



FUN HOME

EDUCATION PACK

COMPILED AND EDITED BY BEN O'BRIEN-LIMMER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER: ANNA RICHARDSON
GRAPHIC DESIGN: GEORGIA BINGHAM

SEASON SPONSOR



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ABOUT THE MUSICAL

Fun Home is a groundbreaking musical that explores themes of family, identity, and self-discovery. Based on Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir of the same name, the musical offers a moving and introspective look at her upbringing in a small Pennsylvania town. The narrative is centered around Alison's relationship with her father, Bruce, a complex man who runs the family's funeral home—referred to as the "fun home."

The story unfolds through a series of non-linear vignettes, exploring Alison's memories at three different stages of her life: Small Alison, a young girl discovering her love for drawing and her emerging sense of self; Medium Alison, a college student grappling with her sexual orientation; and Adult Alison, a successful cartoonist reflecting on her past. This unique storytelling technique allows audiences to witness the interplay between past and present, and how Alison's understanding of her father and herself evolves over time.



NEED SUPPORT?

SOME OF THE CONTENT IN *FUN HOME* MAY BE TRIGGERING, CHALLENGING OR DISTRESSING.

If you need to talk with someone regarding the topics raised by this show the following organisations can offer help and support:

Need to talk?

Free call or text **1737**.

Talk with a trained counsellor, 24 hours a day.

Lifeline

0800 543 354 (0800 Lifeline)

Or free text **HELP** to **4357**, 24 hours a day.

Youthline

0800 376 633

Free text **234** or email **talk@youthline.co.nz**, 24 hours a day.



You can find more resources and helplines through the QR Code above or by searching **mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines**

FUN HOME

MUSIC BY JEANINE TESORI
BOOK AND LYRICS BY LISA KRON
BASED ON THE GRAPHIC NOVEL BY ALISON BECHDEL

CAST / KAHUI KIRIWHAKAARI

CHARACTER

Alison Bechdel
Bruce Bechdel
Helen Bechdel
Medium Alison
Joan
Roy/Mark/Pete/Bobby Jeremy
Small Alison
Small Alison
Christian
Christian
John
John

PERFORMED BY

Kelly Hocking
Michael Lee Porter
Juliet Reynolds-Midgley
Emma Katene
Lily Bourne
Isaac Pawson
Carla Ladstaetter
Eden Taylor
Ben Cumberpatch
Erik Misnyovszki
Barnaby Domigan
Franklin Domigan

COVERS

Alison/Helen Bechdel
Bruce Bechdel
Roy/Mark/Pete/Bobby Jeremy
Medium Alison/Joan

Hillary Moulder
Roy Snow
Cameron Clayton
Tōmairangi
Paterson-Waaka

BAND

Violin/Viola
Violin/Viola
Cello
Reeds
Drums
Bass
Rehearsal Pianist/MD Cover
Band Cover/Understudy
Band Cover/Understudy

Alisa Smith
Henry Nicholson
Caroline Turner
Claudia Crosland
Zakary Williams
Bradley Grainger
Richard Marrett
Theo Henderson
Craig Given

CREATIVES/RINGATOI

Director

Kathleen Burns

Musical Director

Caelan Thomas

Choreographer

Hillary Moulder

Young Performer Coach

Amy Straker

Set Designer

Hannah McDougall

Set Design Mentor

Mark McEntyre

Costume Designer

Stella Gardner

Costume Construction

Daniella Salazar

Findlay Currie

Annie Graham

Patrice Hammond

Rachel Lenart

Eve Curzon

Julian Southgate

Rochelle Wright

Jo Bunce

Louise Topping

Diana Lines

Marcella Herrera

Maezee Burgess

Jill MacGregor

Lily Burt

Bradley Mutch

Alex Wilson

Matthew Duffy

Edward Roche

Seth Edwards-Ellis

Elise Poussain

Wig Stylist

Lighting Design & Intimacy Coordinator

Sound Designer & Operator

Properties Designer

Properties Assistant

Rehearsal Stage Manager

Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Manager

Chaperones

Production Manager

Set Construction

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Showbiz Christchurch, Kim Ransley of ORiGiN Theatrical, Frankie Leota, John Rhind Funeral Directors, and Tim Bain.

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Nathan Vernon, Mint Theatricals, Elizabeth Armstrong, Jam Theatricals, Delman Whitney,
and Kristin Caskey and Mike Isaacson

The world premiere production of *FUN HOME* was produced by The Public Theater
Okar Eustis, Artistic Director Patrick Willingham, Executive Director
In New York City on October 22nd, 2013

FUN HOME was developed, in part, at the 2012 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak and the 2012 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at the Sundance Resort

FUN HOME is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals. www.concordtheatricals.com

FUN HOME staged at The Court Theatre 10 August to 14 September 2024

THE AUTHORS

THE STORY BEHIND THE TONY AWARD WINNING DUO...

Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron are the dynamic writing duo behind *Fun Home*.

Lisa Kron had decades of theatre-making experience under her belt when she took on the challenge of adapting Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir *Fun Home*. With such lush areas of professional focus, Kron seemed like the perfect choice to adapt Bechdel's book about a young lesbian's coming of age—or at least her friend thought so when she presented Kron with *Fun Home* and the suggestion she create a musical from Bechdel's graphic memoir. The only problem was she had never written a musical before. And she couldn't write music.

That's where Jeanine Tesori came in. Kron felt she was the perfect fit, so she approached Tesori with Bechdel's autobiographical graphic novel about growing up as a young lesbian with a

closeted gay father. Tesori took the book, mulled it over, and eventually came back to Kron saying she didn't think she could picture it as a musical. "And that's why I want to do it," she finished.

Thus began the arduous five-year adaptation process. In an interview with *The Interval*, Tesori shared "We tried to write the traditional opening number for *Fun Home* for three years, and it didn't work and it didn't work and it didn't work." But then it did. After a myriad of readings and workshops, *Fun Home* opened Off Broadway at The Public in 2013 while Kron was simultaneously acting on a different stage at The Public in a production of Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*. *Fun Home* transferred to Broadway two years later. It was a critical smash, garnering 12 Tony nominations and winning five. Kron and Tesori made history as the first all-female team to win for Best Score.



JEANINE TESORI

Jeanine Tesori has written a diverse catalog for Broadway, opera, film and television. Her Broadway musicals include: *Fun Home* (2015 Tony Award Winner, Pulitzer finalist); *Violet; Caroline, or Change; Shrek the Musical; Thoroughly Modern Millie; Twelfth Night* (LCT); *John Guare's A Free Man of Color*. *Delacorte: Mother Courage* (starring Meryl Streep). She has received five Tony nominations, three Obie Awards and three Drama Desk Awards. The hallmarks of her work have been described as "close-to-the-surface emotion, structural rigor and rhythmic drive."

Her operas include: *The Lion, the Unicorn and Me* and *Blizzard on Marblehead Neck* (MET/LCT Opera/Theater and Glimmerglass Opera commission); her upcoming collaboration with Tazewell Thompson, *Blue*, was commissioned for Glimmerglass Opera company and will premiere there next season. She wrote the musical featured in the 2016 revival of *Gilmore Girls* and has also written special material for artists such as *The Girl in 14G* for Kristin Chenoweth and has been featured in the documentaries *Show Business* and *Theater of War*.

Jeanine Tesori became the founding Artistic Director of a new concert series at New York City Center called *Encores! Off-Center*, for which she has helmed seasons joined by artists such as Stephen Sondheim, Lin Manuel-Miranda, Randy Newman, William Finn, Alan Menken, Renee Elise Goldsberry, Sutton Foster and Jonathan Groff. After producing four seasons of *Off-Center* concerts, she took one of those concerts, *Sunday in the Park with George* (starring Jake Gyllenhaal) to Broadway where she produced the 2017 revival, with ATG and Riva Marker. She was the recording producer for *Sunday* as well as the Original Cast Recordings of *Violet; Caroline, or Change; Shrek; Twelfth Night*; etc.

A lecturer in music at Yale and on faculty at Columbia University, Tesori has spoken and taught at universities and programs all over the USA. She is the founding Creative Director of the non-profit A BroaderWay, an arts empowerment program for young women. She was given the Einhorn Mentorship Award by Primary Stages for her exceptional work with young artists. Her daughter, Siena Rafter, is a sophomore at Brown University.

LISA KRON

Lisa Kron is a writer and performer whose work has been widely produced in New York, regionally, and internationally. Her plays include *Well, 2.5 Minute Ride* and *The Ver**zon Play*. She wrote the book and lyrics for the musical *Fun Home* (with music by composer Jeanine Tesori), winner of five 2015 Tony Awards including Best Musical. Lisa and Jeanine were the first all-woman team to ever receive a Tony for best score.

As an actor, Lisa was most recently seen as Mrs. Mi-Tzu and Mrs. Yang in the Foundry Theater's acclaimed production of *Good Person of Szechuan* (Lortel Award, Outstanding Featured Actress). Honors include a Guggenheim fellowship, a Doris Duke Performing Artists Award, and the Cal Arts/Alpert Award. She is a proud founding member of the OBIE- and Bessie-Award-winning collaborative theater company The Five Lesbian Brothers. Lisa currently serves as Secretary of the Dramatists Guild Council and on the boards of the McDowell Colony and the Lilly Awards.

**“FUN HOME
WAS MADE
BY A PERFECT
COLLABORATION
OF EXACTLY THE
RIGHT PEOPLE
TO WORK ON
THIS SHOW”**

- LISA KRON

THE CHARACTERS



“DO YOU FEEL
MY HEART
SAYING HI?”

- ALISON
BECHDEL, *FUN
HOME*

Alison

43 years old, a cartoonist.

Medium Alison

19 years old, a college freshman.

Small Alison

Around 9 years old.

Bruce Bechdel

Alison's father. An English teacher and part-time funeral director.

Helen Bechdel

Alison's mother. A teacher and community theatre actor.

Christian Bechdel

Alison's brother, around 10 years old.

John Bechdel

Alison's brother, around 6 years old.

Roy

A young man Bruce hires to do yard work.

Mark

A high school junior.

Joan

A college student.

Pete

A mourner.

Bobby Jeremy and The Susan Deys

Imaginary television characters.

THE PLOT

WATCH OUT! SPOILERS AHEAD...

Alison is 9, begging her father to play with her. She is 19, overcome by the aching and joyous pain of first love. She is 43, an out lesbian hunting for the truth of her brilliant, volatile, and closeted father's life and death. She is all three at once, trying to untangle the central mystery of her childhood.

Successful middle-aged cartoonist Alison (Alison) works on her memoir in the present day, and as she attempts to pin down her memories recalls two time periods in her life: her childhood, around age 10 (Small Alison) and her first year in college (Medium Alison). Alison's memories come to life through a series of non-linear vignettes.

Alison remembers herself as a child, demanding that her father, Bruce, play "airplane" with her, while he sorts through a box of vintage items he has salvaged from a barn ("It All Comes Back"). Bruce tells the family that someone from the local historical society is coming to see their ornate Victorian home that he has restored. Alison's mother, Helen, gets the house ready according to Bruce's meticulous standards ("Welcome to Our House on Maple Avenue").

On the phone with her father and in a journal entry, Medium Alison expresses her anxiety about starting college ("Not Too Bad"). At the Bechdel Funeral Home, Small Alison and her brothers John and Christian perform an imaginary advertisement for the funeral home ("Come to the Fun Home"). Medium Alison hesitates outside the door of the college's Gay Union and is flustered when she meets the more self-assured Joan. Bruce has hired Roy to do yard work and invites him into the house. Bruce seduces Roy in the library while Helen plays the piano upstairs, trying to ignore what is going on in the other room ("Helen's Etude"). Medium Alison writes a letter to her parents about college life but does not mention Joan or her recent realisation that she is a lesbian.

Bruce orders Small Alison to put on a dress. She would rather wear jeans, but reluctantly obeys him ("Party Dress"). Medium Alison proudly tells Joan that she has written a letter to her parents telling them that she is a lesbian but begins to second-guess herself until Joan kisses her. That night, she is delirious with joy after having had sex with Joan and finally feeling confident in her sexuality ("Changing My Major"). Alison considers the connection between her coming out and her father's death. Small Alison has a homework assignment to draw a map of places her family has lived. Bruce takes over, drawing it the way he thinks it should look. Alison realises that despite having

traveled widely, her father's place of birth, life, work and death can all be placed in a small circle in Beech Creek, Pennsylvania ("Maps"). Bruce offers a ride and a beer to an underage boy, and it is later implied that they had a sexual encounter. Medium Alison writes to her parents, asking for a response to her coming-out letter.

Small Alison watches *The Partridge Family*, but Bruce angrily switches it off. Bruce lets on that he is going to see a psychiatrist, remaining ambiguous about the reason. Alison is angry that he lied to her, knowing now that the reason he was going was because he was arrested for what he did to the underage boy. Helen attempts to reassure Small Alison that the psychiatrist will help her father, but she too refuses to elaborate. Bruce starts a vicious argument with Helen. Small Alison fantasises about her family as the happy family singing together on television ("Raincoat of Love"). Alison remembers a time when Bruce took her and her brothers on a trip to New York City. After a long day, Small Alison, Christian and John settle into sleeping bags. Small Alison wakes up and catches Bruce sneaking out. Bruce sings her a lullaby ("Pony Girl"). He reassures her that he is just going out for a paper. Alison wonders if he were, in fact, out cruising.

Medium Alison is angered by Bruce's ambiguous letter in response to her coming out. At a luncheonette with her father, Small Alison notices a butch delivery woman and is filled with admiration and an instinctive sense of identification ("Ring of Keys"). Medium Alison calls home to demand a better response from her parents. Helen reveals that Bruce has had sexual relationships with men and boys. Alison considers all her family tensions and watches a heated argument between her parents. Medium Alison returns home for vacation with Joan. Helen opens up to Medium Alison about her troubled relationship with Bruce ("Days and Days"). Medium Alison, Joan and Bruce have an unexpectedly pleasant evening around the piano.

Bruce asks Alison if she'd like to go for a drive, and (adult) Alison realises that Medium Alison is gone; she joins her father in the car, breaking the boundaries of time. On the drive, she and Bruce struggle to express themselves to each other ("Telephone Wire"). Bruce, manically engaged in a new restoration project, tries and fails to find a way to hold his life together. He steps in front of a truck and is killed ("Edges of the World").

Alison remembers and draws a moment of perfect balance: playing "airplane" with her father. All the Alisons recall the past together ("Flying Away").

THE

MUSIC



**“MY DAD
AND I WERE
EXACTLY ALIKE.
MY DAD AND I
WERE NOTHING
ALIKE.”**

**- ALISON
BECHDEL, *FUN
HOME***

**Opening
Company**

Welcome to Our House on Maple Avenue
Helen, Alison, Small Alison, Christian, John,
and Bruce

Come to the Fun Home
John, Small Alison, and Christian

Helen, Bruce and Roy
Bruce, Helen, Roy, and Kids

Changing My Major
Medium Alison

Maps
Bruce and Alison

Raincoat of Love
Company

Pony Girl
Bruce

Ring of Keys
Small Alison

Days
Helen

Bruce at the Piano
Bruce and Medium Alison

Telephone Wire
Alison and Bruce

Edges of the World
Bruce

Finale
Alison, Small Alison, and Medium Alison

ALISON BECHDEL

Alison Bechdel is a cartoonist who rose to prominence with her tragicomic, *Fun Home* and popular comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*.

Bechdel was born in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. She is the daughter of Helen and Bruce - yes the musical is accurate, no fake names here! Bechdel moved to Manhattan during the summer of 1981 and applied to several art schools, but was rejected and worked in many office jobs in the publishing industry. During this time she started *Dykes to Watch Out For*, and it was first published in 1983 by WomaNews, a feminist newspaper.

It was in one 1985 installment called "The Rule" that accidentally created a huge new segment of media commentary, now called 'The Bechdel Test'. To pass the test, a film or TV episode has to involve two women having a conversation about something other than a man.

And that's it! This should be ridiculously easy, right? After all, women are human beings who have relationships and vibrant lives outside of their interactions with men, right? RIGHT?

In a 2015 interview with *Fresh Air*, Bechdel said she felt "a little bit sheepish about the whole thing," given that the idea for the cartoon actually came from her friend Liz Wallace, who had told Bechdel she would only watch a film if it had two women who discuss something other than a man.

In recent years, the test has seeped into the public consciousness: "Somehow young feminist film students found this old cartoon and resurrected it in the Internet era and now it's this weird thing," said Bechdel. "People actually use it to analyze films to see whether or not they pass that test. Still... surprisingly few films actually pass it."

In 2006, Bechdel published *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, an autobiographical novel about her childhood and the years surrounding her father's suicide. Bechdel and the graphic novel won countless awards - leading us to the glorious musical we have now.

THE BECHDEL TEST:

1. THE MOVIE HAS TO HAVE AT LEAST TWO WOMEN IN IT

2. WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER

3. ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN.

CAN YOU THINK OF A MOVIE THAT PASSES THE BECHDEL TEST?



"The Rule" from *Dykes To Watch Out For* by Alison Bechdel, 1985.

THE CAST

ALISON BECHDEL



KELLY HOCKING

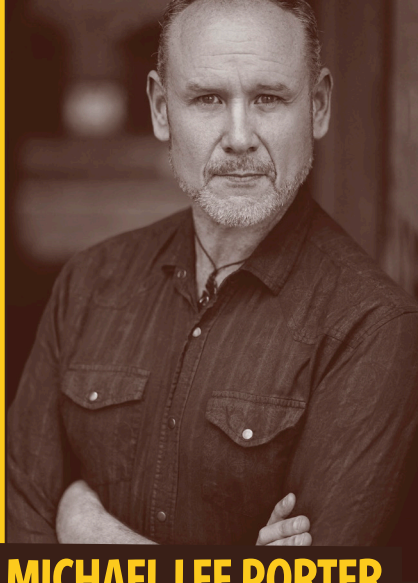
Kelly graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles in 2003 and is currently completing her Master of Arts Degree at the University of Otago.

Kelly was last seen onstage at The Court Theatre in *Grease* over a decade ago. Other theatre credits include *Avenue Q*, *Boeing Boeing*, *Into the Woods* (Fortune Theatre), *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert*, and *Wicked* (Musical Theatre Dunedin). Kelly is also a writer and performs stand-up comedy.

Kelly is the Principal of The Voice Lab NZ, which provides vocal coaching and professional development for other voice coaches. They also have a specialist care team supporting Aotearoa's professional vocalists, which includes injury prevention, rehabilitation, and tour preparation.

Kelly is a proud member of Equity New Zealand.

BRUCE BECHDEL



MICHAEL LEE PORTER

MLP (Taranaki) is a graduate of NASDA (BA Performing Arts).

His acting highlights include *Pacific Post*, *Side by Side by Sondheim*, *Mary Poppins*, *Cabaret*, *Mum's Choir*, *Flagons & Foxtrots*, *Female of the Species*, *My Fair Lady*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *The Rocky Horror Show* (The Court Theatre), *Souvenir: A Fantasia on the life of Florence Foster Jenkins*, *Old Wicked Songs*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Dirty Weekends* (Fortune Theatre), *Tuesdays With Morrie* (Rondo Theatre), and *My Fair Lady* (Showbiz Christchurch). His directing highlights include *Hedwig & the Angry Inch*, *The Last 5 Years*, *Tell Me on a Sunday*, *A Slice of Saturday Night*, *Wicked*, *Mary Poppins*, and *Guys & Dolls*. His touring credits include *Come From Away* (NewTheatricals/Junkyard Dog Productions), *The Phantom of the Opera* (Really Useful Group/GFO), and *Jekyll & Hyde* (TML).

Proud Member of MEAA Australia. I am thrilled to be in the NZ Premiere of *Fun Home*, this being the first show I saw with my husband in NYC a few days before we were married in Central Park by Rabbi Andy, which was the day before same-sex marriage was legalised in all 50 states in USA.

HELEN BECHDEL



JULIET REYNOLDS-MIDGLEY

Juliet moved from England to New Zealand in 2000. Prior to moving she performed in the UK, Italy, and the Caribbean. As a singer of jazz, classical, pop and music theatre repertoire she has enjoyed a varied career and has been a featured artist with the CSO on numerous occasions. While still in the UK she appeared as a soloist with the BBC Concert Orchestra for Radio 2.

Previous Court Theatre credits include *Side by Side by Sondheim*, *Calendar Girls*, *August Osage County*, *Blood Brothers*, *The Mikado*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Once*, *Flagons & Foxtrots*, *Next to Normal* and *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express*.

Other performance credits include *Sweeney Todd*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Mamma Mia* (Showbiz Christchurch).

As well as performing Juliet is passionate about teaching at the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art (Ara) and seeing new work and new artists flourish.

THE CAST

MEDIUM ALISON



EMMA KATENE

Emma (Ngāti Kahungunu) is a Pōneke, Wellington based actor, excited to perform in her second Court Theatre show. She made her debut with her performance of Anna in *The Girl on the Train*.

Her other theatre acting credits include *Cringeworthy: Swinging in the 60's* (Centrepont Theatre), *Mannbann* (Centrepont Theatre), *Pinocchio: The Pantomime* (Circa Theatre), *Land of the Long Long Drive* (Circa Theatre), *Sing to Me*, and *Destination Mars* (Te Papa).

Emma also enjoys working as a director, sound designer and emcee.

JOAN



LILY BOURNE

Originally from Palmerston North, Lily moved to Ōtautahi to attend the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Arts and graduated with a Bachelor of Music Theatre in 2022.

Lily was last seen on The Court Theatre stage as River Rayner in *Appropriate*. Her other credits include Rita Vincent in *Flagons & Foxtrots*, Assistant Stage Manager for the original season of *Something Rotten!*, and Dresser for *Sense and Sensibility*.

This past year has seen Lily touring around Australia and the Pacific for renowned production house Strut & Fret in *Blanc de Blanc Encore/Uncorked*, most recently onboard P&O Cruises Pacific Encounter. Her other performance credits include *The New Regent Street Spectacular* (Strut & Fret), *Merry and Bright* (Blackboard Theatre Collective), *Grease*, and *The Wedding Singer* (NASDA).

Lily is a proud member of Equity New Zealand.

ROY/MARK/PETE/BOBBY JEREMY



ISAAC PAWSON

Isaac graduated from the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art (NASDA) with a Bachelor of Performing Arts.

Notable Court Theatre credits include Mary Sunshine in *Chicago*, Peter in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Bob Gaudio in *Jersey Boys*, and Norman in *Ladies Night*. A theatre highlight of his is playing Tick in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Showbiz Christchurch) and reprising the role up north (New Plymouth Operatic Society).

Isaac travels around Aotearoa and the globe as a performer of Operatunity, New Zealand's largest provider of day time concerts and music travel. Most recently he starred in their *Hoedown Showdown* tour and looks forward to travelling with the company to Croatia next year.

Fun Home marks his tenth show with The Court Theatre and after moving to Auckland in 2021, he is thrilled to be back in Ōtautahi, Christchurch to help bring to life such a cleverly crafted, poignant and moving piece.

THE CAST

SMALL ALISON



CARLA LADSTAETTER

Carla is a Year 7 student at Wairarapa Cobham Intermediate. In 2023, Carla received the Arts and Music Award from Tuia Burnside Primary School. Her previous theatre credits include playing the lead roles in *Matilda the Musical* (Showbiz Christchurch) and *Once on This Island* (Ovation Theatre Christchurch), as well as portraying young Anna in *Disney's Frozen JR.* (The Court Theatre).

An accomplished musician, Carla has developed her own concert program and frequently performs at small festivals and other events. Her television experience includes performing on the children's show *What Now* and recently appearing in six episodes of *Gungeons and Dragons for Kids*.

In addition to her musical talents, Carla excels as a violinist and dancer. She has also won the Christchurch (Irelands) Junior Singing Competition for 2023/2024 and the CentreStage Illuminate Competition in 2024.

SMALL ALISON



EDEN TAYLOR

Eden is 14 years old and is currently in year 10 at St Andrew's College.

Fun Home will be her second Court Theatre show, having previously performed in *Disney's Frozen JR.* as Olaf. Her other theatre credits include the role of Alice in *Matilda the Musical* (Showbiz Christchurch), and the role of Ariel in her school production of the *The Little Mermaid*.

Eden not only loves to sing and dance, she also enjoys her sport and outdoor activities. She plays basketball and volleyball, and in the summer she likes to go out jet skiing and knee boarding.

CHRISTIAN



BEN CUMBERPATCH

Ben is 14 and in year 10 at Hillmorton High School.

He sings with Voices Co in their Youth Squad, belting out modern pop-acapella and beatboxing.

Ben has played some mischievous roles over the past four years, and was Sven in The Court Theatre's production of *Disney's Frozen JR.*

Other highlights include *Matilda the Musical* (Showbiz Christchurch), *Macbeth* (NZ Opera), *Once on This Island* (Ovation Theatre Company), *Spamalot JR* and *Beauty Within the Beast* (Luminaires), *Mary Poppins* (St Margaret's College) and is currently rehearsing for *Oliver* (Enchanting Productions)

In his spare time, Ben loves surfing, footy, skateboarding and playing the piano.

Ben is excited to work alongside his theatre buddies and be a part of The Court Theatre family again.

THE CAST

CHRISTIAN



ERIK MISNYOVSZKI

Erik is originally from Hungary and is 13 years old. He is the Lead Student for Year 9 at Cashmere High School, earning both the Leadership and Music Scholarships this year.

He started drama at The Court Theatre in 2021 and has performed in musicals with Luminaires and Ovation Musical Theatre.

Erik played Bruce Bogtrotter in *Matilda the Musical* at the Isaac Theatre Royal in 2022, and Olaf in *Disney's Frozen JR.* at The Court Theatre in 2023. He won the Star of the Show award at the 2023 Show Quest.

Erik is the lead singer for Cashmere Stage Jazz Band and played Oliver in Cashmere High School's 2024 production.

JOHN



BARNABY DOMIGAN

Barnaby is 11 and goes to Wairarapa Cobham Intermediate. *Fun Home* is his third Court Theatre show, having previously performed in *Disney's Frozen JR.* and *Appropriate*.

His other theatre credits include singing in *Arohanui - From Christchurch with Love*, the role of Eric in *Matilda the Musical* (Showbiz Christchurch), several shows and music videos for the Music with Michal troupe including NYE22 and 23 in Hagley Park, and annual recitals and medals tests for Anna Lee School of Dance where he learns ballet, hip hop and jazz. Barnaby is currently filming a leading role in the Bema Films series, *Whispers*.

Barnaby plays piano and percussion in two bands and an orchestra and sings in his school chorale and representative choir. He loves football and running, and he plays halfback for the Burnside Dragons.

JOHN



FRANKLIN DOMIGAN

Franklin is nine and attends Tuia Burnside Primary. *Fun Home* is his third Court Theatre show, having previously performed in *Disney's Frozen JR.* and *Appropriate*.

His other theatre credits include playing Young Charlie in *Kinky Boots* with Showbiz Christchurch, *Arohanui - From Christchurch with Love*, several shows and music videos for the Music with Michal troupe including NYE22 and 23 in Hagley Park, and annual recitals and medals tests for Anna Lee School of Dance where he learns ballet, hip hop and jazz. He is one of six young people selected for the children's entertainment troupe Club Mayhem and is currently filming a supporting role in the Bema Films series, *Whispers*.

Franklin sings in his school and representative choirs, plays in a band and an orchestra and loves to run, play football, touch rugby and rugby for his school and the Burnside Raptors.



ALISON/HELEN BECHDEL



HILLARY MOULDER



Hillary is an accomplished performer with a Diploma in Performing Arts. She proudly holds associate credentials in Modern and Tap from the International Dance Teachers Association and is a proud member of Equity New Zealand.



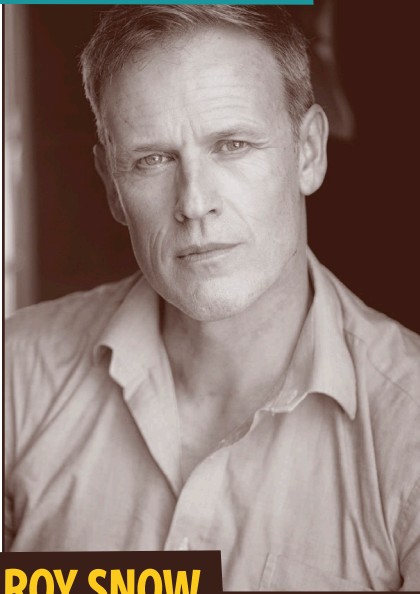
Hillary has performed in productions such as *Chicago*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Jersey Boys*, *Time Machine*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Escape from Haunted House*. Additionally, she showcased her choreographic talent in *Ladies Night*, *Once*, *Flagns & Foxtrots*, *Next to Normal*, *Matilda*, *That Bloody Woman* and directed the enchanting shows *Sense And Sensibility*, *A Flight Before Christmas* and *Every Brilliant Thing*.



A “COVER” IS A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE UNDERSTUDIES AND STANDBYS FOR A SHOW. THESE TALENTED ACTORS ARE PREPARED TO GO ON STAGE WITH AS LITTLE AS THIRTY MINUTE’S NOTICE!

THE COVERS

BRUCE BECHDEL



ROY SNOW

Roy is a Court Theatre regular with numerous appearances over the last 15 years, most recently on our stage as nefarious train conductor Michel in The Court Theatre's smash hit *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express*. Further Court Theatre credits include *Little Shop of Horrors*, *End of the Rainbow*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Chicago*, and *Ladies Night*.

Recent highlights include *Mannband* and *Ladies Night* at Centrepoint Theatre, and a villainous turn in ATC's acclaimed production, *North by North West*. His other theatre credits include *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Cabaret* (ATC), *The Threepenny Opera* (Silo Theatre), *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*, and *Evita* (Showbiz Christchurch).

Roy can be found renovating his old house in Geraldine, keeping his wife happy, and walking his daughter's pug Tibbers.

ROY/MARK/PETE/BOBBY JEREMY



CAMERON CLAYTON

Cameron studied at the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Arts (Bachelor of Performing Arts).

His previous credits include *Cats* (Showbiz & AMICII Productions), *RENT* (AMICII Productions), *The Witches of Eastwick* (Riccarton Players), *Shrek the Musical* (Showcase Entertainment), *Flavons & Foxtrots*, *RENT*, *Cinderella* and *Something Rotten!* (The Court Theatre).

Cameron's television credits include *Sextortion* (2020) and *David Lomas Investigates* (2021).

Cameron has also performed in country music throughout NZ, Australia, and USA, and was awarded Gore Gold Guitar Award Overall Winner (2004), NZ Entertainer of the Year (2005), and Trans-Tasman Entertainer of the Year (2001).

MEDIUM ALISON/JOAN



TŌMAIRANGI PATERSON-WAAKA

Tōmairangi Paterson-Waaka is a Māori creative artist of Te Arawa, Te Rarawa and Tainui descent.

Originally from Rotorua, she moved to Ōtautahi, Christchurch to study at the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic arts (NASDA) which she has recently graduated from.

Her previous Court Theatre credits include *The Lost Sock* (puppeteer) and *Disney's The Little Mermaid JR.* (Assistant Stage Manager).

Her other credits include *Hine Hōia - Hine Hōia* (Chamber Music), *Velma Kelly - Chicago* (NASDA), Peter Quince - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Morgan – *Godspell*, and Kevin and Tobee L' rone in Tusk puppets Christmas show *The Flight Before Christmas*.

Tōmairangi has also performed *The Lost Sock* with Tusk puppets at the Off Centre Arts Festival in 2023.

FUN HISTORY

22 OCTOBER 2013

Fun Home opening night Off-Broadway at The Public.

14 APRIL 2014

Fun Home is a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

19 APRIL 2015

Fun Home opens on Broadway at Circle in the Square.

29 APRIL 2015

The show breaks box office record at Circle in the Square.

16 NOVEMBER 2015

Fun Home performs at "Broadway at the White House" by invitation of First Lady Michelle Obama.

DECEMBER 2015

Fun Home ranks supreme on Top 10 lists, including:

ASSOCIATED PRESS #2

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY #2

CHICAGO TRIBUNE #1

AM NEW YORK #2

HOLLYWOOD REPORTER #5

THE NEW YORKER #2

BUZZFEED #6

HUFFINGTON POST #2

DAILY BEST #7

1 MARCH 2016

Ambassador Samantha Power visits *Fun Home* with 26 United Nation Ambassadors from around the world, sparking an international conversation about LGBT rights.

2 OCTOBER 2016

The United States of America National Tour of *Fun Home* launches in Cleveland, Ohio.

10 NOVEMBER 2016

First International Performance of *Fun Home* in the Phillipines with a limited run of only 18 performances.

27 JUNE 2018

Fun Home has its London debut at the Off West End Young Vic theatre.

3 MAY 2021

After some COVID rescheduling, *Fun Home* has its Australasian premiere in Sydney at the Roslyn Packer Theatre.

2 APRIL 2024

The production company, Nine Stories, confirms a three-year, first-look deal with Amazon MGM Studios for a *Fun Home* film directed by Sam Gold and starring Jake Gyllenhaal as Bruce Bechdel. There is no planned release date.

10 AUGUST 2024

Fun Home New Zealand premiere at The Court Theatre.



NZ

1962 - 1972

The New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Society was formed. They played a crucial role in raising public awareness and pushing for legislative changes.

1 JULY 1993

The Human Rights Acts, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was passed in New Zealand.

17 APRIL 2013

New Zealand Parliament passed the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill which legalised same-sex marriage. This came into effect on 19 August 2013.

3 JUNE 2015

The *Fun Home* Broadway cast recording hits #1 on Billboard Albums Chart.

7 JUNE 2015

Fun Home wins five Tony Awards.

26 JUNE 2015

The Supreme Court of the United States legalises same-sex marriage in all fifty states. #LoveWon

29 JUNE 2015

Fun Home is the first Broadway show to perform on *Late Night with Seth Myers*.

4 MARCH 2016

Fun Home becomes the first Broadway show to participate in Spotify Sessions.

10 SEPTEMBER 2016

Fun Home closes on Broadway after 26 previews and 583 regular performances.

TONY AWARDS

WINNER

Best Musical

WINNER

Best Score: Lisa Kron & Jeanine Tesori

WINNER

Best Book: Lisa Kron

WINNER

Best Direction: Sam Gold

WINNER

Best Actor: Michael Cerveris



THE CREATIVES

DIRECTOR



KATHLEEN BURNS

Kathleen has been working for The Court Theatre since 2003. She is an actor, writer, director, and Court Jester. She even tried her hand at set design once.

Fun Home is her second mainstage direction after *Flagons & Foxtrots*.

Her previous Court Theatre credits include *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *RENT*, *Ladies Night*, *The Pink Hammer*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Thumbelina*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Hamlet: The Video Game (the stage show)*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Ropable*, *Educating Rita*, *Macbeth*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Lady Killers*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *White Rabbit*, *Red Rabbit*, *Blood Brothers*, *Grease*, and *The Women*.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR



CAELAN THOMAS

Caelan is a Christchurch-based accompanist, musical director, and arranger, and became an Associate of Trinity College, London (ATCL) in 2015.

His previous Court Theatre credits include Disney's *The Little Mermaid JR.*, *Something Rotten!*, *Disney's Frozen JR.*, *Next To Normal*, *RENT*, *Flagons & Foxtrots*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *Jersey Boys*. His other theatre credits include *Kinky Boots*, *My Fair Lady*, *Matilda the Musical* (Showbiz Christchurch), *The Wedding Singer* (National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art), *Chicago*, *Legally Blonde Jr* (CentreStage Rolleston), *Bad Girls* (Riccarton Players), and *The Witches of Eastwick* (Kirwee Players).

Caelan is currently working with The Vocal Collective as the Assistant Musical Director and as one of two Musical Directors working with the Selwyn Community Choir.

CHOREOGRAPHER



HILLARY MOULDER

Hillary is an accomplished performer with a Diploma in Performing Arts. She proudly holds associate credentials in Modern and Tap from the International Dance Teachers Association and is a proud member of Equity New Zealand.

Hillary has performed in productions such as *Chicago*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Jersey Boys*, *Time Machine*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Escape from Haunted House*. Additionally, she showcased her choreographic talent in *Ladies Night*, *Once*, *Flagons & Foxtrots*, *Next to Normal*, *Matilda*, *That Bloody Woman* and directed the enchanting shows *Sense And Sensibility*, *A Flight Before Christmas* and *Every Brilliant Thing*.

Hillary's repertoire encompasses diverse works such as *Matilda the Musical*, *Beauty and the Beast - The Pantomime*, *A Fine Romance* and *We Were Dangerous* (Piki Films).

Hillary is a strong supporter of equality, diversity, and the power and importance of acceptance in theatre and the world alike.

THE CREATIVES

YOUNG PERFORMER COACH



AMY STRAKER

Amy Straker is an actor, singer, theatre maker and performance coach. After graduating from NASDA in 2005, Amy began her career with an acting internship at The Court Theatre. Since then, she has appeared in over 35 Court Theatre productions beginning with the musical *Oliver!* and most recently, *Once*. Amy has also worked in Wellington with Downstage Theatre and Ensemble Impact, as well as collaborating with Site Specific, Kidzstuff, Fortune Theatre, Shaky Isles - London, and Auckland Theatre Company.

Amy's most recent work as a performance coach was on *We Were Dangerous* (Piki Films) and *Sister Josephine* (AJFilms). She also works as an acting tutor for The Court Theatre and NASDA.

Amy is a co-creator of Cubbin Theatre Company and plays original music under the name Amy Grace and with The Swan Sisters.

SET DESIGNER



HANNAH MCDUGALL

Hannah is a graduate of Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School (Bachelor of Design) and College of Creative Arts – Massey University (Master in Fine Arts – Performance (Honours)).

Her previous Court Theatre credits include *The Early Early Late Show* and *Scared Scriptless* as a Court Jester. Her other theatre credits include performer for *Dungeons and Comedians* and *Dungeons and Improvisers* (Little Andromeda), set, costume and prop design for *The Engine Room* (Hagley Theatre Company), and set and prop design for *A Dream Play* (Toi Whakaari – Te Whaea).

Hannah has presented installation and performance art pieces across New Zealand as a part of her own independent art practice throughout the last 10 years – showing at gallery, corporate, and festival spaces such as The Engine Room (Massey University), OHO! Festival CHCH, National Library New Zealand - Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, National Digital Forum 2014 (Te Papa).

COSTUME DESIGNER



STELLA GARDNER

Stella is a self-taught seamstress and textile artist, and owner and operator of Astaral Memories. She has designed and produced costumes for over 20 shows as well as having designed and made over 100 wedding dresses.

Her previous Court Theatre credits include *Cinderella*, *Flagons & Foxtrots*, *Pink Hammer*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Aladdin meets Cinderella*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Tomtom's Musical Adventure*, *Alice in Wonderland - In the Attic*, and *The Princess and the Frog (and the Robber!)*. Her other theatre credits include *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *The Wedding Singer* (NASDA), *The Hare and Tortoise* (New Zealand Playhouse), *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *Opening Night* (The Royal Canadian Theatre Company) and *Boeing Boeing* (White Rock Players' Club).

Stella's television credits include *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Spartacus*. Her film credits include *Lord of the Rings* and *The Narnia Chronicles*.

THE CREATIVES

STAGE MANAGER



LOUISE TOPPING

Louise studied Stage Management at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in London.

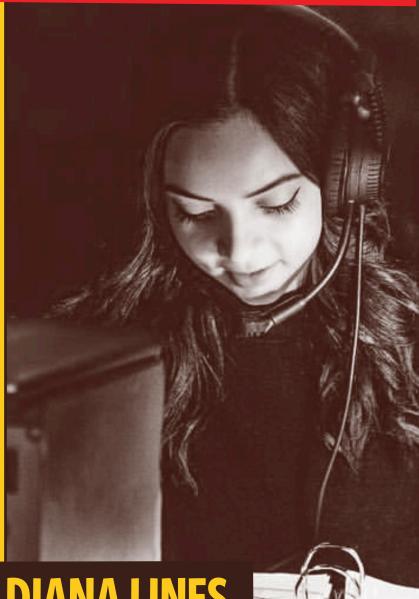
Her UK Theatre credits include *There Came a Gypsy Riding* (Almeida Theatre), *The 39 Steps* (Criterion Theatre), *The BFG* (National Tour), *Sh*t-M*x* (Piccadilly Studios), and as Resident Stage Manager at The Bush Theatre.

Her Australian Theatre credits include *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, *Waikiki Hip*, and *The Vertical Hour* (Sydney Theatre Company).

Louise has also worked extensively in television production, primarily for the BBC and BBC Wales, as well as for Seven Network (Australia) and Ensemble Australia.

This is Louise's third mainstage production at The Court Theatre, having previously stage managed *Something Rotten!* (2023/2024) and as Assistant Stage Manager on *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express*. Musicals are her happy place!

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER



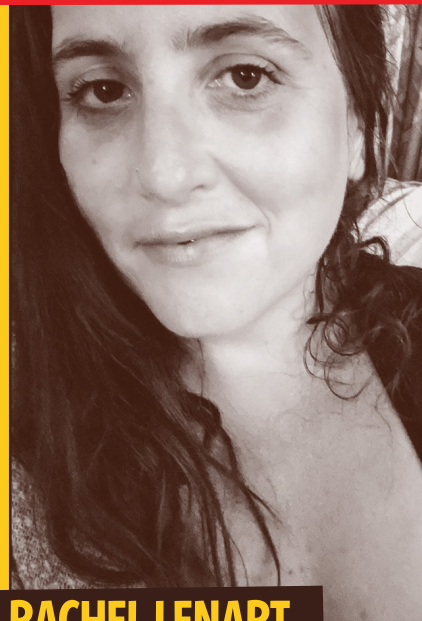
DIANA LINES

Since graduating from London's Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts with a BA (HONS) in Theatre Production Arts, Diana has worked in a multitude of Stage Management roles across a broad range of theatre and live events across the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Her previous Court Theatre credits include Stage Manager for the recent production of *The Lost Sock*.

Other notable credits include SM and Lighting/Sound Operator – *Coriolanus* (The Rose Playhouse, London), Assistant Stage Manager – *Cinderella the Pantomime* (St Albans Arena – UK), Assistant Stage Manager/Book Cover – *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, and *The Tempest* (Shakespeare's Rose Theatre, York), Assistant Stage Manager – *Hairspray*, *Flight*, *iSkate 2.0*, and *1977* (Royal Caribbean Productions), Assistant and Deputy Stage Manager – *Madagascar the Musical* (UK, NZ and Australia Tours), Stage Manager – *A Little Night Music* (Enchanted Productions), and Chorus ASM – *Macbeth* (NZ Opera Company).

LIGHTING DESIGNER & INTIMACY COORDINATOR



RACHEL LENART

Rachel Lenart is an award-winning theatre maker, director, designer, producer, and educator who has been leading professional and semi-professional theatre work since 2004. Rachel's work has played at BATS, Circa, Downstage, Centrepoint, and Darwin Festival.

She is a critically acclaimed lighting designer, working for dance companies and theatre productions, most recently *He Reo Aroha* at Centrepoint Theatre this July.

Rachel has developed a successful model for intimacy directing, based on a deep understanding of the actor's process grounded in two decades of theatre direction and tertiary-level teaching, and founded through international and local guidelines. She has led intimacy work for Centrepoint Theatre, regional semi-professional productions, high schools, and tertiary students.

PROPS MANAGER



JULIAN SOUTHGATE

Julian has designed numerous Court Theatre sets including *Babylon Heights*, *Year of the Rat*, *Skin Tight*, *Baghdad*, *Baby!*, *Blackbird*, *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *The Tutor*, *Heartbreak House*, *Angels*, *The Perfumed Garden*, *Side by Side* by Sondheim, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Pacific Post*, *The Women*, *Amadeus*, *End of the Rainbow*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Plum*, *Le Sud*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Exit the King*, *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*.

His other stage set designs include *Cats*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* (Showbiz Christchurch), and the national tour of *Pinocchio* (Royal New Zealand Ballet).

Julian has also made props and sculpture for numerous festivals, operas, and outdoor and street theatre.

SOUND DESIGNER & OPERATOR

EVE CURZON

Eve has recently emigrated from the UK where she has been working in London for the last 15 years. She has worked on numerous West End shows and UK tours including *Les Misérables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Miss Saigon* and *School of Rock*. She is looking forward to getting stuck into life and work in New Zealand.



THE BAND

VIOLIN/VIOLA



ALISA SMITH

Alisa's musical education began at the Christchurch School of Music, developed through involvement in many ensembles at both a regional and national level, leading to the completion of a degree in performance viola at the University of Canterbury. Further tertiary education followed at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold and Orchesterzentrum NRW, both in Germany.

During her 13 years in Germany, Alisa played and performed in many different ensembles from solo to symphony orchestra, and styles from Baroque (Barockakademie Detmold) to modern music, as a member of Ensemble Courage. Despite concerts taking her throughout Europe and to Asia, she also taught at a regional music school near Dresden, Germany.

Alisa moved back to Ōtautahi, Christchurch in 2021 and continues to share her passion for music as a violin and viola teacher. She enjoys playing with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra amongst other ensembles.

VIOLIN/VIOLA



HENRY NICHOLSON

Henry is an Ōtautahi, Christchurch based violinist, violist and conductor. He graduated from the University of Canterbury in 2023 with a Master of Music with Distinction in violin performance and conducting.

Henry has worked with many theatre companies across Canterbury, including the premiere of *Fairystories* by Paul Graham Brown and *A Little Night Music* with Enchanting Productions. He has also played on *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* with NCMS, and *Beauty and the Beast* with CentreStage Rolleston.

Outside of Musical Theatre, Henry is a frequent performer of Baroque and Classical repertoire on period instruments, but also often premieres and performs new contemporary compositions.

Henry conducts two community choirs and regularly works with many instrumental ensembles across New Zealand.

CELLO



CAROLINE TURNER

Caroline is a member of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and is a graduate of University of Canterbury (Bachelor of Music majoring in Performance Cello).

Concert highlights include performing with Harry Connick Jr, George Benson, Michael Houstoun, Shapeshifter, and Synthony. Caroline is excited to perform cello in her first Court Theatre show, *Fun Home*.

Caroline plays cornet with Woolston Brass, one of New Zealand's most successful and versatile brass bands. Caroline has a Master of Science and Post-Graduate Diploma in Organisational Psychology and works in Learning and Development at Foodstuffs South Island Ltd in their People and Capability team.

Caroline and her husband Todd lead a busy yet rewarding life juggling work, music, and family with two children Boston and Ruby (aged 2 years old and 11 months old), and two step-children Georgia and Jackson (aged 23 and 21 years old).

THE BAND

REEDS



CLAUDIA CROSLAND

Claudia is a graduate of the University of Canterbury with a Bachelor of Arts (Music, Māori and Indigenous Studies) and a Bachelor of Criminal Justice. She is thrilled to be a part of *Fun Home* as her first production with The Court Theatre.

Claudia has played reeds for *Matilda the Musical* (Showbiz), *Guys & Dolls*, *Reefer Madness*, *Curtains*, *Spamalot*, and *Pippin* (MUSOC), and numerous other shows with Blackboard Theatre Collective, NASDA, NCMS, CentreStage Rolleston, and St. Andrew's College.

She has also played with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and was the Musical Director for *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (MUSOC) and *Never Have I Ever: A MUSOC Cabaret*. Additionally, in 2022 she served as the President for MUSOC.

BASS



BRADLEY GRAINGER

Bradley is a graduate of Ara Music Arts School (Bachelor of Music).

Bradley has been involved in multiple shows with The Court Theatre, including *RENT*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *Something Rotten!*. His other theatre credits include *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, *Holiday Inn* (NASDA), *He Says She Says*, and *Or So They Say* (Blackboard Theatre Collective) amongst others.

Bradley is an in-demand electric and double bassist living in Christchurch. He has worked with numerous notable international artists such as Andy Sugg, Steve Barry, Stefan Nagler as well local bands such as Mundi, Yurt party and Symposium.

He has performed in festivals throughout NZ which include Christchurch, Wellington, Martinborough, Waiheke, and Nelson jazz festivals, as well as Christchurch's World Buskers Festival. His career has also seen him perform on Princess and Holland America Cruise Lines as part of the show band.

DRUMS



ZAKARY WILLIAMS

Zakary is a graduate of the ARA Institute of Canterbury Music Arts degree (Bachelor of Musical Arts). His previous Court Theatre credits include *Something Rotten!*. His other theatre credits include *Kinky Boots* (Showbiz Christchurch), *Godspell*, *Me and My Girl*, *Company*, *Grease*, *Chicago* (NASDA), and *As You Like It* (Third Bear).

Zakary is a Christchurch based drummer and percussionist with experience in a wide variety of musical styles. He can regularly be found performing with local musicians or leading his own jazz ensemble, and has also worked with a number of Christchurch theatre groups in shows and cabarets. Outside of performing, Zakary teaches drums in schools around Christchurch.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of my favourite things about the performing arts is the sense of lineage - connecting to, and building on what has come before. Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* is a wonderful example of this not just in theory, or throw away cliché, but in very real practice.

It began as a graphic novel in 2006, written by Bechdel to help her decode, process, and understand her past. Then Tesori and Kron adapted the work, swapping mediums, shifting from page to stage, and through their care, craft and insight created a smash success, award winning musical. Each piece of the process taking the greatness of the prior, moving forward, adapting tastefully, hoping to only enhance what was originally great.

We then come to our production where my job is to assemble a team to bring this new version to life. Our new version. I can think of no greater combination of people to attempt this with. To my key creative team - thank you. Without your skill, taste and dedication we would never have made it. To my cast - you have been generous, willing to adapt, and ferocious in your application of your craft and skills. Thank you.

As The Court Theatre prepares for another huge shift, **we are only able to do so because of what came before.**

As we premiere this musical for you, **we are only able to do so because of what came before.**

I'm confident we're doing justice to this exquisite entry into the contemporary musical canon. The new things, the things that make this production unique, I'm very proud of.

Welcome...to the Fun Home.

Ngā mihi,
Kathleen Burns



“I’M CONFIDENT WE’RE DOING JUSTICE TO THIS EXQUISITE ENTRY INTO THE CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL CANON.”

**- KATHLEEN BURNS,
DIRECTOR OF FUN HOME**



We sat down with Kathleen Burns to learn more about her vision for this musical as well as some of the challenges and how she has approached this project.

How would you describe the ‘world’ that *Fun Home* is set in?

The world is largely Alison’s memories. The main locations are her family’s house and funeral home, both in Pennsylvania, and Oberlin College in Ohio. We see time periods in her life when she is ten and nineteen years old.



What are some of the differences you have noticed in directing a musical compared to a play?

You have a choreographer and musical director to collaborate with!

Are there any important themes people should look out for?

The play explores the need to make sense of the past in order to move forward. Within it are all sorts of tangled themes. There’s coming of age experiences, not feeling accepted by your parents, the need to express oneself authentically.



What might a typical rehearsal look like with the cast when creating this production?

The earlier rehearsals were very bitsy and out of order. Actors might have a singing call, a choreography call, a scene work call... Then as things progress we put all the jigsaw pieces we have made together. By the final week, we were running the show every morning, and working bits in the afternoon.



Is there anything else you would like to share about *Fun Home*?

Something unique about this play is that it has no scenes! In the script, there’s no “Scene 1...”. Everything is written to be fluid, one memory giving way to the next. There’s also no intermission!

Education Activities:

Unpacking the Director's Concept

Thinking about the source material:

The performance of *Fun Home* that you watched is originally based on a graphic novel by the same name. In groups of 2 - 3:

- Read the Director's Note and the article linked below and look at google images of the graphic novel, which will allow you to see excerpts.
 - [Fun Home creator Alison Bechdel on turning a tragic childhood into a hit musical | Comics and graphic novels | The Guardian](#)
 - [Fun Home Graphic Novel Pages](#)
- Use the linked inquiry chart to organise your ideas: [Inquiry Chart](#)
- With the information you have gathered from your reading discuss and make notes and sketches around the following questions:
 - What inspiration do you think the director took from the source material?
 - How do you think the elements of the graphic novel were realised on stage? Think about:
 - The staccato/short nature of the scenes
 - The direction that might have been given to the actors
 - The positioning of the three Alison's on stage and how connection was shown
 - How were drama components (Techniques, Elements, Conventions and Technologies) highlighted or enhanced by the directors choices?
- *Embody your ideas:* present the ideas you have discussed and collected in three freeze frames. Make sure you stage them in a way that reflects a panel from a graphic novel or cartoon strip. You can use Spoken Thought in the place of speech bubbles.

Connecting to the themes:

In small groups brainstorm all the themes that are evident in the performance of *Fun Home*.

- Start with a large piece of craft paper and a pen each. For the first 5 minutes

everyone writes down all the themes they can think of, plus any notes that expand on those ideas.

- After five minutes, the group discusses the themes that are identified on the brainstorm and choose one or two that your group feels they most connected to.
- For each of the themes, choose a moment from the performance where this was highlighted and complete the following:
 - Sketch how the moment was portrayed on stage in detail, you may choose to do two or three sketches to show the whole moment.
 - Annotate comprehensively, noting how the drama components were used to highlight or enhance the theme.
 - Stick your sketches up on a white board or on a wall and discuss with the whole class, allow other groups to add extra annotations or details to deepen your collective understanding.
 - Photograph your sketches and keep them in a shared digital space so that you can access them when you are creating your report or revising for your exam.

Personal reflection:

Using the information that you have unpacked in the two previous activities, plan a short essay and complete for homework exploring the following prompt:

“Explain the concept Kathleen Burns was trying to bring to life in *Fun Home* and discuss how this was highlighted in a scene or moment from the performance”

Make sure you include quotes from this education pack and also link to the wider context of the performance, such as the themes or how inspiration was drawn from source material.

Theatre’s ability to heal, educate, entertain or transform its audience.

NOTE: This section is for all senior students.

In the refreshed standards for NCEA Level One, one standard explores the function of theatre. This means the performance’s/play’s ability to heal, educate, entertain or transform an audience. While Level One students will be exploring this in reference to play’s set in and written by Aotearoa playwrights, using this language is an excellent way to broaden and deepen your ideas about the performance that you saw.

As a class brainstorm around the following prompts: (you could do this on the whiteboard or on large pieces of paper, which you can photograph and keep for future reference.)

FROM THE

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

What draws you to/inspires you about this play?

I think that good art should make you feel something, and *Fun Home* absolutely ticks this box. It's a beautiful work that evokes joy, acceptance, desperation, anger, and peace. *Fun Home* is a powerful and very moving story that stays with you long after the final curtain has come down. That's the sort of art I love!

Although the musical is now 10 years old (and the book itself nearly 20), I believe that the *Fun Home* story, themes, and messages are just as relevant and important to tell now as they were then.

This set splits the musicians into two separate sections. Has that provided any unique challenges?

It definitely has its challenges, but in some ways it has surprisingly been a blessing!

We have six live musicians in *Fun Home* - Drums, Keyboard, Violin/Viola, Cello, Reeds, and Bass (electric and acoustic). One of the common challenges in the band pit is trying to keep the noise from the drums out of the microphones for the quieter instruments (Clarinets, Violins etc.) so that the sound operator has the best control over the balance of the whole band. We've been able to split the drums and keyboard to one side of the stage, and the rest of the band in the "quieter" section on the other side. It's something that actually makes the sound operator's life easier!

However, we don't have a direct line of sight from one section to the other, which is where the challenge comes in. We have a camera for the Musical Director, and a live feed set up on the other side of the stage to ensure the musicians all stay together. It's a fairly critical reliance on



“I WOULD SAY THAT THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR IS A PARTICULARLY COLLABORATIVE ROLE, BUT IN A MUSICAL, EVERY ROLE NEEDS TO BE A COLLABORATIVE ROLE!”

- CAELAN THOMAS, MUSICAL DIRECTOR OF *FUN HOME*

technology, but it's very common and reliable nowadays - in *Next To Normal*, for example, the musicians were split into 4 completely different sections!

What does a typical rehearsal look like for you as the musical director?

The Musical Director plays a part in many different parts of the rehearsal process which all look a little different.

Initially, the Musical Director has the responsibility of teaching the cast all of the singing. I typically start out working with soloists, and then work the major ensemble work afterwards. I begin rehearsals with a brief vocal warmup, and then go about teaching the music. While there's always a big focus on the notes (pitch and rhythm), I'm often giving direction around many other areas of the vocal performance including tone, vowel sounds, accent, diction, phrasing, articulation, and dynamics. I'm always very particular in the first few rehearsals, as it's hard to layer things up later in the process - once bad habits set in, they can be extremely hard to undo!

After the cast knows their music, it's my job to monitor this as they begin to add in the acting and choreography. We begin these rehearsals with a vocal warmup. Then, I play a supporting role throughout the rest of these rehearsals. As the choreographer or director is working, I'll address small vocal notes, or things that the cast is forgetting (often this is small details like cutoffs or tricky harmonies). Again, it's important to avoid letting bad habits set in!

Often, acting scenes have underscoring, which is music played underneath the dialogue. Here, it's my job to ensure that the dialogue matches up correctly to the score. Here, I'll support the director and the actors as they're working. This can be asking actors to slow down or speed up lines, or giving them a musical cue to wait for before delivering a certain line. It's important that the show can be done consistently every night over a season of dozens of shows.

The Musical Director is also responsible for bringing the band together. In band rehearsals, we work right through the score, and my focus is on trouble spots. This might be vamps (sections repeated until a



certain dialogue or acting cue is reached), tempo changes, key changes, or tricky time signature changes. I often give notes about the playing of individual instruments, which might include dynamics, articulation, or “feel”.

What factors such as set design, costume design, director’s vision influence your contribution to the production?

I would say that the Musical Director is a particularly collaborative role, but in a musical, every role needs to be a collaborative role! The director’s vision is the direction for the entire show. They might decide that the show needs to be dark, or joyful, or bright, or silly. It’s the job of the Musical Director to ensure that the music (and singing) in the show contributes to this to create a cohesive end result.

For set design and costume design, often the influence is actually the other way around! Some actors might not be able to wear, for example, a costume that requires them to be hunched over if they have big vocal requirements that require good posture. A set may not be able to contain too many stairs if the actors are singing for long periods of time and don’t have the stamina, or we may need additional space for a larger band. As with anything, good collaboration requires a certain appetite for compromise, as well as knowing which things are vitally important, and which ones are much more flexible.

In your opinion, what are some of the key themes in the play that the music helps to support?

Fun Home (the book) is a memoir - Alison Bechdel examines and often re-examines her memories throughout as she (and the reader) build up a better understanding of her life and the events. It follows a train of thought, often jumping around to other related events, and not in a chronological order.

The musical is written similarly, with the role of Alison being played simultaneously by three actors who are all different ages, and act as Alison in different stages in her life.

There are musical themes and ideas which pop up throughout the score, and are repeated to evoke emotion, memory, or to relate two otherwise disconnected moments. There are instrumental themes for different characters or ideas. Notice the repeating musical themes throughout the

show which are used to portray similar moments of “ignorance”, “childishness”, “unravelling”, or “desire”, and the dissonant twang of the major seventh to accentuate conflict and misunderstanding (which is beautifully referenced again as part of a much fuller chord to portray peace and acceptance as the other side of this coin right at the end of the show. There’s a good reason Jeanine Tesori is the most awarded female musical theatre composer in history!).

One of the major parts of Alison’s journey is her battle with sharing such a similar path to her Dad (said explicitly in “Am I just like you?” in the opening number), and fearing her own journey after seeing her father’s missteps. There are countless musical themes which are repeated for Bruce and Alison and lines that are sung at the same time (or the same line sung by the other character later in the show).



Education Activities:

Unpacking the Musical Directors Concept

Connecting the Director's and Musical Director's Concept

In *Fun Home* it would have been particularly important that the Director and Musical Director were collaborative throughout to achieve their vision. Where the Director has the script as their primary source material, the Musical Director has the music as their primary focus. This music will influence the way they approach the show, the support they give the actors as the characters are brought to life and the discussions they might have with the Director around overall vision.

In pairs read through both notes from the director and musical director.

- Use the following template to collect information from both interviews: [Read Write Think - Seed Discussion Template](#)
- Once you have collected information on the template, come back together as a class and address the “information I don’t understand” section, making comprehensive notes
- Back in your pairs talk about the following ideas and prepare to present what you found out back to the class in a way that suits you; verbally, in writing, by sketching and annotating, in role/performance;
 - How does the Musical Director’s work impact the characters being created?
 - How are themes, messages or ideas brought to life through the music and the songs?
 - What do you think the Musical Director talked to the designers about or had influence over?
- Homework activity: Respond to the following prompt in a short essay or with a comprehensive essay plan:
 - Discuss how you think the Director and Musical Director worked together to bring to life a shared vision - include quotes from their interviews to support your argument.

Exploring the music and it’s reflection of story and character

Caelan Thomas mentions in his interview that *“There are musical themes and ideas which pop up throughout the score, and are repeated to evoke emotion, memory, or to relate two otherwise disconnected moments. There are instrumental themes for different characters or ideas.”*

As a class brainstorm all the themes that *Fun Home* and the way that it is staged highlights. Once you have exhausted your brainstorm with your teacher, choose the themes that stand out the most to you. Splitting into groups, assign one theme to each group. Then identify the following:

- A musical moment in the performance that the theme is specifically connected to
- The character/s that are highlighted in this moment
- The musical moment or song that this theme connects to
- Listen to that song - The Spotify playlist and the YouTube playlist of the Original Cast recordings are linked below.
- [Fun Home \(A New Broadway Musical\) - Compilation by Jeanine Tesori | Spotify](#)
- [Fun Home Original Cast Recording - YouTube](#)

Thinking about what Caelan Thomas has said in his interview, make detailed notes about how the music highlights the theme and characters in this moment. Use lyrics or identify musical aspects of the song/music to support your ideas.

- You could present this information in a way that fits best: comprehensive brainstorm, printing out the song lyrics and annotating them, writing a short essay together, creating a presentation on PPT or Google Slides, an in role performance - be creative
- Present what you have compiled to the class or to another peer group and discuss what you have learnt from this activity. Individually think about how it could contribute to compiling your report or writing your exam later in the year.

FROM THE

ACTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

KELLY HOCKING ADULT ALISON

Briefly tell us about Alison.

Alison is a gay cartoonist who uses her art to make sense of her world. Now 43, Alison has decided to tackle an aspect of her life that she has been avoiding; the death of her father. Alison has long felt that her father's suicide was caused by her own 'coming out' during her university years. But as she begins to look into her memories, new truths and perspectives emerge. Alison has high standards for her artistic work and is fixated on small details. She has a tendency to overthink her art and her life in the pursuit of perfection.

How do you embody Alison?

Adult Alison is extremely similar to me. In fact, I've never played a character who feels so much like myself. Alison shares my obsessive nature, love of detail, dry sense of humour, and desperate desire to understand things. Embodying Alison is more about 'allowing' myself to be authentic. That said, Alison is more quiet and introspective than I am. I tend to explode my curious nature outward, but Alison mulls things over in a more stated way. To embody this introspection, I focus deeply on my breath and how my body feels when I'm going at a slower pace.

What kind of collaboration did you have with the Small and Medium Alisons when working on how to portray your version of Alison?

I think it is possible that I have the easiest job of all the Alisons because I have been 19 and 10 before and vividly remember those phases of my life. The incredible actor playing Medium Alison, Emma Katene, and I have had some good chats about our characters and we tend to instinctively pick up on each other's habits and blend them together. It happened very organically. It is an exciting opportunity to work with the two

actresses who play Small Alison. Eden and Carla are both immensely smart young performers and they have different energies. Depending on who is playing Small Alison, the memories of Adult Alison shift ever so slightly in my brain. Both young actors are easy to connect with and just so darn impressive.

Is there any shift in focus when going between singing a musical number and speaking dialogue?

There isn't a shift in my intention as the character but there is as a performer. If I'm doing my job effectively, the audience won't notice that I, the actor, have widened my focus to incorporate musical elements that I need to listen out for. But the character is firmly going forward with the intention of discovery or whatever the case may be.

Were there any unexpected challenges or quirks to this role that you hadn't expected?

Navigating the huge sketchpad! I'm not a visual artist and have no experience drawing. You'll see me walking all around, interrogating my memories but always with my sketchpad and pencil. It felt awkward at first, but now I think it's become a part of Alison. Who knows, maybe I'll even draw a good picture or two by the end of the season!



EMMA KATENE MEDIUM ALISON

Who is Medium Alison?

Medium Alison is a bright, curious, and mostly optimistic 20 yr old woman who feels a lot of anxiety about fitting in and new experiences. She has grown up learning what 'normal' little girls are and should be. This means she feels wrong or not good enough as she is, and has this excitement, joy and almost childlike sincerity when she finds validation. In the world of the play, she feels like the comic relief.

How do you embody Medium Alison?

She kind of flits between a little ball of excitement and frozen in feelings so her body is quite interesting. It's like I'm trying to make my t-shirt fabric or my pants not touch my skin as much as possible, because that means Medium Alison's body isn't being perceived which is great because then she'll fit in more. But also her elbows sit in her waist, she kinda holds herself from her tummy, and is a bit hunched in her shoulders. This is partially to help control her movements, and anxiety while also being able to sing; but mostly so I have an ab by the end of the season.

How do the different design elements like costume or set impact your performance? What helps and how?

Because Medium Alison is a young woman exploring what femininity and masculinity mean to her, clothing really impacts the character. The fit of a shirt might cause her to be more uncomfortable in one scene than another, so it's helpful when the costume designer puts me in shirts that are the right fit and shape for the emotions of the character and the scene. Being physically restricted in a scene feels similar to being emotionally restricted. I also found the notebook/sketchpad she carries around really helpful to find the physicality, it introduces a whole bunch of questions like does she try to hide behind it? Is it an extension of her limbs or is she too uncool? etc.

How have you approached showing Medium Alison's relationship with other characters in the play?

I personally have thought a lot about the time period this was written for and what that means for audiences looking through that lens and also about our time period now. Trying to marry the authenticity of the story and it's setting, to feelings that Aotearoa audiences will be able relate to is so important and



has been great to figure out with Kathleen. All these relationships tell me about who Medium Alison is as a person too because I have to remember that MA is experiencing all the things she does in the play, in real time. So I as the actor might know the play is going to do this but MA doesn't, which is where her authenticity and optimism matters.

My focus towards Joan has been finding the place between queer joy, overwhelming emotions, and the oh too familiar awkwardness of having a crush for the first time. This has been fun to also marry our characters together in the wider context of queer representation. There are so many different ways to be a human being, so many ways to be a New Zealander, so many ways to be queer. We have an opportunity to portray 5 different ways of expressing queerness to varying degrees, which isn't thaaat many but we'll take it! Many people outside the LGBT++ communities often meet or hear about the loud, obvious, or expressive stereotypes of queer that exist. But many people might not notice the quiet nerdy (or confident) ones, or the bigger bodied, or the married and bisexual, and sometimes even themselves. Finding the mix has been super cool and has landed slightly more masculine than I feel within myself - which has made my long, super curly hair, very annoying in rehearsals because "Emma's" hair feels wrong for "Alison's" hair.

Finding a focus for my father has been interesting because the pain of not being or feeling loved can sometimes come across as grief, which is not what we want when trying to pretend a tragedy isn't coming up. So, we injected some optimism and joy into that relationship, which added to this weird family dynamic you'll see in the show.

MA's relationship with her mother has been the hardest to find because we speak very little and when we do there are some big emotions going around. Kathleen is incredible and we worked the mum and daughter phone call many times just being face to face, right in front of one another which was super helpful to get this sense of wanting, push and pull that they have. Mother/Daughter relationships are often rife with unmet expectations and tumultuous emotions so I definitely didn't need to think about this from an 80's specific standpoint.

MICHAEL LEE PORTER BRUCE BECHDAL

Briefly tell us about Bruce in your own words.

Bruce loves fine things, even if re-purposed from the dump, with a speciality in faux Victoriana and Rococo style. Avid reader and lover of literature. A High School English teacher as well as a Funeral Director. If he had his 'drothers' he wouldn't have married, and would be happily living with a guy, or single and fancy free. He resents the life he has, as his garish restored furniture, doing up decrepit old victorian mansions, library of books, aren't enough.

Sadly, he takes his frustration out on his wife Helen and his kids, who just seem to annoy him most of the time. His mood swings and passive-aggressive behaviour in his private life are covered up with a shiny veneer in public life, where he plays the doting husband and father. He has urges that he gives into, stupidly and reprehensibly sometimes.

How do you embody Bruce?

The same way I approach any script; homework, start with text analysis; what he says about about characters (in private/public) what others say about him, to him, or to others in private, research; what other things are referenced in the text that relate to him, e.g. the books he, or Medium, Older Alison mention, why were those books specifically mentioned - in great scripts nothing is mentioned without a reason, I found the more I researched those books, the more imagery I found, e.g. the themes of Icarus and his father Daedalus. He also uses books as a way to convey things, even if what he wants to convey is so obscure, it takes years to understand.

So to embody all the 'Stuff' that is Bruce, you have to rely on the above, but then distill it to the given circumstances of the play. What is happening at the moment in the scene, what has just happened, what is about to happen. It's a tricky play, we're told right at the end of the opening number that he kills himself. But, one must not let that influence the way anything is played for the first 90 minutes. The audience knows what's coming but he doesn't. Each scene has to be played for the truth of that moment. What are the objectives of those moments, what are the obstacles that stop him from reaching those.

It's a hard role to inhabit as he destroys so many peoples lives, so we have little cute rituals after scenes where he is cruel (especially to Helen and Small Alison) to release the tension and shake-off

the nasty things he says and does. I find it really hard to be so brutish to other humans, to quote Bruce "I was rather sensitive when I was little", I still am, my parents used to scream at each other and were quite violent to each other, I wanted to black it all out, (just like Small Alison). Short version: listen and react to whats happening; and the text & reaction in the moment dictates the path.

Are there any techniques you use to manage your vocal and physical health over the course of rehearsals and performance season?

For rehearsals (especially if we start early,) I do a gentle physical warm-up with special add-ins from my physio, to look after my creaky aging joints, I never overdo singing warmups, I absolutely do a vocal warmup, but I judge that based on the vocal range of the character. Then from performance onwards, I also do a spoken voice warmup about 30 mins before 'curtain up', consisting of tongue twisters, and covering all consonants and vowel combinations.

Given that it is live theatre, there can be variation from show to show. Do you consciously think about variation in your own performance?

I don't try and make it different, but I do my best to listen and react in the moment, as that's the only way to honestly play a scene, and if the offer from another actor is varied, or the mood is different, or if the theatre is hotter or colder than usual, that can add a difference to the way you say something, or react. In a musical there are more checkpoints you have to hit because often the underscoring dictates the time you have to say something or the band is waiting for a specific word before they continue.



Education Activities:

Unpacking the characters and the actors' performances

Exploring the characterisation of Alison through the ages:

Alison is played by three different actors, at different ages and stages of her life. This enables the audience to explore the struggles her family experienced, especially her father and how this impacted her throughout her life. Use the table below, either individually or in pairs to think about the purpose of the character Alison within the story being told in *Fun Home*:

In pairs read through both "From the Director's Mind" and "From Page to Stage - an Interview with the Musical Director."

- Sum up what purpose each version of Alison served in the telling of the story
- Outline how that actor used their voice, body, movement and space in the performance to communicate that purpose. For example; thinking about the way Adult Alison used space to show that she was the narrator of the story, looking back on her past
- Identify and describe in detail a moment in the performance where that purpose was highlighted
- Pull out quotes that are relevant to each of the Alisons from the interview with Emma and Kelly.
- Identify lines of dialogue that support the notes that you have made

Age	Purpose in the story	How the actress used techniques to communicate purpose	Powerful moment that exemplified their purpose	Quotes (from the musical or from the interview)
Small Alison				
Medium Alison				
Adult Alison				

Exploring how the actors have used their drama techniques:

An essential part of unpacking a live performance is thinking about how actors have used their drama techniques; body, voice, movement and space, to communicate the role they are playing. This allows us to think about what has motivated the actor to perform in this way. We need to unpack what they have drawn from the text of the play, what they have been directed to do, what they personally bring to the characterisation and how this comes to life physically on stage. Use the following steps to help you explore the actors choices:

Create a character profile for each of the adult characters in *Fun Home* (you have already unpacked Alison)

- Choose how you are going to create a profile - digital or on paper
- Find a picture of the character from the promotional material from The Court Theatre and google the graphic novel - include an image of the character from both
- Make notes about how the actor created the physicality of the character - body, voice, movement and use of space
- Add notes about what you think motivated the actor to portray the character like they did - add notes directly from the interview with the actor
- Identify an important moment for the character, talk about how they used techniques in this moment to convey an important idea, message or reveal something about their character
- Looking at the Spotify or YouTube playlist, choose a song or piece of music that was particularly important for the character - make notes about how they used their techniques throughout the performance of this song and what that communicated to the audience
- Create a glossary of quotes and lines from the performance that could be useful in your report or when writing your exam answers

Using techniques to deliver difficult content:

This activity should be teacher led and students should be able to opt out if they feel like it. Make sure you know your class well and discuss how you might keep yourself safe as you have this discussion.

Fun Home is a contemporary musical that deals with both hopeful and challenging content. Art including theatre is often a vehicle for exploring topics that are difficult to unpack. This allows the audience to think about what they have seen, how it has been communicated, speaking to us both emotionally and intellectually. When discussing difficult topics within performance it is important that audiences are able to explore the light and the dark in conjunction, which the structure of *Fun Home's* book and

FROM THE DESIGNERS

STELLA GARDNER COSTUME DESIGN

What were some of the key challenges in designing for this project?

Fun Home is based on a graphic novel, so the costumes are already drawn; the challenge was to change them enough to make them mine while still keeping with the original vision of the show. The script jumps around 3 eras, so figuring out what era is what, and when, and how to fit in costume changes in the short period of time the actors have to change from 70s to 80s has kept me on my toes.

What were the main influences for the set and costume design?

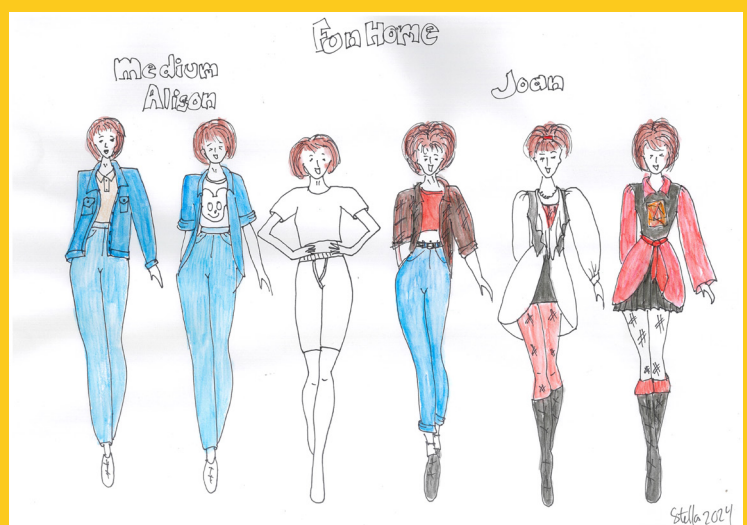
With a period piece we always have history to look back on for the design process, I researched the actual family in the show, took some inspiration from the Osmonds, The Partridge Family, Sonny and Cher, for my 70s looks. For the 80s looks I went back to my childhood and recreated some of the looks I myself wore when I was going through my own self exploration.

What are you most proud of in your design?

Usually, my costumes are so over the top, so sticking to the brief has surprised me, I have, however, added a little Stella to one scene, so there are sequins and bold designs to look out for.

In your opinion, what are the big ideas being explored in this play that your design is supporting?

The show orbits about one character and her growth as she discovers who she is, the costumes reflect that journey. As a small child she is rebelling against the normal feminine clothing choices, as a young adult she hides her feminine shape, and as an adult she settles into a combination of her former styles with a touch of nautical reflecting her journey and exploration.



RACHEL LENART LIGHTING DESIGN

How would you describe the lighting design you have created for this play?

Stylistic and atmospheric, the design is aiming to enhance the incredible set design and explore elements of the space in theatrical ways. We're using colour and angles to shift the tones and help read the story and make the timelines clear and interesting. The lighting helps guide the audience through the story, but it also has a journey and a language of its own.

What are some of the lights/fixtures you have chosen to use and why were they chosen?

There are 106 fixtures in this rig! Depth and texture in design is important to me, so I've gone for a full back and side wash to deepen and sharpen the space. Some really fun additions are the 6 movers in the rig, 2x VL4000's with mechanical gobos, and 4 mavericks (2x spots and 2 motorised profiles). Because these are so adaptable, they're pulling a lot of weight in the design! They're used as front light, side, back, set highlights and top lights as well as for effects and creating movement.

In your opinion, what are some of the central themes in *Fun Home* and how does your design help communicate them?

A central theme is an idea of behind closed doors, and the parts of ourselves we think we keep hidden, and the cost of that disconnect on the people who love us. The design explores this in tones and colour palettes, shifting from luxe, warm and ostentatious, to cold and shadowy, to joyful and playful. We're creating some shapes and angles that reveal things the characters can't always see.

It's also a coming of age story, and a story about memory, truth and reconciliation which really blurs the relationship between past and present, imagination and truth. I'm exploring this with colour and isolation, and keeping the storyteller (Alison's) relationship to the story active and present.

How does the lighting help shift the story in and out of the musical numbers?

This is an unconventional musical in that a lot of the musical numbers remain very much in the world of the everyday and emotional truth of the rest of the story. Sometimes this means there's

not much of a shift at all, or the shifts are very subtle, but there are some incredibly wild and colourful exceptions to this! I'm working with the rhythm of fades, you might not notice the first shifts into some of the musical numbers, once we are in there, some surreal, stylised and sometimes silly lighting states happen, but by the end of the number, we generally return to where we left, or an evolution of where we left.

There is one musical number that is simply an extremely slow fade to a stylised isolation, over 2 and a half minutes, it looks amazing!

Is there a particular moment in the play that you are especially pleased about in regard to your design?

There are several! I've really enjoyed playing with the architecture and the set pieces in the raised spaces, I'm really happy with the evolution of the states in 'Ring of Keys' and a couple of the key story shifts and theatrical moments. I'm enjoying exploring the way the lights are responding to and talking to the musical score.

At the time of writing, we are still building the climax and finale states, and I'm really excited about the lighting landscape and language we're finding here.



HANNAH MCDUGALL SET DESIGN

What were some of the key challenges in designing for this project?

Sightlines! The main stage of The Court Theatre is wide and deep and that can be a challenge. *Fun Home* is a musical, so I wanted to give the creative team a space with room for choreography, plus it had to include space for musicians. Also, the story of *Fun Home* spans across multiple locations and decades, so I wanted to create a space that could be sectioned off into segments to represent different worlds in the production - it had to have the capability of being simultaneously expansive and intimate.

All this means I need as much space as possible, and therefore not an inch of stage space is wasted - masking and storage space is incorporated into the set elements, platforms at height were utilized to add more play room, and the set spans the entirety of the stage.

What were the main influences for the set design?

I was influenced by the interior architecture of antique revival homes. Abstract manipulation of space. Minimalism. But the primary influence for the set was the role that it needed to play in relation to the whole production.

How does the set reflect the world of this play?

Fun Home is set in the world of memory. The set reflects this by being an abstracted version of the family home. Details have been minimized, exaggerated, and manipulated to be unnatural, as a constant reflection we are not dwelling in the world of the 'everyday'.

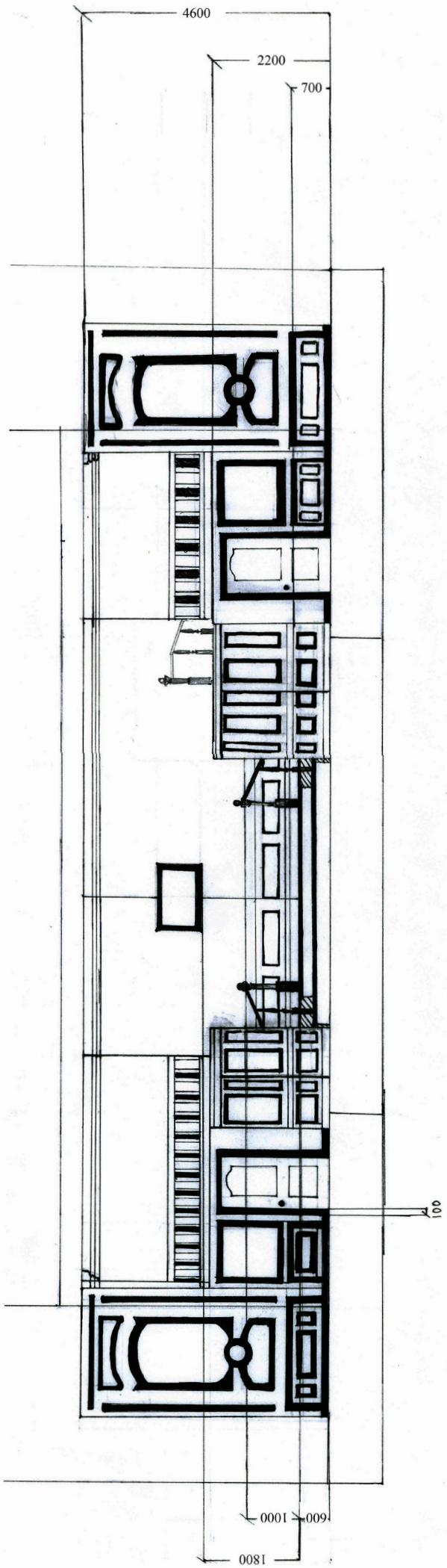
What are you most proud of in your design?

I'm most proud of how the design inspired my creative collaborators - the artistic team that supported me in the manifestation from paper to stage were invested in the design, and felt compelled to contribute their creativity and problem solving skills, as well as apply care and thoughtfulness in the construction process. The work becomes infinitely more successful when more brains are contributing to the conversations, and to inspire other artists to flex their craft is a massive achievement. When it comes to the design itself, I am most proud of the way the set exhibits a quality - it has an aura about it. It's haunting. It transcends beyond objects in space.

In your opinion, what are the big ideas being explored in this play that your design is supporting?

A lot of what the set design is supporting is centered around technical stage-craft requirements, however an important element to the production is the emotional weight which the performers carry so elegantly, so I wanted to ensure they 'popped' in the space. The play explores complicated ideas around family, our relationship to the past, and finding a sense of identity, and the set design has been laid out in a way that speaks to each of these ideas through aesthetics and how it is set up for performers to occupy.





Education Activities:

Exploring design choices

Drawing out important evidence from the design interviews:

- Reference the interviews from the designers above
- Use the following template to collect information from each of the design interviews: [Read Write Think - Seed Discussion Template](#)
- Use this information to support your report writing, exam revision and to complete the activities below.

Connection with the source material - elements of the Graphic Novel

The source material for the musical *Fun Home* is Alison Bechdel's graphic novel by the same name. The designers pay homage to the graphic novel elements within their use of technological design. In small groups take one of the activities below and unpack them. Make sure within the class, each of the activities is covered. Ensure that you share your information back to the entire class.

- **Lighting and Sound:** Choose a moment from the performance where lighting and sound were used in conjunction to deliver a key message or impactful moment to the audience. Sketch the moment like a panel in a graphic novel (a distinct segment of the comic, containing a combination of image and text in endless variety) and annotate it with as much detail as possible, so that someone who hasn't seen it could imagine what that moment looked like on stage.
- **Technology to transition:** Discuss the staccato or short nature of the scenes and how this structure reflects the way a graphic novel is laid out in panels. Use the following table to unpack how technology was used to support the swift and choppy transitions to bring the graphic novel to life. Make notes about how each technology achieved this:

Costume	Sound	Lighting	Set	Props	Special Effects

- **Props, Costumes, Hair and Makeup:** Identify, sketch and annotate props that were important to the story being told and how costumes and hair/ makeup were used to link to the original graphic novel panels or the real life person in Alison Bechdel's case. Link quotes from the designers of these areas about what they were trying to achieve.
- **Key Images:** Identify and sketch the key images of the performance. Annotate in detail how they were created physically by the actors and through the use of technology, especially projections. Add details about what those key images were communicating to the audience, how they connected to the idea of the graphic novel and why they were highlighted in the way they were.

Strategic staging to create the “House on Maple Avenue” and the wider world of the play:

The set design of *Fun Home* plays several important roles in the way this story is told. It sets the scene for the audience in terms of the aesthetic nature of the home that Bruce Bechdel works so hard to maintain. It also serves as the space for multiple locations through time; Middle Alison's dorm room, the funeral home, New York and the highway on the way to Bruce Bechdel's other property. It also serves as Adult Alison's memory, as she looks back on her father's struggles and how that impacted her life and that of her family.

Use the following activities to explore the multi-functional set:

- **The house on Maple Avenue:** (small groups or pairs) Sketch the set, annotate the colours and textures you saw in the design. Or you could reference an image of the set in this pack.
 - Listen to the song 3. Welcome to Our House on Maple Avenue - Fun Home OST
 - Annotate your sketch or the picture with details that are highlighted in the song
 - Discuss why the design of the house was so important to the story, in particular the characterisation of Bruce Bechdel
 - Discuss why Bruce Bechdel works so hard to maintain the house.
- **Exploring Adult Alison's memory:** (as a class) Brainstorm as a class all the ways the set is a space for both Adult Alison and the audience to explore her memories of her life. You should discuss both the real places and her imaginary spaces, such as the disco scene and the advert for the Fun Home. Take a picture of your brainstorm and save it in a shared digital space so you can reference the ideas when you are constructing your report or revising for your exam.
 - **Extension activity:** storyboard one moment where it is clear that Adult Alison is exploring her memories, including detailed captions and dialogue from the performance.

NCEA LEVEL ONE EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

After viewing *Fun Home* your teacher will support you to unpack the show with your peers and to construct an individual report which you will submit in October this year. The following questions and activities will support you to unpack the performance with the assessment specifications in mind.

You can find the specifications for both Level One externals via this link: [Level One Assessment Specifications](#)

Your report will be based around the following three points:

- Key message
- The use of drama components; techniques, elements, conventions and techniques
- Wairua of performance, which captures your personal response and experience of *Fun Home*

You could aim to weave the three points throughout your report.

Unpacking key messages:

When you get back to class, sit in a circle with a small bean bag or ball that you can pass across the room.

- Pass the ball or small bean bag across the circle when you have a key message to contribute.
- Someone should take note of all the ideas put forward.

There might be an obvious overriding message but try to think of all the messages that were communicated throughout the play, so that you can have a deep and robust discussion about the play.

Your focus question is:

“What do you think the key messages of *Fun Home* were?”

- In groups or pairs choose one idea from the wider brainstorm.
- Write down how the message was communicated to the audience; through acting, directorial or design choices.
- Note down specific moments where the key message was highlighted to the audience (remember that this will be different from person to person, it is ok if your understanding is different from your partner).
- From your discussions do a short presentation back to the class about your key message, how it was highlighted in the show and why you thought it was important.
- Gain feedback and thoughts from your peers.

Individual activity: Choose one of the key messages that haven't been touched on and complete one of the following activities to explore whether you had a personal reaction to it:

- A voice note or vlog discussing what the key message was, how it was highlighted and how you connected with it.
- A sketch with annotations of a specific moment that highlighted this key message.
- A short essay (200 words) about the key message and why you connected to it.

Exploring moments where drama components were used effectively:

Before you start discussing *Fun Home*, make sure you understand what techniques, elements, conventions and technologies are. Break down a glossary of words with your teacher and make sure you know how to use them when you are talking and writing about live performance.

Split into four groups with each group taking one component each.

- Note down important moments in the performance where that component highlighted the key message
- Add brief sketches and annotate details of the moments as you discuss
- Add notes, quotes (from the actor/director/designer or from the play) and your own thoughts

Each group will share their information back to the class and upload all the information to a shared space; such as a google classroom, OneDrive or up on your classroom wall.

Individual activity: Looking at all the unpacking your class has done together around use of components, complete the following activity to support the construction of your report. Extending on the key message you have already used or a new one that means more to you. You can record this work in whatever way suits you best; writing, slides, vlog, voice note or in role (be creative)

- Choose a moment where this key message was highlighted by all or a combination of components
- Explicitly explain the moment and the use of components
- Add details, examples from the performance and quotes
- Use specific drama terminology in every part of your response
- Sketch and annotate if you think that will help you to elaborate your ideas

Wairua of performance:

As part of your reflection on *Fun Home* and in the construction of your report you will need to explore your own personal response and the 'wairua of performance.' Your teacher will have access to the unpacking of this standard which gives you a more detailed explanation and can explore this with you in class.

"Personal response will be from their perspective, as either an audience member, or performer. They will also understand how the wairua of a performance is channelled through the performers, and how the use of drama components can influence how effectively it is projected onto the audience." - 1.4 Unpacking

Questions to ask yourself to explore your personal response to the performance:

- What did you feel during the performance?
- What thoughts did you have during the performance?
- What have you been feeling since?
- What have you been thinking about since?
- What do you need to discuss further with your teacher, your family or your peers?
- What conversations have you had?

Group activity: In small groups, brainstorm all the moments that the audience visibly reacted during the performance.

- Why were they reacting to these moments?
- What was the actor doing at the time?
- What decisions did the designer and directors make in these moments?
- Did the audience's reaction impact your thoughts, feelings or ideas at this moment?

Individual activity: Write or record a reflection based around the following prompt, incorporating responses to the questions above.

What thoughts, feelings or responses did the performance of *Fun Home* prompt you to think about? How did the decisions that the director/designers made or the performance of the actor contribute to these thoughts, feelings or responses?

Once you have completed the activities outlined you can start to explore how you might use ideas, thoughts and evidence compiled to build your report. Remember it needs to be your own work and that you can present your ideas in a way that suits you best.



REVISION QUESTIONS FOR NCEA LEVEL TWO AND THREE

If you are a Level Two or Three student these revision questions are curated to support you to be able to answer your exam questions. You need to think carefully about the answers that come up as you work through the questions and how your thoughts, evidence and physical examples could be used in your exam responses.

The assessment specifications for both Level Two and Level Three are linked below:

Level Two: [Level Two Assessment Specifications](#)

At Level Two you "should be familiar with the use of **drama elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies**". Questions may cover a combination of all four drama components.

Level Three: [Level Three Assessment Specifications](#)

At Level Three you will be expected to

- "Make connections between the director / designer's concept(s) and the performance seen."
- "Be familiar with the use of drama components such as elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies."
- Think about wider context
 - "the performance as a whole
 - the playwright's purpose
 - the nature and/or purpose of theatre as an art form
 - the social or historical context. Questions may cover a combination of drama components such as elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies."

Questions to help you think about the actors creation of character and their use of techniques: (Answer the questions for one or more of the actors in the performance.)

- How did the actor use techniques to create his/her character? Give specific examples from the performance.
- How did the actors use their voice to create a connection with the audience?
- How did the actors use their body language and use of the space to build a

- connection with the audience?
- Why was it important that the actor's use of tone and pitch was empathetic with the subject matter of the performance?
- How did the actors use gesture and posture to communicate the characters age, thoughts and feelings?
- How did the actors use the space to create a sense of time and place in a specific moment in the performance?
- How did the actors use space/proximity and eye contact when breaking the fourth wall with the audience? Why was this important to the story being told?
- How did the actors use pace and body energy to move the story along? Give specific examples from the performance.

Questions to help you think about the use of conventions in performance: "strategies established to make meaning and connect to wider context."

- Discuss a moment in the performance where a drama convention was used effectively to move the story forward.
- Explain how a convention or a combination of conventions were used in a performance. How did this use of conventions create a sense of mood or atmosphere?
- How did the use of a convention build tension during an important moment in the performance?
- Discuss how the use of a convention helped to create meaning in a moment in the performance?
- Discuss how the use of a convention or combination of conventions in a specific moment helped you think about the big ideas and themes of the play.
 - What was the wider context (socially, historically, politically or geographically) that this moment linked to?

Questions to help you think about the directors choices and use of drama elements:

- Choose a moment in the performance where you think the director tried to build tension?
- How did the director build mood and atmosphere?
- Discuss what you think the director's concept was and what key messages they wanted the audience to focus on.

- Discuss how the director collaborated with the designers to focus the audience on the key messages, ideas and themes of the performance?
- Discuss how the director created a sense of time and place in the choices they made around staging. Give physical examples from the performance.
- Discuss why you think this play is important for audiences to watch? Why this play, at this point in time?
- Discuss how this play heals, entertains, educates or transforms the audience and the directors role in communicating that message.

Questions to help you think about design and use of technologies: reference the design information in this pack to support your answer.

- How did lighting and the choices the designer made create mood and atmosphere?
- Discuss how the costumes and hair/makeup supported a sense of place, time and linked to the source material - Bechdel's graphic novel.
- Discuss how the set supported the pace of the play and reflected the way a graphic novel is structured.
- How did sound enhance the tension and mood of the performance?
- Discuss the significance of the props used in the performance and how they communicated the themes, ideas, messages and symbols.
- Make notes on the purpose of the time period set and costuming, as well as setting it in one location - the Maple Avenue house? Why was it important in this particular type of story?

Further resources:

Alison Bechdel Interview - <https://www.metroweekly.com/2017/04/drawing-on-life-an-interview-with-fun-homes-alison-bechdel/>

Fun Home Closes on Broadway - <https://womenandhollywood.com/the-revolutionary-fun-home-ends-its-broadway-run-34b5b84b474/>

Cast of Fun Home visits the original house - <https://slate.com/human-interest/2015/03/funhome-on-broadway-cast-members-visit-the-house-where-the-real-story-happened.html>

Lesbians and Ring of Keys: A Cultural Love Story - article about [signalling/ symbolism] and exploring the metaphors used in [song] - <https://slate.com/human-interest/2016/12/the-lesbian-love-of-key-rings-and-carabinersexplained.html>

Timeline of LGBT history in the United States - <https://www.gsafewi.org/wp-content/uploads/US-LGBT-Timeline-UPDATED.pdf>

Alison Bechdel's opening night comic, published in Vermont's Seven Days - <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/arts-culture/fun-home-the-musical-2393463>

Glossary

From the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre with additional information by The Court Theatre

1950s Lesbian Pulp Novel - pulp fiction was written about fantastic, sensational topics, and gets its name from the low-quality wood pulp paper on which it was printed. These inexpensive novels were not considered "high-brow."

Araby - A short story in *Dubliners*, a collection James Joyce published in 1914. The story deals with the end of childhood and discovery of a world beyond that in which the main character grew up.

Asexual - an asexual person is one who does not experience sexual attraction. It is an intrinsic part of who a person is, like other sexualities (not to be confused with celibacy, which is a choice). This definition is from and more information is available at <https://www.asexuality.org>.

Barette - Hair clip (also known as a slide), which clasps hair in place.

Bohemian - unconventional; usually describing someone literary or artistic

Brinley - Daniel Putnam Brinley was an American painter whose works reflected his residence of Connecticut.

Butch - Someone who identifies and presents as masculine. While it's most often used to talk about masculine lesbians, butch can also describe masculine queer men or queer people of other genders. (Gender Nation Glossary). The history of this term is available in an article by them. <https://www.them.us/story/inqueery-butch>

Colette - Sidonie - Gabrielle Collette was a French author and stage performer who lived from 1873-1954. She lived openly as a bisexual woman and her writing often dealt with queer themes, romance, and erotica. Collette was nominated for a Nobel Prize in literature in 1948.

Crew cut - a short haircut which resembles the bristles of a brush.

Dungarees - Dungaree is a denim-like fabric, so this word can refer to pants or an overall-like garment. In the *Fun Home* graphic novel, the character that Alison sees with a ring of keys is wearing jeans.

Dyke - Formerly and sometimes still considered a derogatory word to describe queer women. Some women have taken back the word, however, and use it for themselves. Do not call someone a dyke unless you know that they have reclaimed the word. (Gender Nation Glossary)

Euphemism - when referring to something unpleasant or taboo, a more mild or indirect word or expression

Formaldehyde - A strong-smelling disinfectant and preservative used for biological matter.

Gay - The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, and/

or emotional attractions are to people of the same gender (e.g., gay man, gay people). Sometimes lesbian (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. Identifying gay people as "homosexuals," is an outdated term and can be considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people. (Gender Nation Glossary)

Hectoring - to speak in an intimidating, bullying, or harassing way

Hepplewhite suite chairs - Hepplewhite was a neoclassical furniture maker in 1700s England, known for a simple, elegant style.

Dresden figurines - German porcelain ornament prized by collectors, known for their delicate portrayal of fabric.

Histrionics - a theatrical, deliberate performance of emotion

Hughes and Plath - Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath were American poets. They married, had two living children, and lost one to miscarriage. Hughes had an affair and the marriage ended in 1962. Plath died by suicide in 1963, and after her death, letters were discovered written by Plath to her psychiatrist in which she alleged physical and psychological abuse by Hughes. Assia Wevill, the woman with whom Hughes had an affair, also died by suicide in 1969. More information available here: <https://www.literaryladiesguide.com/literary-musings/relationship-sylvia-plath-tedhughes/>.

Humectant - retaining or preserving moisture

Jack in the pulpit - A plant native to North America (*Arisaema triphyllum*) that resembles a figure standing in a pulpit.

Jean Stafford and Robert Lowell - Stafford was an American writer (1915-1979) who was especially known for writing female characters who had to confront the restrictions of society. She had an addiction to alcohol. Lowell was an American poet (1917-1977) who was noted for his autobiographical poetry, including poems about his mental illness and time confined in hospital. They were briefly married in a relationship that included a traumatic car accident and alleged domestic violence.

Jungian Rebirth - Carl Jung (1875-1961) was an influential psychoanalyst who identified five types of rebirth as a renewal or transformation of personality.

Land Shark - references a 1975 Saturday Night Live recurring sketch which parodies the movie Jaws. A land-dwelling shark knocks on peoples' doors and denies its identity, and then eats them when they answer the door. See the original sketch at <https://www.imdb.com/videooplayer/vi3999373593>.

Lesbian - A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay (adj.) or as gay women. Identifying lesbians as "homosexuals" may be considered a derogatory term. (Gender Nation Glossary)

Manic - an abnormally elevated mood state; including excessive or unreasonable enthusiasm.

Prodigal - from the biblical parable of The Prodigal Son, someone who returns to a place after leaving it for somewhere far away. Can also mean a wasteful expenditure, and the Cambridge

Dictionary deepens the definition to the person leaving to do something that their family disapproves of and returns feeling regretful.

Senior, Junior - Grades in high school; a senior is grade 12 and a junior grade 11 in the United States. The New Zealand equivalent would be roughly year 12 (junior) and year 13 (senior).

Red Baron with his Sopwith Camel - From history.com - The Red Baron was the nickname of WWI German fighter pilot Manfred von Richthofen, and the Sopwith Camel a biplane. Small Alison might be referencing the historical figure or Snoopy the dog in the comic Peanuts by Charles Schultz; Snoopy often imagines that his doghouse is a plane and he is a "World War 1 flying ace" with the Red Baron as his nemesis.

Roman-a-clef - a novel in which real people and events are presented in a veiled way including under disguise or with invented names.

William Morris (wallpaper) - "The 19th century's most celebrated designer" (Victoria and Albert Museum) who was best known for his textile and wallpaper designs using natural motifs.

Winogrand - Garry Winogrand (1928-1984) was an American street photographer best known for his candid photographs of New Yorkers in the 1960s and 70s.

Word is Out - Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives was the first full-length documentary film about lesbian and gay identity with an entirely gay production team. The transcript of the film was released as a book in 1978; it is in this format that Alison encounters the interviews in *Fun Home*.

**DO YOU FEEL
MY HEART
SAYING HI?**

