy March:

The youngest March sibling who isn't afraid to speak her mind. She isn't very good with "vocabiblary," and doesn't like Jo writing down and documenting her mistakes. Amy loves pretty and sophisticated things. She is determined to act like a lady although her temper can get the best of the situation. Throughout the play we see Amy grow from a child to an elegant individual.

Theodore "Laurie" Laurence:

The sweet young neighbor next door, who is not the biggest fan of socials. Laurie avoids his school lessons with Mr. Brooks. After joining Jo's theatricals, he becomes an honorary member of the March family. Being around Jo, Laurie doesn't have to pretend to fit the masculine gender role set by society and upheld by his grandfather, who wants Laurie to become a "tedious titan of industry."

John Brooks:

Brooks is Laurie's tutor. He is reserved, educated, and hard-working. Brooks falls in love with Meg and is given the nickname "stuffy old Brooks" by Jo.

Mr. Laurence:

Laurie's grandfather, who only wants the best for him. He is wealthy, grouchy, and a bit cold to the March siblings at first. Beth reminds him of his late daughter, leading to a special connection between the two. Mr. Laurence helps the March family when Marmee needs to go see Papa.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Hannah:

Helps Marmee run the March household. She is in charge of the kitchen. Hannah keeps the girls in check and is considered part of the family.

- **Mrs. Hummel:** An immigrant woman with a baby who is sick.
- **Mrs. Mingott:** A wealthy lady who employs Meg as a governess and who tries to find suitable partners for Meg and Jo.
- **Robert "Papa" March:** The March siblings' father, who is off at war.
- **Parrot:** Aunt March's pet bird, who repeats everything she says.
- **Mr. Dashwood:** A publisher who often partakes in drinking.
- **Messenger:** Delivers a telegram on Christmas about Papa.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS



SPOILERS AHEAD!

ACT ONE

Scene 1

We find Jo writing in her notebook wearing a masculine outfit—her father’s castoffs. Beth asks Jo to tell her a story, a “real” story. Jo starts telling her the story of their family, the Marches, as she applies a fake mustache to her lip.

Scene 2 – December 1861

The Marches are having breakfast. Hannah, their longtime housekeeper, argues with the youngest March sibling, Amy, about her hairstyle. Amy insists she can put her hair up, but Hannah and oldest sibling Meg insist she’s too young. Amy asserts that she is almost a full-grown woman, “more of a woman than Jo, anyway.” Jo enters for breakfast covered in ink and in her trousers, wearing a fake mustache. Meg asks Jo why she is wearing the costume for their family play that Jo is writing and they are all rehearsing. Jo says because she’s the man of the family while their father is off at war. We are introduced to Amy’s unique (misspoken) vocabulary (or, as she says later, “vocabiblary”) and to Jo writing down all of Amy’s errors.

Jo has been working for their Aunt March all day. Jo does this so Aunt March will take Jo to Europe with her. Meg works as a governess to the wealthy “Manhattan Mingott” family. Amy complains about going to school. The siblings talk about Beth and her “nervous episodes,” which keep her out of school. Amy says when she grows up, she will run away with a prince and never ruin her hands working, while Jo has inky hands, practicing to become a famous writer. The siblings have a tussle until Marmee, their mother, returns home.

Marmee had been at a neighbor’s house, the Hummels. Mrs. Hummel is an immigrant woman with a baby, and her son came to the March house asking for help, as his mother is ill.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

This experience inspires Marmee to ask the girls if, for the upcoming Christmas celebrations, they could save their money and not do gifts this year. The siblings resist, and Marmee accepts defeat on the issue, for now. The girls get ready to leave the house, but Marmee stops Jo and tells her she has to change out of her trousers and into a skirt. Jo changes, reluctantly. It is cold outside, so each sibling is handed a hot potato to keep their hands warm.

Scene 3

On the way to the Hummels' home, the siblings talk about how they will use their Christmas present money. They overhear someone playing the piano next door and Meg notes it must be the grandson of the gentleman who lives there, Mr. Laurence, who has moved in with him after his parents' death. Jo begins to whistle to the music, which Amy calls "boyish."

Scene 4

Amy is punished at school for passing limes in class (an activity popular amongst girls) and runs home after being hit by her teacher. She does not go inside the March house but instead sits outside in the snow. Theodore Laurence ("Laurie"), her neighbor's grandson, finds her and they introduce themselves and start a conversation. Amy wonders why he doesn't go by Theodore, and Laurie says "it's just not who I am." Laurie says he has been watching the March family and thinks they must all be so happy together, but Amy disagrees—she feels like her family doesn't understand her and thinks she's spoiled.

Laurie's tutor, Mr. Brooks, arrives, frustrated that Laurie is skipping his lessons. Brooks doesn't know how to handle the upset Amy, so he goes to the Marches' door for help, where he is introduced to Meg. The siblings bring Amy inside and Brooks is left at the door, speechless—he is enamored with Meg. Jo and Laurie also meet here for the first time.

Scene 5

We follow the Marches into their home. Marmee is frustrated that Amy's teacher hit her and agrees to tutor Amy at home. Jo is frustrated that Amy doesn't have to "survive" school like she did, feels Amy is spoiled, and thinks Amy won't learn her lesson if she is able to be homeschooled.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Marmee reminds Jo that she actually liked school and that things are different for Amy. Meg shares that the wealthy Mingotts have invited the family to a dance. Jo is not interested, Meg insists Jo must chaperone her, and Amy is eager to go but is told she's too young, prompting the siblings to argue.

Scene 6

Meg and Jo arrive at the Mingotts' dance, keenly aware that they are considered "charity cases" amongst the elite in attendance. Meg fusses with her appearance while Jo describes the many stains and rips in her clothing, which makes Meg ask Jo to stand in the corner so as not to embarrass them. Mrs. Mingott approaches Meg and adjusts her appearance to make her more presentable, including taking away her glasses—even though Meg cannot see much of anything without her glasses. Mrs. Mingott then brings Brooks over to Meg to introduce them formally and the two head off to the dance floor.

Mrs. Mingott leaves to find "some creature" to introduce to Jo. Jo tries to hide, but runs into Laurie also avoiding attention. The two become friends and find many things they have in common—they are both quick-witted, dislike their full names and go by preferred nicknames, and don't fit the "traditional" gender roles of the time that they are expected to fill. Laurie shares how his grandfather expects him to become a "titan of industry" and go to college, which he is reluctant to do. Jo is very jealous of Laurie being able to go to college—as a woman, she is unable to go. The two talk about not being very good at being a "lady" and a "gentleman." Laurie says he'd rather be a girl than a boy so he wouldn't have to live up to the expectations of men in his family. Jo shares that she would like to be a famous writer, actor, or soldier, and that her talents would only be recognized if she was a boy. Laurie convinces Jo to dance with him.

They run into Brooks and Meg, who sprained her ankle while dancing. The siblings can't afford a carriage, but Meg is unable to walk home. Laurie insists that they share his carriage and takes them home. Brooks and Meg share a tender moment before they depart.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Scene 7

The Marches are rehearsing the play Jo has written. Jo plays Rodrigo, a “mustachioed villain,” and Amy plays the brave Valentino, a knight. Jo pauses rehearsal and criticizes Amy for not being a “convincing gentleman” and dismisses her from the play. Amy and Jo fight. Laurie suddenly appears and Jo casts him as Valentino instead. Amy is mortified that Laurie has seen her in her bearded Valentino costume. Meg is concerned about Laurie joining their “ladies club,” but eventually acquiesces.

Laurie’s grandfather, Mr. Laurence, arrives to bring Laurie home, telling Laurie he is too old for games and should not be playing amongst women. Jo tells Mr. Laurence that his grandson needs to have fun sometimes. As Mr. Laurence and Laurie head out, Mr. Laurence notices Beth playing the piano. They leave. Amy becomes upset with Jo for ruining everything.

Scene 8

Beth visits the Laurence house to ask Mr. Laurence if Laurie can join their play. Beth reminds Mr. Laurence of his daughter, Laurie’s mother, who had also played the piano before she passed away. The two have a touching moment before Mr. Laurence tells Beth to go home.

Scene 9

The Marches rehearse Jo’s play. Laurie surprises the siblings and says his grandfather has permitted him to act in the play, referencing Beth’s visit. The siblings all decide to spend their Christmas dollars on a gift for Marmee instead of on themselves.

Scene 10

It’s Christmas morning and the siblings surprise Marmee with a basket of gifts. Marmee is moved and remarks that the girls have all grown up so fast. Jo, Amy, and Meg also surprise Beth with a new piano, which came from Mr. Laurence. Beth sprints to the Laurence house brings everyone there back to the March home to celebrate.

Scene 11

The Christmas party continues. Beth has been playing piano non-stop. Brooks and Meg dance. Jo and Laurie look on. Laurie asks Jo what she thinks of marriage.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Jo finds romance disgusting. Laurie asks Jo to dance and she declines, but Amy steps in, eager to dance with him.

A telegram arrives and the Marches learn their father has been badly hurt in the war and is now in hospital. Mr. Laurence buys Marmee a train ticket to be with her husband and Brooks accompanies her. Marmee takes all the family's savings and tells Jo she may not be able to go to Europe with Aunt March. Jo runs out the door.

As the girls say goodbye to their mother, Jo reenters with a stack of money—she has sold her hair to a nearby wigmaker to support the family. Marmee is touched and hugs the siblings before she departs for the hospital.

Scene 12

Hannah tries to keep order in the house while Marmee is away. Beth prepares to go to the Hummels' house to help their sick baby, even though her head hurts. Meg adjusts to being the “woman of the house” in Marmee's absence.

Scene 13

Jo and Laurie walk back from town after Jo sold a story of hers to the local newspaper. Jo again talks about becoming writer, “one of the greats,” and not having to write “sentimental little ladies' stories.” Laurie helped negotiate her pay in the transaction by saying that he was her agent. They have a tender moment before Jo punches him in the arm.

Jo and Laurie arrive back at the March house. Beth is devastated—the Hummels' baby died in her arms of scarlet fever. Beth again says her head hurts. Beth tells Laurie to keep Amy out of the room as Amy has never had scarlet fever—she may be exposed.

Scene 14

Time passes and Beth has become very sick. The family takes care of Beth and decides not to write to Marmee about Beth's illness until they know more.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Scene 15

Beth has continued to get worse. Hannah decides to write to Marmee. Beth asks Jo to tell her a story.

Scene 16

Marmee arrives home the next day. The girls are happy to report that Beth's fever broke and she's feeling better. Marmee is thankful and shares that she has brought a belated Christmas present—their father, Robert, arrives helped by Brooks. The siblings and Hannah are overjoyed to see him. They haven't taken down their Christmas decorations yet, and Laurie kisses Jo under some mistletoe, which upsets Amy.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

Time has passed, approximately 18 months (about a year and a half). Meg and Brooks are married, and she has given birth to twins. Amy has matured and now wears her hair up. Jo wears her trousers for the rest of the play. Laurie is becoming a young man. Beth watches this all transpire.

Scene 1 – Late summer/early fall, 1863

Marmee has been painstakingly caring for Robert in his recovery. Jo continues to rehearse her play as Rodrigo with Laurie as Valentino. Meg is no longer in Jo's play as she lives with her husband Brooks and their babies. Laurie asks Jo why she doesn't want to be the female ingénue character in the play, because then she'd be able to flirt with his character. The two argue. Laurie leaves for college the next day and asks Jo to show him kindness before he departs. Jo says she'll be jealous and asks him to do his best at school, since she can't go. Laurie wants her to finish her novel while he's away. Laurie says he will take Jo to Europe and they can go on an adventure together, then leaves.

Amy and Beth enter. Jo says they can continue with their play, but Amy says they are too old for the play now and it's inappropriate for women of Jo's age.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Amy says Jo can't send Laurie off the next day as they promised to work for Aunt March. Jo is frustrated but Amy reminds her that they need the money. Jo complains, and Amy tells her she needs to be realistic and get serious—give up on her “fantasies.”

Scene 2

Jo and Amy arrive at Aunt March's house. Jo still has her trousers on. Aunt March, described in the stage directions as “the most gnarled, horrible woman imaginable,” enters with a pet parrot. Aunt March comments passive aggressively on Jo's outfit. Aunt March begins saying very upsetting things. Jo bursts out, arguing against each thing Aunt March has said. Aunt March uninvites Jo from her Europe trip, as she intended to take a “lady” with her, and invites Amy instead. Amy accepts and Jo is furious.

Scene 3

Back at home, Jo and Amy fight. Amy says, “Aunt March is taking me along because I'm smart enough to keep my peace! Because I act like a lady and you never do!” Jo argues that Amy doesn't understand her, that Jo “would make a dreadful lady...even if [she] wanted to be one...They would all say, look at that awkward boy in the dress.” Jo decides she'll get to Europe her own way, by finishing her novel.

Scene 4

Meg visits the March house, very upset. She is overwhelmed with motherhood, frustrated by being poor, and is not finding fulfillment in being home alone with her children. Brooks and Meg had also gotten into a fight after he found her crying and stressed, and she stormed away. Jo's advice is to forget her husband and move back in with the family, so “everything can be just as it was.” Brooks arrives and apologizes to Meg. Meg decides she was being childish and leaves with Brooks. Jo returns to writing. Beth's head hurts again.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Scene 5

Jo goes to a publisher, Mr. Dashwood, to sell her completed novel. Mr. Dashwood says he is “not in the market for ladies’ novels.” He offers her an insulting amount of money, half of what she’d earned for her one story back when Laurie had come with her to the publisher. Mr. Dashwood says next time she should bring a man with her. Jo returns home. Beth asks if Jo is alright, Jo is very upset. Beth suggests that Jo should write about something from her own life. Jo says no one would want to read “about a house full of stupid naïve girls, about someone like me...not a real woman...”

Scene 6 – Approximately spring, 1864

Laurie returns from college after his first semester. Jo recounts her frustrations with life—her trip to the publisher, how Amy is going to Europe instead of her, how Meg is not around anymore, and how Jo feels like she has no place in the world and doesn’t know what to do. Laurie tells Jo that she doesn’t have to make money—someone could give it to her, “somebody who loves [her].” Laurie then shares that he’s loved Jo ever since they first met and proposes to her. Jo is hesitant. Laurie says he doesn’t want to change her. Jo wants to stay as they are, but Laurie says he can’t pretend they’re children anymore and he needs more. Jo turns him down and Laurie departs heartbroken.

Amy and Beth enter. Beth consoles Jo, who is devastated to have lost her best friend, while Amy asks how Jo could have been so stupid as to deny Laurie’s proposal. They continue to argue.

Scene 7

Beth visits Laurie at his house. Laurie says he is not going back to college but will not bother the Marches anymore. Beth says he should go with Amy to Europe. Laurie says Amy is “just a little girl,” but Beth opens his eyes to the fact that her sibling has grown up and likes him.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Scene 8

Back in the March house, Jo is looking for the novel she wrote. Amy meant to throw Jo's notebook full of Amy's vocabulary mistakes in the fireplace, but accidentally burned an identical notebook with Jo's completed novel. Jo is devastated, then furious, and slaps Amy. The two fight while Marmee and Beth try to separate them. Jo says she will never forgive Amy. Amy leaves. Jo decides she and Amy will never get along, so they should allow themselves to grow apart to make things better for the rest of the family. Beth faints.

Scene 9

Beth is sick again, and admits she never really felt better after her first fever. The prognosis from the doctor is not good. Beth is ashamed that she's done so little with her life. Jo says she's giving up on her dreams and will just stay home and take care of their parents and "do her duty." Beth becomes very upset and tells Jo she cannot give up on what she wants to do with her life, and makes Jo promise she will keep writing. Beth also asks that Jo make amends with Amy and that she bring Amy and Laurie together. Beth asks Jo to tell her a story.

Scene 10

Jo starts to tell the story of the Marches. Beth passes away. Jo starts to write down this story.

End of Play.

Finding the “Now” in *Little Women*

An Interview with Director Marti Lyons

We sat down with *Little Women* director Marti Lyons to set the stage for our production of this new and fresh adaptation of the classic novel.

Seattle Rep: What is your vision for this production? How are you balancing the elements of old and new in Kate Hamill’s adaptation of a beloved classic?

ML: Kate Hamill’s *Little Women* is based on Louisa May Alcott’s original but takes on a life of its own. Likewise, our production takes inspiration from Alcott’s masterpiece but also from our contemporary moment. As artists, we are always looking for the most invigorating way to tell a story that bridges the past and the present.

SR: Among many previous stage and film adaptations of *Little Women*, what do you see as unique to this version?

ML: A major theme in *Little Women* is storytelling itself. Jo, our protagonist, is a writer like Alcott, and uses creative narrative to process the complexities of life. Through the lens of Jo, the storyteller, both Alcott and Hamill examine how we understand ourselves and the world through storytelling. The theater is a natural place to continue such an exploration. Just as Jo reincarnates Beth through telling their family’s story, we as theater-makers bring Alcott’s book to life through telling our story of the March family.

SR: Nineteenth-century gender roles pose a huge obstacle to many characters in this story. How are you approaching this with an eye toward the sophisticated audiences of this generation?

ML: Louisa May Alcott once said, “I am more than half-persuaded that I am a man’s soul, put...into a woman’s body.” While we don’t and can’t know exactly what Alcott meant by that statement, it is clear from her journals, interviews, and biographies that Alcott grappled with gender identity throughout her life. Though Louisa—or Lou as she preferred to be called—would not have had the language we now use to talk about gender identity, Alcott’s struggle with how to be fully her (them? him?) self in the world feels very resonant with now. Simultaneously, Alcott’s struggles remind us that, though underrepresented, queer and trans people have existed throughout history and to think of gender as singularly a contemporary conversation is its own kind of erasure.

Inspired by Alcott’s life and Alcott’s (and Hamill’s) representation of Jo, I have approached *Little Women* through a queer and intersectional lens. Our *Little Women* examines not just the notion of what it is to be a woman, but how femme and masc energy manifests in each of the characters.

Finding the “Now” in *Little Women*

In this we explore not just cisgendered identities, but queer and trans identities. This exploration is as historical as it is contemporary, and in our production, we witness each character discover what it means to live life as themselves.

SR: The original novel has been a favorite for generations. Do you have a personal connection to *Little Women*?

ML: I first read *Little Women* as a teenager and was deeply moved by the story of the Marches. As time has passed, I have returned to the book again and again. Although I know the story well, each time I read it I experience it anew. Between each encounter I have gained knowledge and experience, so when I come back to the book, I have both the comfort of returning to a story I know and the excitement of discovering it once again. In this way, I feel I have grown up with the Marches, learning more about them as I learn more about myself. Which makes it such a distinct joy to now bring them to life onstage.



Rebecca Cort, Cy Paolantonio, Katie Peabody, and Amelio García in rehearsal for *Little Women* (2023).

ARTICLE: "DID THE MOTHER OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IDENTIFY AS A MAN?"

In this *New York Times* editorial, author and journalist Peyton Thomas explores the answer to the question "Is Louisa May Alcott best understood as a trans man?" Thomas explores the evidence from *Little Women* and Alcott's own writings that might lead some contemporary readers and researchers to answer "yes." Thomas also contextualizes the history of the term "trans," while outlining the challenges and opportunities of trying to understand the identities of people from the past.

- *The New York Times*: "Did the Mother of Young Adult Literature Identify as a Man?"
Published December 24, 2022: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/24/opinion/did-the-mother-of-young-adult-literature-identify-as-a-man.html>
- For an in-depth dive into the queer and trans themes of *Little Women* and Louisa May Alcott's life, listen to Thomas' podcast, [*Jo's Boys: A "Little Women" Podcast*](#).

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO GENDER INCLUSION

In this production of *Little Women*, many of the characters find it hard to fulfill societal expectations of their gender roles, but none more than Jo and Laurie. Today, many youth-serving organizations are working to increase gender inclusivity in their organizational structures and break down outdated, gendered policies. **Young Women Empowered (Y-WE)**, a longtime partner of Seattle Rep, has been a leader in this work.

Check out their website to learn more: youngwomenempowered.org

ACTIVITY: POST-SHOW REFLECT & WRITE

1. Read **Y-WE's Gender Inclusion Policy**: bit.ly/YWEPolicy
2. Reflect on your viewing of *Little Women*, your reading of the Y-WE policy, and *The New York Times* article (on page 20).
3. Write a 5-sentence summary of each. **Compare and contrast** the three pieces: What does each say about gender inclusivity? How does each piece reveal something about gender that the other does not? What **connections** to your own life or experience did you make to each piece?

5-Sentence Summary Form

Sentence 1 – Main Idea

Sentence 2 – 1 sentence summary of the beginning of the piece.

Sentence 3 – 1 sentence summary of the middle of the piece.

Sentence 4 – 1 sentence summary of the end of the piece.

Sentence 5 – Conclusion

Sentence 1-

Little Women:

Y-WE Policy:

The New York Times article:

Sentence 2-

Little Women:

Y-WE Policy:

The New York Times article:

Sentence 3-

Little Women:

Y-WE Policy:

The New York Times article:

Sentence 4-

Little Women:

Y-WE Policy:

The New York Times article:

Sentence 5-

Little Women:

Y-WE Policy:

The New York Times article:

Compare and Contrast Reflection Essay



GLOSSARY

Keep an ear out for the following terms used in this production of *Little Women*.

Abolitionist: Someone who supports putting an end to slavery.

Colic: A condition in which a baby cries for prolonged periods of time without explanation.

Depravity: Immorality.

Dissension: Disagreements between people's opinions, actions, or characteristics.

Galumph: Move around in a clumsy way.

Hymn: A song of praise this can be to a god, religion, saint, or even a nation.

Impertinent: Acting in an improper, disrespectful, or rude manner.

Libel: A published statement that has false accusations against a person intended to hurt their reputation.

Malapropism: A word that someone has unintentionally confused for a similar word.

Pariah: Someone who is rejected or not accepted in a group or place.

Primp: Take extra care in the way a person looks or dresses.

Puerile: Lacking maturity.

Rubella: A contagious viral infection that can cause harm to an unborn baby if a mother becomes infected during pregnancy.

Scarlet fever: An infectious disease often found in children and typically characterized by fever and rash.

Tenement: A run-down apartment building that hardly meets the minimal standards of living.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AT SEATTLE REP

Do you love all things theater? Have you always wanted to be on stage but never had the chance? Do you want to see more theater in your life? Seattle Rep has options for youth to engage with theater all season long! We've included some of our upcoming programs and ongoing ticket options. Learn about our Family Friendly programming, age recommendations, and more at: seattlerep.org/forfamilies

Ticket Discounts

Seattle Rep believes theater is for everyone. We offer these discount programs and many more to make ticket prices accessible to all.

- **\$5 TeenTix:** Become a member of TeenTix for free (for ages 13 – 19) and get \$5 to every show at Seattle Rep! Seattle Rep honors a 2 for \$10 offer on Friday nights to all TeenTix pass holders (you can bring anyone of any age with you as your Friday plus-one!).
- **Student Tickets:** We offer a discount for youth under 18 or current students of any age for \$18 each.
- **Pay What You Choose:** Seattle Rep offers Pay What You Choose tickets for all of our performances.
- **Free Tickets for Native Individuals:** Seattle Rep offers free tickets for self-identified Native individuals to see all our shows.

More details, discounts, and options:



OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AT SEATTLE REP

Teen Nights

On select Fridays throughout our 2023/24 Season, teens are invited to see our shows for \$5 (with a TeenTix membership) with a free pre-show reception, fun activities, and a chance to hang out in a youth-only space! Pre-show Teen Night events begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by a 7:30 p.m. performance.

2023/24 Teen Nights

- *Little Women* – Friday, December 1, 2023
- *Quixote Nuevo* – Friday, February 2, 2024
- *Sanctuary City* – Friday, March 3, 2024
- *Fat Ham* – Friday, April 26, 2024
- *Jinkx Monsoon & Major Scales: Together Again, Again!* – Friday, June 14, 2024

Next Narrative Monologue Competition

Act on Seattle Rep's biggest stage and have the chance to perform at the legendary Apollo Theatre on an all-expenses-paid trip to New York City... what more could you ask for! **The Next Narrative Monologue Competition (NNMC)** features newly written monologues from fifty of America's leading contemporary Black playwrights. Students select a monologue, memorize and workshop the piece with talented theater professionals, and compete for the chance to perform both at Seattle Rep and in NYC!

All high school-aged youth (grades 9-12) living in Washington state can join. It's totally free to participate! **Learn more NNMC info and sign up below:**



Check out all of Seattle Rep's Youth Engagement offerings!



THERE'S MORE TO EXPERIENCE IN OUR LOBBY!

When you come to Seattle Rep, arrive to the show early and enjoy these engagement opportunities in our lobby.

ART WALK

While Seattle Rep is known for its art on stage, you don't want to miss the powerful art in our lobby, too. As the season progresses, check out the ever-changing work in our lobby Art Walk, located to the left of the Bagley Wright Theater Doors 4 and 1, near the main-level Bagley restrooms and Wellness Room. We will be highlighting three different local artists this year whose art and/or intersectional identities reflect the themes you will see on stage. This program is in partnership with local gallery organization A/NT Gallery.

A/NT Gallery has been a pillar at Seattle Center as a welcoming, non-juried art space with new FREE shows opening each month. If you are interested in displaying your own art or want to discover more local artists, contact A/NT Gallery at:
info@antgallery.org or 206.233.0680.

LISTENING STATION

In the Seattle Rep lobby, check out our Listening Station, located under the big staircase as you enter the theater. Look out for rotating music and podcasts at our Listening Station that elevates the motifs of the shows on stage. In honor of *Little Women*, this playlist celebrates the rich culture of women songwriters in Seattle.



REP
SEATTLE

LITTLE WOMEN

