

# Fort Wayne youththeatre

## Education Guide



MAKING LITTLE WOMEN:

Louisa  
May  
Alcott



2021-22 SEASON

# Fort Wayne youtheatre

About Us...

As the fifth oldest active children's theatre in the nation, Youtheatre is dedicated to its mission to "educate, engage and entertain" through quality theatrical experiences. In 1934, Dr. Clive McAllister, president of the Old Fort Players (now the Civic Theatre), appointed a committee to create a junior or children's theater branch of the organization. The committee established the philosophy that the new "Children's Theatre" would develop poise, better diction, and self-esteem for children through dramatic instruction. They would give at least one play a year, and awaken enthusiasm in children for beauty in art and integrity in dramatic literature.

The first class began with an enrollment of a whopping 40 students, each of which paid just \$1.00 for 8 classes! The first production, "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," was performed at the Majestic Theatre in Fort Wayne and had a cast of 75 young people. Tickets were only 10 cents for children and 25 cents for adults.

In 1954, the Majestic Theatre was deemed unsafe for children by the fire department and so the Children's Theatre spent the next 10 years at various locations in the city. By the time it rejoined the Civic Theatre at the Old Palace Theatre, it had a new name, the "Fort Wayne Youtheatre." In 1973, both organizations moved to their current home in the Arts United Center on E. Main Street in downtown Fort Wayne. The Youtheatre became autonomous in 1984.

In 1978, Broadway star Harvey Cocks became the Executive Director of Youtheatre. Even after retiring from that position, Harvey has remained as our Artist in Residence; and after 40+ years, he is still inspiring young actors and actresses! In 2010, he was joined by Leslie Hormann, who served as Executive/Artistic Director until 2018.

Youtheatre is currently managed by Executive/Artistic Director Todd Espeland, who came to us in 2018 after serving as Artistic Director of the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre. He is joined by Assistant Director/Director of Outreach Christopher J. Murphy and Administrative Assistant/Marketing Director Megan Ebbeskotte and a staff of outstanding local artists who serve as teachers, guest directors, choreographers, music directors and designers.

For over three quarters of a century, Youtheatre has produced classes, camps and theatrical productions for the artists and audiences of northeast Indiana. Our touring "Youtheatre-On-The-Go" troupe takes literature-based shows into the community, performing in hospitals, libraries, community centers and more. In 2018, our Linda L. Ruffolo "Young Heroes of Conscience" Series, which has spotlighted the likes of Anne Frank, Ryan White, Harriet Tubman and Ruby Bridges, won the "Mayor's Arts Award."



# ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTION

## SETS

The scenery pieces that form the area in which the performers act out the play. Sometimes scenery is very realistic, making the audience think they are inside a real house, for example. Other times the scenery is quite fanciful or limited. What different sets can you name in the show? What time and place does it look like?

## LIGHTS

The lighting instruments that help to create the right atmosphere on the stage. Lights direct the attention of the audience to specific areas of the stage or to a specific performer. The lights may be different colors to add special effects such as nighttime or a storm. How do the lights in this production show changes in the time and place?

## PROPS

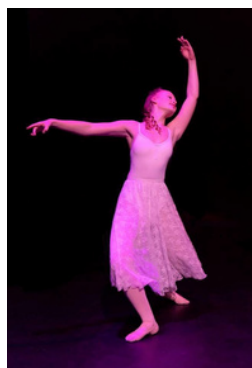
The objects performers carry to help them act out the story. Look for important props that help define character or place. Can you name a few?

## MAKE-UP

The cosmetic bases, blushes, lipsticks, mascara and eye liners which helps the performer physically become the character he/she is playing. Make-up is also used so that the performers facial features can be seen clearly under the bright stage lights from a distance. Do you notice any special make-up in the show?

## COSTUMES

The clothing the performers wear. Depending on the story being acted out, this clothing may be what a character of the time would have actually worn. It may also be very exaggerated or fantastic in the case of a dream or a fairy-tale. Costumes help the audience know what a character is like or where and when he/she lived. Are the costumes drab or colorful? Do they look realistic? What do they tell you about the time and place?





# MEET *the* TEAM

## **GREGORY STIEBER, DIRECTOR & PLAYWRIGHT**

GREGORY STIEBER has been with Youtheatre for more than 25 years as an actor, teacher, playwright and director. He is the creator of our "Linda L. Ruffolo Young Heroes of Conscience Series," writing & directing MARY'S STORY, THE KID FROM KOKOMO, RUBY BRIDGES, REMEMBERING ANNE, AFTER THE MIRACLE, BUILDING THE DREAM and more. He has directed for Civic, Arena & Fort Wayne Ballet. His other creations include STAR CROSSED for the Fort Wayne Dance Collective, AN EVENING OF HAMLET for the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and I WILL WAIT: The Veterans Spouse Project with George John Productions. He was named Artist of the Year by Arts United in 2011, 2015 and 2020. He was also awarded "One of the Righteous" from the Jewish Federation for his continued dedication to social justice through theatre.

## **MICHELE DEVINNEY, PLAYWRIGHT**

Michele DeVinney has been writing about the Fort Wayne arts community for almost three decades. In 2021, after 25 years as a features writer for Whatzup, she left to launch her own blog, Fort Wayne Currents ([fortwaynecurrents.com](http://fortwaynecurrents.com)). MAKING LITTLE WOMEN is her first effort as a playwright, and she thanks Gregory Stieber for the remarkable opportunity to collaborate with him. In her spare time, she is a student at Penn State World Campus, working to earn a graduate certificate in Children's Literature, and she is Mama to her three children plus a growing list of stepdaughters and in-laws. Most importantly, she is Gaga to three delightful children: Lucie, Gatsby, and Imogen. Her love of literature and education has made this experience particularly rewarding, and she hopes everyone will find themselves motivated to read the classic works of Louisa May Alcott.



### *Q: What does a Director do?*

**A:** A Director collaborates with and supervises all the other members of the production team (sets, lights, costumes, etc.) to make sure everyone is working together to tell the same story. He or she also directs the movement of the performers and helps them develop characters and relationships. In short, the Director is THE BOSS.

### *Q: What does a Playwright do?*

**A:** A Playwright is the author of the play. This may be one person or a team. It may take many years for a Playwright to perfect their work through readings, workshops and productions.



# THE LINDA L. RUFFOLO YOUNG HEROES OF CONSCIENCE



**2015**

THE KID FROM KOKOMO:  
Ryan White



**2016**

RUBY  
BRIDGES



**2017**

REMEMBERING ANNE:  
Anne Frank



**2018**

YOUNG  
HARRIETT TUBMAN



**2019**

AFTER THE MIRACLE:  
Helen Keller



**2020**

BUILDING THE DREAM:  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



**2021:**

THE YOUNG  
HEROES OF 2020

**Linda L. Ruffolo** was an amazing advocate for the City of Fort Wayne, a tireless volunteer and a caring friend to many. During her 42 years as a member of our community, she dedicated her passion, time and talent to an extensive list of volunteer roles with such organizations as Arts United, The Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Study Connection, Forte Festival, The Fort Wayne Ballet and Fort Wayne Youtheatre.

Youtheatre is proud to honor her legacy of service with this series of plays dedicated to social justice, good works and the positive impact that even the youngest among us can have on the world.

# BIOGRAPHY:

## Louisa May Alcott

**Louisa May Alcott was an American writer in the 1800s. She wrote *Little Women* and other books that were not published in her name. Her writing for young adults is still very popular today.**



### Louisa's Childhood

Louisa was born in 1832 in Pennsylvania, USA. She was the second of four daughters: Anna Bronson Alcott was the eldest; Elizabeth Sewall Alcott and Abigail May Alcott were the two youngest. Louisa did not go to school. Her father was a teacher and taught her at home until 1848. Her mother was a social worker. Well-known people, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry David Thoreau were family friends and taught her lessons.

### What happened in Louisa's life?

Louisa's family did not have much money, and this meant that she was forced to work from an early age. Louisa worked at many jobs, including as a teacher, seamstress, governess, domestic helper, and writer.

During the Civil war (1860), she moved to Washington D.C to work as a nurse for 6 weeks because she got typhoid and became very ill.

In 1858 her younger sister died and her older sister married.

### Louisa's Writing Career

Louisa published work in her own name, but she also published work using other names, Flora Fairfield and A.M Barnard.

Louisa's novel, *Little Women*, is very well known and is based on Louisa's childhood experiences with her three sisters. In *Little Women*, Alcott based her heroine "Jo" on herself. But whereas Jo marries at the end of the story, Alcott remained single throughout her life.

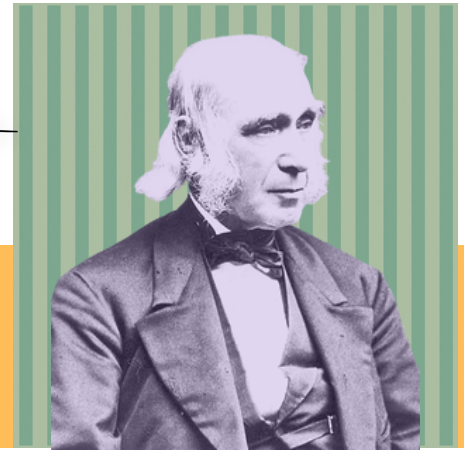
### Later years

Louisa was very ill and had health problems due to side effects from a mercury treatment 20 years prior. She had a stroke, and died aged 55, 2 days after her father had died.

# BIOGRAPHY:

## Amos Bronson Alcott

**Amos Bronson Alcott, Louisa's father, was an American teacher, writer, philosopher, and reformer. He was also an abolitionist and an advocate for women's rights.**



### Early Life

Born in Wolcott, Connecticut in 1799, Alcott had only minimal formal schooling before attempting a career as a traveling salesman. Worried about how the itinerant life might have a negative impact on his soul, he turned to teaching.

### Teaching

His innovative methods, however, were controversial, and he rarely stayed in one place very long. His most well-known teaching position was at the Temple School in Boston. As an educator, Alcott pioneered new ways of interacting with young students, focusing on a conversational style, and avoided traditional punishment. He hoped to perfect the human spirit and, to that end, advocated a plant-based diet. His experience there was turned into two books: *Records of a School* and *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*. Alcott became friends with Ralph Waldo Emerson and became a major figure in transcendentalism. His writings on behalf of that movement, however, are heavily criticized for being incoherent.

### Later Years

Based on his ideas for human perfection, Alcott founded Fruitlands, a transcendentalist experiment in community living. The project failed after seven months. Alcott struggled financially for most of his life. Nevertheless, he continued focusing on educational projects and opened a new school at the end of his life in 1879. He died in 1888.

### Family

Alcott married Abby May in 1830 and they eventually had four surviving children, all daughters. Their second was Louisa May, who fictionalized her experience with the family in her novel *Little Women* in 1868.



# SUMMARY:

# Little Women

**Little Women, Louisa May Alcott's most famous novel, was originally published in two parts in 1868 and 1869. The semi-autobiographical, coming-of-age novel was an immediate commercial and critical success.**



The story is about the fictional March sisters: Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy, and their mother, whom they call Marmee. The story is set during the American Civil War. Their father is serving as a chaplain in the Union Army. Each sister has a fundamental flaw: Amy is selfish, Beth is shy, Meg is vain, and Jo is outspoken and tomboy-ish. Their best friend is Laurie, the boy who lives next door.

Alcott's inspiration for Little Women came from her life experiences when she was younger. The setting is in Massachusetts, the state where she grew up. The characters in the story represent her sisters, mother, and herself. Marmee was in charge of the household when the father was away.

It tells of the hard times that they had growing up and the struggles that the sisters had to overcome. The sisters learned to grow up faster than they wanted to, so that they could support the family. Their lives were not easy, but the story is about love, family, and growing up.

## SOME OF THE MANY ADAPTATIONS OF LOUISA'S FAMOUS NOVEL



1949 Film

LITTLE WOMEN  
OPERA IN TWO ACTS  
by  
Mark Adamo  
(piano-vocal score)



1998 Opera

LITTLE WOMEN  
the musical



2005 Musical



2019 Film

**PUT YOU IN YOUTHEATRE!**

Fort Wayne Youtheatre

# ACADEMY

of Performing Arts

**Where Creativity Plays**

**Classes Available for Ages 3-18**



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Voice | Tech Theatre**

**Fall & Spring Semester Classes  
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Summer Camps**

*\*Financial Aid is available. Apply Online.*



**Find more info at  
[www.FortWayneYoutheatre.org](http://www.FortWayneYoutheatre.org)**



# ACTIVITY: CREATE YOUR STORY

*Little Women* was deeply influenced by the events and emotions of Louisa May Alcott's life, and is considered a semi-autobiographical novel. This activity allows students to bring certain influential moments of their story to life.



Imagery is an essential part of communicating one's experiences. In this activity, students will practice breaking down an event into incremental moments or snapshots:

- Start by having students brainstorm an important event in their lives .
- Then, they will plan a freeze frame vignette of one moment of the event.
  - To do so, students can first break down the event into a series of snapshots in their mind.
  - Then, they can jot down words or simple sketches to show a single snapshot on paper.
  - Partner students and instruct them to discuss the scenes in detail. The purpose of their discussion is to identify the one moment that stands out as both powerful and visually engaging.
- Then tell students how they could set up a "live" vignette.
  - For example, in *Little Women*, there is a scene where Amy falls into the pond while ice skating. This vignette could be played out with one student acting as Amy, falling dramatically to the floor; one student acting as Jo, reaching to save Amy; and one student acting as Laurie, looking shocked and afraid.

## DISCUSSION TOPIC:

**Do YOU think the traditional "little women" roles celebrated in Louisa May Alcott's novel are outdated in today's society?**



# POP QUIZ:

## TEST YOUR MEMORY

See how much you remember from the performance of **MAKING LITTLE WOMEN: LOUISA MAY ALCOTT** with this brief quiz on the play, the plot and characters.



- Why doesn't Kat like Little Women?
  - It's overdone
  - It's dated
  - She can't relate to it
  - All of the above
- What classic book is Zach adapting for his play?
  - To Kill a Mockingbird*
  - The Outsiders*
  - Lord of the Flies*
  - Huckleberry Finn*
- Maya is an escaped slave: true or false?
  - True
  - False
- Where are Elise, Lucinda, Violet, and Zelma meeting for their book club?
  - Their school library
  - Elise's living room
  - The Allen County Public Library
  - Cindy's Diner
- What is the name of the law that required escaped slaves like Thomas Sims to be sent back to their 'owners'?
  - The 13th Amendment
  - The Fugitive Slave Act
  - The Missouri Compromise
  - The Freedman's Bureau Act
- Why did Elizabeth and Maya quit from the factory?
  - To stand in solidarity with the fired escapees
  - Their wages were unfair
  - Their shifts were too long
  - Sebastian treated them poorly
- Why was Fatima leaving school?
  - Her parents couldn't afford tuition
  - She was being bullied
  - She doesn't want to be a dramaturge anymore
  - Her family is being deported
- What has happened to Thomas?
  - He has been set free
  - He wants to help Louisa write her book
  - He has been captured
  - He is living with the Alcotts
- In the final battle of Zach's play, who wins?
  - The Greasers
  - The Soc's
- In the end, does Kat still find *Little Women* irrelevant?
  - Yes
  - No
  - It's unclear

## ANSWER KEY

- Q1: d: All of the above  
 Q2: b: the Outsiders  
 Q3: a: True  
 Q4: c: The Allen County Public Library  
 Q5: b: The Fugitive Slave Act  
 Q6: a: To stand in solidarity  
 Q7: d: Her family is being deported  
 Q8: c: He has been captured  
 Q9: a: The Greasers  
 Q10: c: It's unclear

**COMING  
SOON...**

**PERFORMANCES:  
MAY 6-8**

**SCHOOL SHOW:  
MAY 8**

Fort Wayne  
**youthatre**



# *Suggested Reading...*

LITTLE WOMEN by Louisa May Alcott

LITTLE MEN by Louisa May Alcott

THE REVELATION OF LOUISA MAY ALCOTT by Michaela MacColl

MEG, JO, BETH & AMY (a graphic novel) by Rey Terciero

POLLYANNA by Eleanor H. Porter



For a full list of books by Louisa May Alcott, books related to, inspired by or in the genre of LITTLE WOMEN, check out our full Reading List for readers of all ages courtesy of the Allen County Public Library.



# LANGUAGE ARTS

## STANDARDS

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Most Youtheatre productions are literature-based and on the recommended reading list of the Library of Congress.

Language Arts Standard: Perceive, identify, describe and analyze the distinguishing characteristics of form, structure and style of story.

- Retell story identifying plot, theme, characters, and setting.
- Recall story plot utilizing chronological order.

Language Arts Standard: Evaluate Theatre/Literary work based on critical perception and analysis.

- Share perception of theatre experience in the area of voice, movement, mood and motivation.
- Make suggestions for alternative endings.
- Analyze and critique story and performance through creative writing.
- Create a similar story through creative writing.

Language Arts Standard: Use Theatre /Literary work to develop affective areas of self-concept, problem solving and interpersonal skills.

- React to feelings of self and others within a production.
- Identify conflict within story as it relates to self and others.
- Compare and contrast problems and resolutions found in different stories and real life situations.
- Express personal attitudes, values, and belief systems as it relates to theatre piece.
- Interact freely in conversations, class discussions and dramatic activities.
- Contribute to the solving of problems through dramatization/improvisation.

Language Arts Standard: Examine Theatre /Literary work in a historical and multicultural context.

- Identify similarities and differences between characters from diverse cultures depicted.
- Identify historical differences/figures in different time frames depicted in story.
- Identify significance of historical aspects in story.

Exploring Aesthetics: A Philosophical Basis for Life!

- Attending live theatre helps children value its importance to the community and helps develop a lifelong commitment and love of Theatre and Literature. Students experience aesthetic growth through appreciation of Theatre.
- Students discover through experience that making art is an essential human activity. It requires collaboration, and enhances creative thinking.

