

Book by Makena Reynolds
Music & Lyric: Teagan Reynolds
Additional Composition: JT Kaufman



The Emily Dickinson Musical



UROP Presentation by Makena Reynolds



The background is a deep purple gradient, darker at the top and lighter at the bottom. It is decorated with numerous white, multi-pointed stars of varying sizes, some appearing as bright, out-of-focus light sources. Soft, white, wispy cloud-like shapes are scattered across the upper half of the image, adding a dreamy, ethereal quality.

“It’s timely to tell the story of Queer women in theater. More specifically, it is important to tell the story of women through the female lens. Theater has the influence to sway audiences and tell them what is or is not important. The material currently available to produce within the theater industry does not accurately mirror the values of society today. Plays and musicals written by women for women are scarce, and to foster female theater artists intent on making change to the industry and society they require good material that supports it.”

Material Available for Women Divided by Era

Golden Age Musicals: Character tropes for women as reflected in musicals like “Oklahoma”

Laurey - Swooning, ingenue, who’s entire plot line revolves around her relationship with Curly and avoidance of Judd.

Ado Annie - Hypersexualized, woman, swooning over Will Parker.

Post Golden Age/Pre-Contemporary: Character tropes for women as reflected in musicals like “Sweet Charity”

Charity- A woman who is chasing after a man to make her feel complete and whole. Allows men into her life who treat her poorly.

'The Emily Dickinson Musical': A Poet In Her Own Terms



Mariah Stanelle and Eva Merrill for "The Emily Dickinson Musical." (Courtesy Open Door Productions)

By **Tervela Georgieva**, Arts Writer



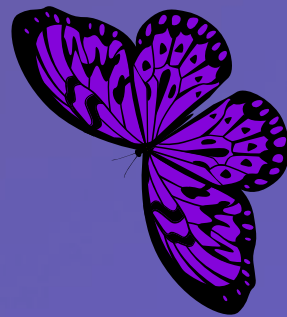


“I’ve been thinking about the meaning of representation since the musical, and I’ve discovered that part of representation is allowing a person to be complex – regardless of whether we relate to their complexity or understand it. It’s about a person showing us their complexity, rather than us trying to explain their complexity.”



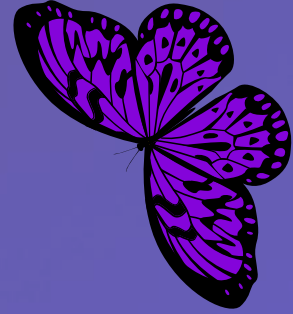
Source Material

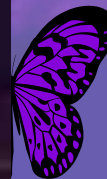
- ❖ In the bare minimum that I previously knew about Emily Dickinson, it felt odd to me that she has only existed as a literary ghost. She has barely any footprint other than her published poems. Not to mention, the subject of her poems were vague. In reading “Lives Like Loaded Guns” by Lyndall Gordon and “Open Me Carefully” arranged by Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith, it became clear that there was more information on the life of the poet than I previously thought. We just had to do some more digging, and be open to the complexities we’d unfurl about Emily.



The Truth About Emily Dickinson's History

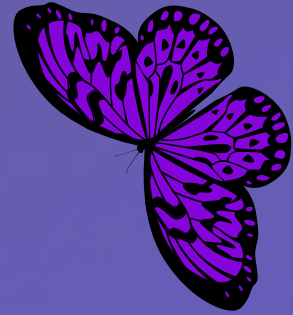
- ❖ Now, I am not an Emily Dickinson expert. I am by no means parading around as someone who claims to know the real Emily. For one, we will never really know who she truly was. No matter how many letters we read and decipher, the truth behind Emily's thoughts will always be unknown. Furthermore, to claim that my perception of the secluded poet is the only truth would be harmful. Where I aim to bring "the truth" forward, I must acknowledge that it is still only my truth no matter how much I discover regarding Emily.





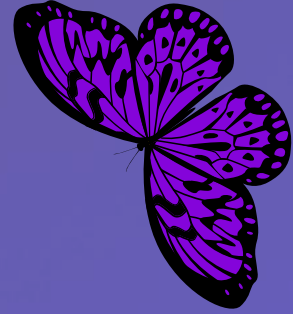
Legacy

- ❖ This thought about legacy has remained with the creative team throughout this entire writing process. While we know we would be taking artistic liberties, we also knew that this was a version of Emily Dickinson we believe to be truer to herself. It has been difficult finding that line between reality and fiction because at this point, this version of Emily feels so real to all of us on the creative team.



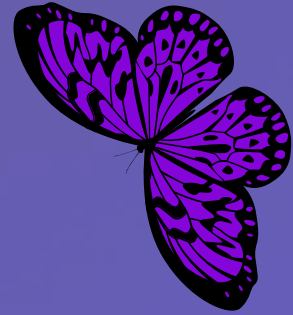
“Lives Like Loaded Guns” & “Open Me Carefully”

- ❖ “Lives Like Loaded Guns” focuses on Mabel’s reign and how her edits led to society’s current perceptions of Emily Dickinson. “Open Me Carefully” is the careful organization of letters and poems between Sue and Emily to demonstrate their clearly romantic relationship. Each of these books had what the other left out, and in reading the two almost simultaneously, it was fairly easy to piece Emily’s life together. Especially when working with authentic letters from people like Emily, Sue, Austin, and Mabel, it is very easy to read between the lines.



Final Thoughts

- ❖ People say that her work was “saved from the flames” but at what cost?
- ❖ How could who tells your story affect your legacy?





Thank you so much
for your time!



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regarding The Emily
Dickinson Musical visit
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[@emilydickinsonmusical](https://www.instagram.com/emilydickinsonmusical)

