

DRAMATURGY PROGRAM NOTE

“I want to do something splendid before I go into my castle, something heroic or wonderful that won't be forgotten after I'm dead. I don't know what, but I'm on the watch for it, and mean to astonish you all some day.”

- “Jo” in *Little Women*

In May of 1868, Louisa May Alcott embarked on a 10-week journey at the writing desk of her family home in Concord, Massachusetts. This was a journey of wit, determination, and countless sleepless nights to complete a novel inspired by her own childhood experiences- one surrounding a determined writer experiencing the weight of familial duty while longing to rebel against society's views on femininity.

Since the work's original publication 158 years ago, Alcott's novel has lived up to Jo's dream of accomplishing something that “won't be forgotten after I'm dead.” Through countless adaptations—including the one we share with you today—the story has established its place as a classic in American literature, serving not only as a time capsule of Concord, Massachusetts in the 1860s, but also a story of femininity, family, sacrifice, and love. The novel's universal themes allow these adaptations to change focus and reach new audiences, while still honoring the original story. This musical is no exception. Allan Knee, Mindi Dickstein, and Jason Howland's adaptation offers a unique perspective by eliminating many of the tales of the sisters found in the novel and instead centering Jo, allowing the audience to follow the story of her family and the world from her distinctive point of view.

The dramaturgical work we have done through this production has centered around discovering ways to merge those beloved tales of the March family with the musical adaptation. Through individual table work, dissection of both the libretto and original text, and group discussions expanding upon the moments from the novel that the musical presents us, we have been able to deeply explore this staged adaptation and the immense and unspoken details of the lives of the characters within. Through this process, not only have we had the opportunity to dissect life in Concord and New York in the 1860s, but also the stories of these sisters which Alcott so lovingly writes of.

We are honored to have you here today to spend a moment with us in Concord. To experience the love, loss, triumph, and despair of Alcott's work that we have had the joy of working so intimately with throughout this process.

-Annie Brown, Dramaturg