

Thesis Proposal: Master of Arts, Villanova University

## **Little Women: The Musical**

Book by Allan Knee Lyrics

by Mindi Dickstein Music by

Jason Howland

Based on Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

**Audition:** November 28th, 2016

**Performance Dates:** March 28th - April 9th, 2017

Preview: March 28th at 8pm

Speakers Night: April 9th at 8pm

Performances: Tuesday-Saturday at 8pm, Sunday at 2pm, Mondays Dark

## **Director: Valerie Joyce**

Musical Director: Peter A Hilliard

Lighting Designer: Jerold Forsyth

Sound Designer: John Stovicek Scenic

Designer: To-Be-Determined

Costume Designer: Janus Stefanowicz

Props: Sharri Jerue

Marketing and Public Relations Director: Kimberly Reilly

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### **Dramaturgical Summary:**

After reading *Little Women* and beginning the preliminaries of setting up a dramaturgical file, I immediately became interested in the many themes explored in this musical. These include: empowered women from a historical time, familial loss, and striving to find purpose. These themes make for a powerful story that engaged me in a multi-layered way. I was immediately drawn to the era of history presented in the musical, an era that I have not explored in my previous studies to any great length. While I have studied a passing history of the Civil War, my education about domestic life during this period is lacking. My lack of knowledge, and I would dare say the greater public's lack of knowledge on this topic, makes this particular project very exciting to undertake. There have been thousands of volumes of history and fiction written about the Civil War, however, few even touch on the home front; those books that do touch on this topic often share insights only on Sherman's march to Atlanta. In broader culture the only real reference one can see of this history is *Gone With The Wind*, which presents a very different story than that in *Little Women*. As a result of this, *Little Women* offers a unique insight into a part of history rarely talked about.

Even more exciting is the fact that it deals almost entirely with women. With this in mind, we can examine *Little Women* as a primary source for how women in the north lived their lives, experienced hardship and war, and how they were treated and viewed by American society. I am thrilled to be able to be part of a production that can highlight the experiences of everyday in the northern states during the war. *Little Women* forms an important part of the story of the American Women's Civil Rights movement, because at the same time Alcott was writing *Little Women*, women like Susan B. Anthony and Harriet Tubman were helping to shape a new political world. This theme is central to *Little Women*, and by showcasing it successfully we can inspire a new generation of young women within politics and literature.

While I find the historical insights very exciting, I am sure to be challenged by the complexity of the music. I had not even thought to listen to the notes in the songs until I had read the musical several times. These are obvious musical mistakes for some, but for me they have been a great challenge to overcome. At Valerie's suggestion, the nuances I picked up have added a lot to my understanding of the musical. For instance, I was really selling short Marmee's song "Here Alone," it was on my list of potential songs to cut. But after listening to how the orchestra built up Marmee's emotion and then transitioned into one of Jo's largest numbers, I realized that "Here Alone" was really a very important moment of music and storytelling. I concluded that for our production it might be important to actually emphasize this song rather than cut it. My understanding of these nuances are still in their infancy but the production will enable my understanding to grow. They will need to grow a lot more before I can truly understand the music at its full potential. As I continue to work with Valerie, and as we add Peter to our discussions about music, more of the hidden secrets, such as rhythm, will be revealed to me. My continued reading on musicals will also broaden my talking points with Valerie enabling me to better contribute to these conversations. Once I gain a more well rounded knowledge of musicals, I will be better equipped to assist the actors in understanding those big moments, and in turn, better help the audience take away those major life lessons.

Learning about the original production has been another challenge. I was struck at how recently this version of *Little Women* was adapted: the original Broadway production was mounted in 2005. Foolishly I had assumed that it must have been older. This short production history has been compounded by reviews not commenting on changes to the script. Reviewers seem uninterested in changes made to the script in more regional productions or simply do not know the musical well enough to make any mention of cuts. Many inquires I have made to theatre companies asking about their productions of *Little Women* have also gone unanswered. This trend

is a complete reversal of how my inquiries have normally gone. In the past, my emails or calls have been greeted with enthusiasm to share details. For instance, while inquiring for reviews and images for *The Rivals* last year, I was given access to one theatre festival's archives to help see how their production differed from others.

Reviews also barely touch on the set at all and instead focus simply on praising or complaining about the singing attributes of the leads. This has proved exceptionally challenging since Valerie prefers set notes from productions but not any pictures from productions. While this has presented challenges, non-review based resources have been more helpful. For instance, in specifying design components during my research, I managed to acquire the Scene Design Proposal from San Diego State University. I hope this more detailed set explanation will prove useful and eye opening. Additionally, production photos, have detailed the sets of many of the regional productions of *Little Women*. While reviews are silent on set issues, these pictures have given me insight into several wide set designs; everything from traditional New England house to a forest of book-like trees. While Valerie would like to form an initial set image in her head without these resources, she has told me that those production pictures will come in handy when tricky decisions need to be made.

The reviews of these previous productions have been eye-opening for one very important reason: they have stated several major failings. First, they state that the lyrics for this production offer almost no excitement, and second, they see the music composition as being generic and without any real depth. The reviewers either blame the lyricist, Mindi Dickstein or Jason Howland's music for these problems; however, my examination of other, more recent, reviews has led me to believe that this is not the case. The failings of these early productions can be conquered by focusing on the strong thematic elements presented in *Little Women*.

This show can succeed if mounted with a clear vision. Strong character development is a must. Many of the minor characters are not on stage long enough for the audience to develop an emotional connection to them. For this show to succeed, Jo's storytelling about minor characters, and her feelings for them, has to be genuine and clear. My job will be to show attention to this potential challenge, and help the production achieve successful storytelling with these minor characters. Additionally, clever cuts will have to be made. Many of these reviews complain about the show going on for two and a half to three hours. This is really reaching the limit for many young audience members. Our cuts will have to reflect this reality, while preserving the story. All in all, these efforts will be directed to achieve the absolute maximum effect on the audience. Using Valerie's feminist vision we will transform this nostalgic tale and into a more story with more contemporary values. In doing so, this production can make an impact on people's lives. I will work with the Kim Reilly to make sure we prepare audiences members for this both in our PR, lobby and program. In doing so, we can make sure that we achieve the highest level of audience engagement and participation possible.

I think this play is a perfect choice in 2017. Our culture appears to be ripping itself apart and reliving old problems, such as racial and gender rights, particularly in regards to our current presidential election. It is important to offer audiences, particularly on the Main Line, theatrical experiences that might change their minds about issues like gender. According to a 2014 Guardian Article, men still outnumber women in traditional publishing, so these parallels can really bring the reality of the nineteenth Century to today, and encourage a critical, and not simply a nostalgic, response to the play. Gender pay and expectations can also be explored in *Little Women*, and be related back to the current realities on the Main Line. As a semi-autobiographical story, *Little Women* has the power, to show how the world was in a particular place and time, the challenges they faced, and the progress we have made, but also how little

distance we have actually traveled, both in time and in political and civil terms. While at first glance *Little Women* appears benign to many, at least looking at reviews, the social undercurrents in the play can greatly affect an audience. Additionally, because it is a musical, we have greater access to people who might not otherwise come to see theatre. A successful production of *Little Women* will certainly tap into the ideas of gender, and really enlighten people about this issue. I am very excited in exploring the issues of history and gender through music. As a politically active person and a lover of history, I fully understand how the power of movement and words can change someone's mind.

A politically powerful musical offers an amazing opportunity to be able to do that because it might just be the last thing an audience member expected. This can be achieved by my careful analysis of the score, text, and historic period that helped shaped *Little Women*. Valerie's and Peter's minds will help me understand the musical elements in *Little Women*, and my own research and synthesis will help me access the history. By combining the knowledge shared by Valerie and Peter, along with my own research, dramaturging *Little Women* will prove to be an experimental, exhilarating and exhausting production that will truly change my understanding of the power of the Broadway musical.

### **Dramaturgical Goals**

1. Effectively work with the director and production team to seamlessly deliver research and insightful notes regarding all aspects of the production. Be a well-rounded dramaturg who can be called upon to take the initiative and carry out analysis for the director and research images, documentation and audience outreach for production staff. Additionally, I will effectively deliver production material to the actors and strive to allow the actors to assess the text, music, and themes of *Little Women*, giving them just the correct amount of insight.
2. Learn how to dramaturg a musical, including by learning the importance of the orchestra, musical direction and how music can influence the story.
3. Keeping in mind that *Little Women* is a breathing story that has changed over the years, there will be many adaptations, views and the original novel to analyze. I will strive to preserve the musical text and the director's vision, while allowing three other sources to inform my opinion but not shape this production.



## Initial Response

### Positives:

~**Strong historically based female characters:** *Little Women* presents a story with strong female characters. Their struggle is embodied in each song and in the non-traditional 19th century roles for the central characters. *Little Women* also explores a part of Civil War history that is not often explored, Maree's song "Here Alone" in particular shows the struggle for women on the home front. Additionally, *Little Women* offers Villanova opportunities to show off all of the strong female performers in our program.

~**An Operatic Tragedy:** "An Operatic Tragedy" is a very fun song. Immediately, it sets the tone for the musical by illustrating that these women are going to be having all sorts of adventures. This is illustrated by having Rodrigo, the dashing hero, played by one of the girls. This defies gender norms in fiction, while also breaking norm in the reality of the play. I'm excited to see what type of "adventurous" staging we can have for this scene, particularly, with regards Rodrigo and Pendergast.

~**Mr. Laurence delights:** Mr. Laurence's character presents small obstacles through the story, but his tale provides a pleasant arch. He goes through quite the transformation, allows an actor to start off crotchety and end nice. I love that Mr. Laurence is a secret softy and likes to sing. For example, "Off To Massachusetts" is a charming song that really shows his true nature. I wonder if we achieve the same fun from Mr. Laurence's his dialogue as well.

~**Lessons from Aunt March:** Aunt March makes for a formidable, overbearing presence on stage. Having listened to her a few more times, and having watched *Beauty and the Beast* recently, she certainly reminds me of Mrs. Potts. Aunt March makes an interesting maternal

counter to Marmee. She has the best intentions for the girls at heart but goes about achieving her goals in a very old fashion way, even though her own persona is quite modern. I would be interested in exploring the relationship between Aunt March and Marmee. At the end of *Little Women*, Aunt March has a very nice gesture of giving her house to Jo. Making “a library” gives Jo the economic stability to continue her writing without having to rely on anyone else.

~**Jo’s view towards men:** I still can’t get over “Take A Chance On Me,” I can’t believe it’s not by ABBA. Of course the themes in both versions of the song are similar and neither works out for ABBA, Jo or Laurie. Jo seems to have no interest in marriage till the very end, and even then the idea of marrying the professor, will be more of a true partnership rather than a traditional marriage. This breaks with norms of the historical time period and, I would argue, of many popular musicals.

~**A male perspective:** Mr. Brooke reminds me of someone out of a Jane Austen novel. Mr. Brooke and Meg appear to be the typical trope for musicals, truly the picturesque Disney tale. Apart from this instance, *Little Women*, counters those typical tropes. And it is nice to see those tropes play out against the Jo’s struggles. Working in opposition to Mr. Brooke’s arch is Laurie. He really struggles with understanding female emotions, however, he does take Jo’s friendzoning in stride. “Five Forever” is a nice moment for Laurie to shine. Laurie also serves as a comic relief character. “The Most Amazing Thing” illustrates his goofball moments. Amy says “I love fireflies” and replies Laurie “I said so do I” really sums him up (97). I actually don’t know if he actually likes fireflies or not, the point is that he says whatever he has to and likes whatever he has to because of Amy.

~**Sisterly love:** The love and bond of sisters is very strong, e.g. the skating scene and the kite scene. Those underlying traces of love exists even when they are angry with each other, for

instance with Amy. However, the loss of Beth sends Jo spiraling, and really illustrates the power that love of that calibre can have.

~**Countering Jo with Professor:** Professor Bhaer is reasonably boring, he doesn't go anywhere or do anything that would be considered a great excitement. I like that because it juxtaposes the girls who are traveling the world or writing adventure novels. It's the inverse of what traditionally has been presented in musicals and history. This switch proves to be very enjoyable to behold.

~**Jo's writing and imagination:** The stories that Jo writes parallels her own life through fantasy. This is a theme that many writers of fantasy and horror have used, and it makes for an enjoyable reading and theatrical staging. Characters like Rodrigo, who make up part of Jo's character, make several comebacks throughout Jo's fantasy songs! These prove to be very entertaining moments to envision on stage. I think there are plenty of opportunities to do some melodrama with his character as well as with Clarissa and Prendergast.

~**Musical moments of family love, tragedy and rebirth:** "Some Things Are Meant To Be" is really a sad song. It carries a lot of foreboding imagery such as flying high into the sky, allusions to both escapism and heaven. It also shows a really powerful moment between sisters. This song also serves as a catalyst for much of the action later on, such as within "The Fire Within Me." This is a great inspirational song for Jo. After coming out of such a sad moment, loss of Beth, return of Amy, and sad song from Marmee, this epic song of self discovery serves as a highlight of the whole show.

~**Imagery in the rain:** "Small Umbrella in the Rain" is a really charming ending song. This song makes a good case for differences in relationships, which means it's a very relatable song. It's a nice, cute and happy ending. And reminiscent of Jo's line "I don't need being saved" (19). She really isn't saved at the end.

**Negatives:**

~**Denial, denial, denial:** Putnam's denial letter for publication is cartoonishly cruel. It might be difficult for the audience to relate to a denial like that.

~**Professor lacking:** At first, Professor Bhaer seems to only be open minded on the surface? For instance, when Jo tells him about rejection letters, but then he sours quietly after that conversation. How can we add depth to that?

~**Challenges in staging:** Stage Directions like "scene gradually changes" are unhelpful, but luckily wide open for interpretation. E.g. The stage direction "Clarissa becomes more and more bedraggled, loses more of her clothing" (74). Simply poorly written.

~**Context clues or imagined:** Not sure that the correct phrase to describe the sisters would be "penniless and ragged" (7) since they are stability in the middle class.

~**Jo's stubbornness:** It's difficult to side with Jo on several occasions, some of her anger moments are a little small (e.g. With Meg getting engaged to Mr. Brooke). As such, it might appear to the audience that she is picking some very small fights or being too reactionary.

~**Traditional Gender Nonsense:** In the final scene, the Professor swoops in and says that he sent Jo's manuscript to the Weekly Volcano Press, and they will now publish it. This moment is kind of disappointing that Professor Bhaer is the one who gets the book published.

**Questions:**

~What is gained or lost by having a larger chorus? Do we even need a chorus? Can regular actors double as chorus or ASM's? What makes most sense for the department? What makes most sense for the play?

~What is the time period for Jo's fantasy story? What would they be dressed in? How have the characters in Jo's story been portrayed before?

~How are transitions between present and past done? Are any changes with Jo needed as she transitions?

~What type of doubling should we be exploring for songs like “An Operatic Tragedy”? Are the doubling suggestions in the Broadway version the only option?

~How much did printing a new script cost in the winter of 1863?

~How old is father? What is his back story? When did he enlist? What medical unit was he apart of? And is he an officer?

~The Stage Directions on page 12 say “Seeing them all in parts of costume”? But when do they start putting the costumes on in the first place?

~Where did the exclamation “Christopher Columbus” come from?

~Aunt March’s song “Could You” indicates that Jo hasn’t up to this point worn a corset. What else would she be wearing?

~What is a dance card?

~Why is Jo so mean to Laurie from the onset of the ball?

~What would a patch on a 19th Century ball gown look like?

~When Meg is brought back from the dance with Mr. Brooke, are Jo and Laurie with them? Do they come back together or separately. The stage directions are unclear.

~Why did Amy give a false apology to Jo?

~How has the skating scene been done in the past? How can it best serve our production?

~In Scene 4, why does Mr. Laurence come to the March house in the first place? How does he know Laurie is coming there? Did Laurie leave with Jo from the house or meet together at the pond?

~Did the train service continue to operate civilian trains during the late Civil War?

~How much would hair cost? How long is her hair? How will our production approach the question of hair, will this be achieved with a bald cap, or an actress with a shaved head, or by some other fashion?

~How did Laurie get his inheritance money without his grandfather's knowledge?

~In other productions, how have they transitioned between Jo writing to Professor Bhaer? Light or actual scene change?

~How did the original productions get the kite to fly? Did they even?

~Why does Meg still live in the March house after she is married? Was that normal at the time?

~What did brides wear in weddings in 1865? What did weddings in general look like in 1865?

~What would Jo's printed book look like?

~How have previous productions approached the rain scene?

### **Crack/Thread:**

~**Unexplored themes:** I find the idea of exploring an upper, middle class family during the Civil War very exciting. It's a topic in history that the war certainly overshadows. However, the troubles of the home front, particularly in the new and emerging middle class is one that historians have not often written about. Furthermore, the idea of solely exploring the lives of women on the home front is of particular interest to me. Jo, who is transformed into a strong woman without the help of a father or husband, and turned into someone who has achieved a position of prosperity and note in 1865 would have been quite extraordinary in America back then. That's why these characters, presented in this specific time are so interesting. It's even more interesting when you learn that much of this story was based, or at least inspired by Louisa May Alcott's own life. The history of the 1860s is wholly swallowed by the Civil War, if this war had not happened perhaps Alcott's story and rise would be more widely known.

Additionally, there are some Disney-like qualities to the story. For instance, Jo instantly reminded me of Belle from Beauty and the Beast. The idea of a strong female lead, that can still fall in love, but is not at the will of men is a theme that was explored heavily during the Disney Renaissance of the late 80s and early 90s.

### **Concretes:**

These three thread Jo and Beth together and also serve as the final thrust to get Jo published:

~**Letter:** The letter that takes Jo back to Concord. Obviously, this is the letter that almost signs the death of Beth. Secondly, it separates Professor Bhaer and Jo at a time when things might have developed between them, and lastly, it starts Jo on the great writing phrase which will end with her getting published and Professor Bhaer returning to her.

~**Kite:** The kite from Beth. This is a powerful symbol illustrating the relationship between Jo and Beth. “Some Things are Meant to Be” and the themes explored in the song go hand in hand with the kite. The kite represents the desire to fly away and escape reality. Jo and Beth do get to escape for that day, however, they can’t escape the world for long.

~**Shell:** The shell Beth gave Jo. This shell is the spark which inspires Jo to start writing again and also serves as a powerful reminder of Beth’s loss. This shell is the centerpiece of “The Fire Within Me,” although Beth is not actually there, the sentiments it carries are just as powerful.

### **Aural Visual Moments:**

~**Bad ass women:** I am most interested in showing off the strongest, most passionate, saddest or inspirational moments for Jo and the other female characters. In many previous musicals these moments might have to deal with a man, however, I believe that we can ax the men from the most important moments and make a case that the most important moments are those that are just women.

~**Mom's song:** "Here Alone" is sung by Marmee in written letter form. The song illustrates the reality of Marmee's situation and shows us how very lonely she is. Marmee lives a very solitary life even though she is surrounded by her daughters. She sings "Send my love with every line... I can't talk about the war... the church bells bring the war to our door... raising little women when I'm here alone" (17-18). These words and the slow rise and fall of her voice throughout this song demonstrate the strong will Marmee has against all of life's hardships.

~**Meet the sisters:** "Better" starts off with a transition from New York back to the day before Christmas 1863. This song shows a lot of self doubt and anger at Professor Bhaer. Jo asks "how can I do better, than what's already here?" (6). Later we glimpse a small sample of the relationships that all the girls have between one another, and also gives the audience a brief but important show of their individual personalities. As we move to this part of the song, the fast pace wing instruments die off and we are left with a slower violin tune that is filled with the idea of remembrance, for Jo, remembering those stories in Concord. If we had only this moment and jumped right to Act 2 we wouldn't be nearly as lost as one might think. We also get to see what each of the girls want at the beginning so that we can see how each character changes throughout the show.

~**Fun with musicals:** "The Weekly Volcano Press" is such a fun song. Starting with "Sometimes when you dream" the beat is very lighthearted, which fits Jo's mood. She is in prime storytelling mode. The song is punctuated by these clever ups and downs, back and forths between pace and style. For instance, Professor Bhaer says "Henry Dashwood - now he is a man of taste," this comes right after one of Jo's upbeat riffs. Jo's next line in the song starts off lights and ends down, yet still funny "Dashwood was a fiend" (70). The tempo remains fast, light and windy before we quickly add the string instruments. Then the song gets silly with accents, at first Jo and Pendergast sing together before their voices break apart to become their own separate characters.



This mirror singing illustrates Jo acting out her story at the office of the Weekly Volcano Press.

As Clarissa sings “Let go, let go, let go” (71) the instruments almost follow her moment as she is pulled back and forth. What follows is several minutes of acting out different scenes from Jo’s story very much in melodrama form. The music follows that pattern emphasizing it so that each moment is exceptionally dramatic. This song ends in powerful fashion with several characters singing about their success.

~**Jo’s losses are real:** “Some Things Are Meant To Be” illustrates the power of sisterly love which is what the musical is all about. This idea is stitched together by some truly beautiful harmonies between Jo and Beth, which are interlaced with the solo moments sung between the two sisters. “Some Things Are Meant To Be” is a very sad song but also is the most powerful moment we have seen so far. It shows sisterly love in its purest form. The lyrics explore the ideas of escaping from the world, the girls sing “let’s imagine we are flying through the air” (89) However, this song also explores the tragedy and doom that is waiting to strike the March family. Parts of the song are fantasy like, the piano really emphasizes this idea with dreamlike clarity. The orchestration makes me think of flying through clouds, an idea that is reinforced by the lyrics. But the dreamlike theme is punctured with stinging reminders that “somethings things are meant to be”(91) These sentiments are really make this song the emotional powerhouse of the show. This song takes us out of the normal everyday of the show, away from Concord and New York. I think there is a lot of opportunities to explore movement and how to use lighting in the scene. Beth has the last word “Let me go now” and the music reprises the song as Beth lets go of the kite and the music slowly begins to fade (91).

~**No ordinary Mom:** “Days of Plenty” is a song that shows the sad humanity in the March household after Beth’s death. In the lines just before the song, Jo asks Marmee “How do you

manage, how do you go on day-in, day-out, as if nothing happened” and Marmee replies “Don’t make so much of me Jo” (101). Even though these words would suggest weakness, nothing is further from the truth. Marmee is instead shown in a very powerful light, after all of the tragedy that has happened to her, she is still a figure of strength. Marmee says “I refuse to feel tragic... there has got to be meaning” (101). Marmee says to Jo that she has to remember her sister and what has happened, but use that loss to find your own strength. The piano starts this song with short dabs that almost sound like tears, and slowly more and more instruments are added when Marmee gets to “But I refuse to feel tragic,” with the full orchestra supporting her at “You have to believe there is a reason for hope” (101). These powerful musical moments are truly emphasizing the importance of Marmee’s words. Marmee stays very strong in her resolve and then arches down at the very end. This gives the sense that Marmee is overcome after singing this very powerful song and leaves so her daughter doesn’t have to see her show any weakness. Her words are followed by what sounds like church bells in the distance.

~**Keep the home fires burning:** “The Fire Within Me” once again illustrates the power of sisterly love. This song demonstrates loss, love and remembrance, but also is used as an inspirational moment for Jo so that she will start writing again. At the start of the song, Jo is stuck, singing “All I have are memories,” as the music is rapid, building and angry (102). Then abruptly the music halts and eases into a startlingly peaceful tune, this follows the on stage moment of Jo’s discovery of Beth’s shell. The music slowly builds back up as Jo uses the shell and memories of Beth as fuel to feed the “fire within me” (102) This is the impetus for a renewed Jo. The music transitions along with the scene once Jo has found her strength. As Jo retells her story from Christmas 1863, the violin plays reminiscent parlor music, while the piano slowly builds. Then the piano the very faintly plays the main notes to “The Fire Within Me,” and with that Jo explodes into a power ballad. With “the fire in my heart, here I go and there’s

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no going back...I've got giant plans," Jo is now ready to face the world with renewed courage

(103).

### **Preliminary Resource List:**

#### **Critical Analysis of *Little Women***

Alberghene, Janice M., and Beverly Lyon Clark. *Little Women and the Feminist Imagination: Criticism, Controversy, Personal Essays*. New York: Garland, 2014. Print.

A collection of almost 20 essays on female identity and how people have responded to or been shaped by *Little Women*. Also includes excellent bibliographic information for further feminist research.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women: An Annotated Edition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. Print.

Louisa May Alcott's original text of *Little Woman* with annotations to explain hidden meaning and historical context. Edited by Daniel Shealy.

Clark, Beverly Lyon. *The Afterlife of "Little Women"* N.p.: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014. Print.

Clark's book is a historical examination of how *Little Women* has developed over the course of a century and a half. Touches on the novel, film, and other adaptations, and how the interpretations of the text has changed over the years.

Eiselein, Gregory, and Anne K. Phillips. *Little Women*. Ipswich, MA: Salem, a Division of EBSCO Information Services, 2015. Print.

This book is a collection of essays and critical analysis of Louisa May Alcott's novel, *Little Women*. Topics vary from character analysis to general theme to Alcott's upbringing, each essay approaches the novel using a different angle.

Stern, Madeleine B. *Critical Essays on Louisa May Alcott*. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1984. Print.

Part of a greater anthology of books called, *Critical Essays on American Literature*, this book delves into what critics at the time to present have written about *Little Women*. Including reviews of the book.

#### **Alcott's Life**

Alcott, Louisa May, Joel Myerson, Daniel Shealy, and Madeleine B. Stern. *The Journals of Louisa May Alcott*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1989. Print.

Louisa May Alcott's private journals and writing that categorize much of what happened in the war period as a nurse, along with her writing endeavors.

Cheever, Susan. *Louisa May Alcott*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011. Print.

One of the foremost, modern biographies of Louisa May Alcott.

Ardis, Ann L. *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990. Print.

An exploration of how female writers and their works were received in the 19th Century.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979. Print.

A feminist approach to how women responded and wrote about suppression and patriarchy in the 19th Century.

Gorsky, Susan Rubinow. *Femininity to Feminism: Women and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992, Print.

A study of the relationship between what women wanted in the 19th Century and what they wrote.

Flood, Alison. *Publishing industry is overwhelmingly white and female, US study finds*. The Guardian. London, UK. 2016.

US study by Lee and Low Books explore who publishes books in 2016.

Harper, Judith E. *Women During the Civil War, and Encyclopedia*. Routledge. New York. 2004. 17 Nov. 2016.

An exploration of women during the civil war and its social and cultural impact.

### **Life in the North and in Alcott's world**

Cimbala, Paul A. *The Northern Home Front During the Civil War*. Westport: Praeger, 2012. Print.

A overview of how the Civil War affected the northern states economically and socially. As well as information on the daily lives of non-combatives.

Giesberg, Judith Ann. *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2009. Print.

An examination of working class women's struggles on the homefront, this study specializes on families while the male was away during the war.

Strickland, Charles. *Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa May Alcott*. University, Alabama: U of Alabama P, 1985.

An examination of how Alcott was influenced, while at the same time explored and criticized Victorian society in Massachusetts.

### The Civil War

Hyslop, Stephen G. *Atlas of Civil War: A Comprehensive Guide to the Tactics and Terrain of Battle*. Hanover, NH: National Geographic Society, 2008. Print.

A complete history of the US Civil War, with a mainly military focus.

Weigley, Russell Frank. *A Great Civil War: A Military and Political History, 1861-1865*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000. Print.

A military and political history of the civil war, highlights on the political and social Implications allow this book to be multifaceted.

### Musical Theatre Research

Jones, John Bush. *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theater*. Hanover: Brandeis UP, Published by UP of New England, 2003. Print.

An history of musical theatre from the 19th Century to present and how they engage with culture and politics.

Wolf, Stacy Ellen. *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.

An examination of female characters, writers and actors and how they have developed and changed the world from the 1950s to Present.

### Review Resources

Albuquerque Journal. *Review: Little Women the Musical*. Albuquerque, 20 Oct. 2007. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

Talks about the breakup of the orchestra and notes several of the outstanding songs, including "Off to Massachusetts.". Also notes the slow scene changes.

Bickerstaff, R. *Review: Little women at acacia theatre*. Urban Milwaukee, 15 Jun. 2009. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

Talks about how the audience might react to the musical if they have read the novel. It also talks briefly about the nuances of Jo's performance and talks about production doubling.

Brantley, B. (2005, January 24). *A Tomboy with gumption (and her sisters)*. New York Times. 24 Jan. 2005. Web. 10 Nov. 2016.

The New York Times coverage of the original Broadway production.

BROADWAY. *Were New York drama critics astonished by little women?* 24 Jan. 2005. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

A collection of highlights from the original Broadway production.

Donovan, Deborah. *'Little Women' energizes the stage at Marriott Theatre*. Daily Herald, 13 Dec. 2007. Web. 24 Oct. 2016

This review centers on several of the show stopping numbers including “Astonishing” and “Some Things Are Meant To Be”. The set was very sparse as it was a round stage. According to this review, this musical is filled with “lessons for young women.”

Maclean, Colin. *Little women: The Broadway musical is 'sumptuous'*. Toronto Sun, 5 Jun. 2011. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

This production mentions the cast size of 17, “backed by an orchestra of 13. production “captures the sweep of the times but maintains the intimacy of the March family.”

Marks, P. (2006, June 30). *“Little women”: Girls gone mild*. Washington Post, 30 June 2006. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

The review comments on the excruciatingly amount of time this production took. Does praise the strong performance of Marmee and the Professor. However, this reviewer had some harsh comments about the group “blood and gut scenes,” apparently they lacked the comedic error that was the author's intent.

Osenlund, Katheryn. *A Curtain Up Philadelphia Review Little Women, The Broadway Musical*”. CurtainUp, May 2011. Web. 15 Oct. 2016.

Philadelphia reviewer Kathryn Osenlund describes this musical as “definitely for the grownup”. Highlights she makes, note of a 4 person orchestra playing 10 instruments.

Rooney, David. *Review: 'Little Women: The Musical'* Variety Magazine, 23 Jan. 2005.

A very in depth examination of the original Broadway production. Talks about the music, cast and has a nice section on the set. Certainly, this strikes a nice balance between the negatives and positives of this first production.

Schupmann, Melinda. *Backstage. Little women: The Broadway musical*. 25 Nov. 2009. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

Praises several minor songs and doesn't praise the big hit numbers, also makes note of a minimalistic set.

Simons, John. *Twisted Sisters*. New York Magazine, Jan 2005. Web. 24 Oct. 2016.

Review of the original Broadway. This review makes several rude comments about the production, and does make several comments about the set and dance that are interesting to note.

Silk, C. *Review: TheatreZone's "little women" soars with song, brims with emotion*. 9 Mar.

2012. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

This review has glowing things to say about this production. While critical of the original Broadway production, this review maintains that TheatreZone strived to find the nuggets and make them shine. A “crescendo of violins and a heaping side of melodrama” and add to that “12 triple espressos” and you have this production of *Little Women*. Also talks about orchestra, accents and lighting.

Zacher, S. *REVIEW: Little women: The musical (NightBlue theater)*. 30 Nov. 2010. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

This review once again makes comments on the writers of the musical rather irrelevant to the production. This does offer some insights into, perhaps, how to market the show, or how not to; and makes comments on its length at 2.5 hours.

### **Costume Resources**

Seleshanko, K. (2008). *60 Civil War-Era Fashion Patterns*. United States: Dover Publications. 2008. Print.

Taken from *Peterson's Magazine*, a fashion magazine for women, these 60 fashion patterns explore women's clothing during the Civil War.

Shep, R L, Peter Dervis, and W S. Salisbury. *Civil War Gentlemen: 1860s Apparel Arts & Uniforms*. Mendocino, CA: R.L. Shep, 1994. Print.

Explores both civilian and military male fashion during the Civil War period.

### **Design Resources**

Provencher, Virginia Marie SCENE DESIGN OF LITTLE WOMEN THE MUSICAL, San Diego State University, Spring 2012. Web. 24 Oct. 2016.

Full scene design proposal and work though for the 2012 San Diego State University production of *Little Women*.



**List of Deadlines:**

Initial Response, September 2016

Journey Map, October 2016

List of Potential Cuts, October 2016

Reviews, November 2016

Auditions, November 28th, 2016

Critical Articles, December 2016

Callbacks, January 15th 2017

Website and Actor Packets, February 2017

Audience and Lobby Display Development with PR Director, February 2017

Program Notes and V-File to PR Director, March 2017