

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

I was first introduced to some of the music from *Fugitive Songs* my junior year of high school in 2007 at Westhill. The very first number I heard is arguably the show's most familiar: "Spring Cleaning", which was sung by (now) Broadway veteran and epic comedienne, Heléne Yorke – who at the time was a senior musical theatre major at the University of Michigan. The video of this performance had been uploaded to Youtube – then a new convention – and the person who shared it was Korey Buecheler, who not a year later would be studying musical theatre at Elon University alongside original *Fugitive Songs* cast member Barrett Wilbert Weed. And as Korey queued up the video in the chorus room, on Mr. Buchmann's projector, she told me and Danny Monroe: "This performance is f*cking incredible, and it's going to change your life."

Obviously, she was right (and much like Heléne and Barrett, has since made her Broadway debut).

But even as of a year ago, I *never* saw this coming. While cooped up in my Harlem apartment, making the most out of quarantine, I found myself – day by day – once again revisiting *Fugitive Songs*, clamoring to remain in Manhattan; relentlessly wondering, "*If I stay, if I stay...*"

I remember buying the original *Fugitive Songs* album on iTunes in 2012, elated that both "Annie's Party" and "Spring Cleaning" had finally found a home. I later took my first true dive into the score while on tour in 2013, visiting – for the first time – many of the places the show depicts (my favorite of which was *undoubtedly* Colorado). In 2014, after I was fired from a gig solely for having a boyfriend (in Branson, MO), "I Could Go Back" resonated deeply – especially as Missouri is still the furthest I've lived from home. But probably most notably, I remember clinging to *Fugitive Songs* in September of 2018, shortly after my mother had passed away, when my life was upside down.

In essence, not only has this score accompanied my life's greatest adversities, but it's also been, in effect, pretty parallel to my career as an artist. And it is with that sustained, heartfelt connection that I hope I've helped create something meaningful in kind. As Thanasis' debut production, it belongs to the 20+ outrageously talented artists and artisans – who've all helped shape it with their hearts, souls, bodies and minds. And I couldn't be prouder that it's a production intended to inspire change throughout this community. Because the inconvenient truth is that change is long overdue in every facet of entertainment – whether on Broadway, in Hollywood, or even at home in Syracuse.

Furthermore, this production of *Fugitive Songs* is unlike any that's come before it. We are in fact the first company (at least to ours and the composers' knowledge) to present the show as one singular narrative with six principal characters – as opposed to a song cycle with 19 separate stories. According to Nathan Tysen, this was the show's original intention, but neither he nor Chris Miller – nor their closest friends and colleagues – could ever "figure it out", as he told me back in February.

Personally? I pray to god we've done the two of them justice. Whether or not we've solved every question they themselves left unanswered is entirely up for discussion – which is precisely why **we hope you'll join us for a brief talkback following the performance.**

Given the show's content as well as the experimental nature of this production, we'd love to hear your thoughts, and answer what we can (in the span of no more than 30 minutes). Please just know: the infusion of Substance Abuse Disorder into the plot of the show was not something we took lightly in rehearsals, or at any point during the process. In fact, I made sure we had the invaluable Moe Harrington (from ACR Health) to shepherd us – who, in addition to training our cast members in how to administer Narcan, gave us a full-on power point presentation regarding the realities of the opioid epidemic still ravaging America today.

Lastly, I would like to personally dedicate this production to Kathy Ruane Tompkins – the woman who introduced me and so many other Westhill students to the theatre – whose passion and fervor I will forever carry in all that I do as an artist.

Thank you for attending our production and supporting live entertainment. We hope you enjoy the performance.

Yours,

J.R. Westfall