



Courtesy of Syracuse Stage

THE WOMEN of the Syracuse Stage production of "Little Women": (from left) Aisling Halpin as Amy, Jenaha McLearn as Beth, Mary Kate Morrissey as Meg and Sarah Shahinian as Jo.

Familiar Themes

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those in their acquaintance. "You can follow their journey. They're not strangers to you by the end of the play," says director and choreographer Anthony Salatino.

He says the play's themes — values, conflicts, struggles, death and family relationships — are familiar to everyone.

"It has nothing to do with gender. That's an important thing. It has to do with life experiences and how do we overcome, how do we find opportunity out of a crisis. What lessons are we learning through all this," he says. "Love is the thing that holds it all together."

Of course, music cements this "Little Women."

Salatino describes the lyrics as beautiful and easy to understand. "The great thing about the music is that it continues the plot and character development. So the songs are not just songs of emotional value, although they exist. But, it's the character also forwarding the plot and the character's own journey during the song."

The lives of the March women aren't the only drama of "Little Women." The musical has had a storied history since its beginnings in 1998. Composer Kim Oler and lyricist Alison Hubbard collaborated on "Little Women" for a Broadway debut, but were removed from the project long before opening night in 2005. After some time, the two returned to the musical. Songs were added, old songs rewritten and a new



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book by Sean Hartley was finished. It received a full production in 2004. But, "Little Women" remained a work in progress.

Kemp saw the opportunity for students in SU drama's New Play Workshop Program in 2007. Oler and Hubbard, both based in Long Island, continued to make changes as the workshop progressed. Afterward, Kemp lobbied Timothy Bond, Stage's producing artistic director, to schedule "Little Women" as a future main stage holiday presentation. It is a joint production of Syracuse Stage and SU's Department of Drama.

And, once again, Kemp plays a part in giving life to "Little Women."

Special events

These are some of the special events Syracuse Stage is holding in conjunction with "Little Women." All events are held at Syracuse Stage, 820 E. Genesee St., Syracuse.

Today: "Live in the Sutton." After "Little Women" performance, ESP jazz quartet will perform in Sutton Pavilion.

Sunday: "Actor Talkback." The cast of "Little Women" will remain for a question-and-answer session after the 7 p.m. show.

Dec. 5: There will be a "Welch Allyn Signed Interpreted Performance" of the 3 p.m. show.

Dec. 9: Dennis J. Connors, curator of history at Onondaga Historical Association, will discuss Louisa May Alcott's connection to Central New York through her uncle, Samuel Joseph May, a Unitarian minister, abolitionist and advocate for women's rights, at 1 p.m. before the 2 p.m. matinee.

Through Dec. 27: In Syracuse Stage's lobby, the Onondaga Historical Association has organized an exhibit of Louisa May Alcott's connections to Syracuse during the 19th century: Her uncle was Samuel J. May, who lived in Syracuse. May Memorial Unitarian Universality Society, 3800 E. Genesee St., is named after him. Two of Alcott's sisters also lived and taught school here during the 1850s.