

Latitude 38 presents

WINNER OF THE DRAMA CRITICS' CIRCLE AWARD FOR BEST MUSICAL
TONY AWARD® NOMINEE FOR BEST REVIVAL OF A MUSICAL

VIOLET

MUSIC BY **JEANINE TESORI**

LYRICS & BOOK BY **BRIAN CRAWLEY**

BASED ON *THE UGLIEST PILGRIM* BY DORIS BETTS

Sponsored by
Woodard Properties

Directed by
Perry Medlin

Music Direction by
Katherine Nies
Graeme Rosner
Laura Collier

NOV 18-DEC 10



livearts.org

VIOLET is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.

STUDY GUIDE

VIOLET

With music by Jeanine Tesori and lyrics and book by Brian Crawley
November 18 - December 11, 2022, in the Gibson Theater
Directed and Choreographed by Perry Medlin

The play runs for approximately 2 hours with a 20-minute intermission.

“VIOLET reveals a place where miracles occur—the world as we’d like to see it, where we all are seen for who we are.” – *Los Angeles Times*

“Heart-stirring ... with its tangy flavors of country, gospel, blues and honky-tonk rock” – *New York Times*

“VIOLET is a small musical of big ideas. Its spectacle comes in its writing and in the opportunity for singing actors to play intriguing characters. This production is not to be missed.” – *BroadwayWorld*

“As musicals go, the story couldn't be simpler. Yet the material couldn't be richer... Of course, from the start, you know [Violet's] on a fool's journey. But you'll never regret taking the ride.” – *Entertainment Weekly*

“[Violet] sings, 'I am on my way.' Buckle your seatbelts, folks. So are you. And what a wonderful trip it is.” – *NY Daily News*

Study Guide compiled for Live Arts by Education Director Ti Ames



Rehearsal photo by Will Kerner featuring (foreground, L-R): Davina Jackson, Jeannie Jones, Mary Catherine Hughes, Bernadette Moran, and Chris Estey; background features ensemble members.

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Plot Summary

Based on the short story "The Ugliest Pilgrim" by Doris Betts, VIOLET centers around a young woman embarking on a long journey full of hope and dreams of a new beginning. Violet has a large scar on her face due to a childhood accident and it has, quite literally, scarred her life. Having run out of all medical options, she now pins all her hopes on a miracle cure from a famous TV preacher in Tulsa, Oklahoma. On her journey of self-discovery, she meets two soldiers, Flick and Monty. As they travel on together, Violet learns the true meaning of beauty, love, and what it means to be an outsider. Her miracle cure does not come through, but Violet experiences a form of healing that is infinitely more valuable.

Play Structure

Violet is traditionally performed with an almost-bare stage and a collection of chairs.

Time & Setting

VIOLET is set in 1964, with several flashbacks to Violet's childhood. The story begins in Spruce Pine, N.C., as Violet travels south to Tulsa, Oklahoma, on a Greyhound bus, with many stops along the way!

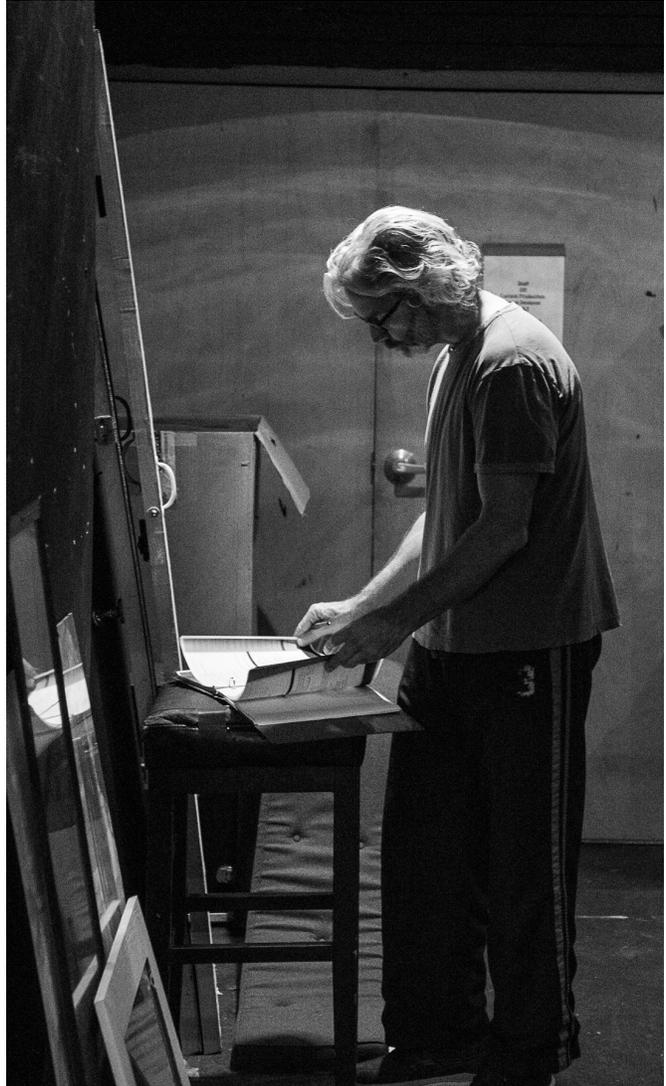
Characters

Violet: The title character, a young North Carolina woman whose face was scarred in a childhood accident. She is stubborn and prickly, but filled with equal parts hope and obsession that she may heal and be made beautiful.

Flick: An African-American soldier; a dreamer and go-getter. He doesn't enjoy the army, but enjoys the respect it garners him. There is something gentle, good about him, not to be interpreted or confused with weakness or lack of authority.

Monty: A paratrooper and Flick's friend from basic training. Rough around the edges. Self-consumed, but not necessarily purposefully so. Fighting his own demons.

Young Vi: Not quite as guarded or prickly as her older self, but still tough and stubborn. She has a keen curiosity and the rough edges of being brought up solely by her father.



Rehearsal Photo by Will Kerner featuring Chris Estey.

Father: A simple, widowed man who lovingly raises his daughter, Violet, alone, doing the best he can with the little knowledge and resources he has to do so. Stern but friendly, smart but uneducated. Accidentally scars Violet's face while he is chopping wood.

Old Lady: A former beauty in her heyday. Staunch, tired and frustrated with life.

Preacher: An impassioned, theatrical man who preaches with all the bravado he can muster. Once had a true healing touch but has lost it in his quest to become a showman.

Virgil: The Preacher's assistant. Knows the smoke & mirrors of the Preacher's show and must begrudgingly deal with anyone who might derail it.

Music Hall Singer: The singer at the dance hall in Memphis.

Lulu Buffington: A member of the volunteer choir that sings for the Preacher's telecast. Sings for God with passion and power. African-American.

Almeta, the Landlady: An older, African-American woman who runs the hotel in Memphis.

Leroy Evans: A citizen of Spruce Pine with a dog named Roscoe. Not very bright.

Many actors play other ensemble roles, including bus passengers and drivers , radio singers, a hotel hooker, and Billy Dean.



Rehearsal Photo by Will Kerner featuring (l-r): Thad Lane, Daniel Hugus, and Mary Catherine Hughes.

About The Composer



Jeanine Tesori has written music for Broadway, opera, film, and television. She is one of the first female composers commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, and ASCAP cites her as the first female composer to have two new musicals running concurrently on Broadway. Her musicals include *Fun Home* (Tony Award for best original score, Pulitzer finalist); *Soft Power* (Pulitzer finalist); *Caroline, or Change* (Olivier Award for Best New Musical; lyrics, Tony Kushner); *Violet* (four Tony nominations including Best Musical Revival); *Shrek* (lyrics, David Lindsay-Abaire); *Thoroughly Modern Millie*; and *Twelfth Night*. Her operas include *Blue*; *A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck*; *The Lion, The Unicorn and Me*; and the upcoming *Grounded*. Tesori's music for plays includes

Mother Courage, John Guare's *A Free Man of Color*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Tesori is the founding artistic director of New York City Center's Encores! Off Center series, a lecturer at Yale University, and the supervising vocal producer for Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*. Most recently, she composed the music for the new musical *Kimberly Akimbo*, with book and lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire, which opened on Broadway October 12, 2022.

About the Book-Writer & Lyricist

Brian Crawley is an award-winning American playwright and screenwriter. His work includes the book and lyrics for *A Little Princess* (composer Andrew Lippa); *Violet* (composer Jeanine Tesori); *Evangeline* (Ted Dykstra); and *Down There* (composer Lewis Flinn). In the documentary *One Night Stand*, Crawley writes a short musical in 24 hours with composer Gabriel Kahane. His awards include the Kleban Award, the Richard Rodgers Musical Production Award, an AT&T OnStage Award, Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Musical, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical (all for *Violet*). His plays have been developed or staged at



Lincoln Center, New York Theater Workshop, the National Alliance of Musical Theatre, and the Eugene O'Neill summer theater conference.

Performance History

Begun in 1994 by Tesori and Crawley at the famed Lehman Engel/BMI Musical Theater Workshop, VIOLET continued development at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Connecticut before premiering Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons in 1997. In July 2013, the musical returned to New York as a one-night, limited engagement production mounted by the Encores! Off-Center program, featuring Sutton Foster in the title role. That critically acclaimed production led to a 2014 Broadway run in a revised version by Roundabout Theatre Company, with Foster reprising her role. VIOLET continues to be performed regionally around the country, including at Chicago's Mercury Theatre, Ford's Theatre of Washington, D.C., and Seattle's A Contemporary Theater.



Promotional Photo by Will Kerner featuring (l-r): Mary Catherine Hughes and Thad Lane.

[To Have The Scar, Or Not to Have The Scar...](#)

VIOLET's story revolves around the young main character who suffered an accident as a child that has left her with a horrific scar on her left cheek. Violet sets out on her journey in order to rid herself of this scar. According to Playbill.com, VIOLET's original Broadway director Leigh Silverman "specifically set out to make the scar a metaphor in which everyone could relate to." Because of this, the scar itself on Violet's face is not visible to the audience. Silverman states, "We all have trauma from our childhood that we're trying to work through and accept and understand, and I feel like the story works literally, but it also works as metaphor. In the most exciting tradition of theatricality, I felt like it was better to not show that scar and to instead challenge the audience to use their imagination and use their creativity to understand the story that we're presenting. I'm

just so grateful every night when I look at that audience and they're leaning in to follow that story. That is what we hope for."

In accordance with the tradition set about by the original Broadway production, the Live Arts production of VIOLET will also not feature a physical scar on Violet's face.

Further Reading

[Doris Betts, a Greyhound Bus, and an Academy Award – Southern Sources](#)



Promotional photo by Will Kerner featuring Mary Catherine Hughes.

Talkback Information

The audience talkback for Live Arts' VIOLET is scheduled for 9:40pm on Thursday, December 8, 2022, in the Gibson Theater (123 E. Water St., 2nd floor) with members of the cast and crew, facilitated by Education Director Ti Ames. You do not have to purchase a ticket to the show on December 8 to attend the talkback. This program is provided free of charge to the Charlottesville community. Please email Education Director Ti Ames at ti@livearts.org with questions about the event.

Works Cited

[PLAYBILL ON OPENING NIGHT: Violet – Saviors, Scars and Sutton](#)

[Violet | Music Theatre International](#)

[Violet \(Musical\) Plot & Characters | StageAgent](#)



Rehearsal photo by Will Kerner featuring (l-r): Chris Estey, Hillel Finder, Jeannie Jones, James Scales, and Mary Catherine Hughes.