

# LOVABLE LUNATIC

THE LIFE & LYRICS OF DOROTHY FIELDS

by

Caitlyn Leach & Talen Piner

A Senior Honors Project Presented to the

Honors College

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for

Graduation with Honors

by

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Greenville, NC

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Approved by:

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School of Theatre and Dance

College of Fine Arts and Communication

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	3
BACKGROUND.....	4
CONTEXT.....	6
CONCLUSION.....	8
REFERENCES.....	9
APPENDIX I.....	10
APPENDIX II.....	11
APPENDIX III.....	18
APPENDIX IV.....	19

## ABSTRACT

There are not enough artistic pieces that celebrate and feature powerful women. In addition, the number of men cast in most theatrical productions usually double the number of women: the production 1776, produced here at ECU, featured a 28-member cast of 24 men and 4 women. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to produce and write a production about a woman. I was incredibly inspired by my voice teacher's revue about Jerome Kern titled "The Way You Look Tonite". But I wanted to give women a voice. I wanted to create a musical that could both educate and entertain audiences and cast members with a determined, relatable female protagonist at its center. As the most influential female writer in musical theatre from the 1920's to the 1970's, the lyricist Dorothy Fields was the perfect fit. Her vibrant story lifts and inspires women, and men, of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds. To share this incredible story, I, along with Talen Piner, cast, directed, costume designed, set designed, conceived, and wrote the new biographical musical titled *Lovable Lunatic: The Life and Lyrics of Dorothy Fields*.

## BACKGROUND

As a musical theatre student, I've always been fascinated with Aristotle's theory that theatre should both educate and entertain. Theatre gives audiences the opportunity to view a new perspective and understand a place or person that they never would've been subject to. Biographical musicals combine theatrical performance and the artist's original music to create an entertaining story that contains useful knowledge about the artist and the era that he or she lived in. Examples of this include *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* and the ever-popular *Jersey Boys*. I was first introduced to this genre, and Dorothy Fields, when I was invited to perform in Mollye Otis's musical revue about Jerome Kern titled "The Way You Look Tonite". As one of Kern's favorite collaborators, Dorothy Fields was featured as a character singing "I Won't Dance" with Jerome Kern. Performing in this musical taught the cast and I about the artists that worked with Kern, the stories behind popular songs, and the beginnings of musical theatre. Theatre teaches us valuable knowledge about the world and with this musical- the performers, the crew members, the audience, and myself- all expanded our knowledge about this incredible contributor to theatre and jazz music.

The process wasn't always the "Sunny Side of The Street"; many plans that were made in my proposal faltered and had to be adjusted. I had to switch mentors in the middle of the project! It started about two years ago when Mollye Otis accepted to be my mentor to help me write a musical revue about Dorothy Fields. With an extensive background in musical theatre singing, Mollye Otis gave me the best resources and comprehension of the jazz era to begin my research and write this project. Some of these resources included two books about Dorothy Fields, original scores from the 1950's and 60's, a few helpful websites, and the album *An Evening With Dorothy Fields*; the last being the center material of research for this musical. For my junior year, I extensively researched Dorothy, the people around her, and the multiple decades she worked through, I created a set list of songs, and I wrote a small libretto with multiple characters to create Dorothy's story. However, the way I was writing suggested more than a

small revue and I soon found myself without a mentor when Mollye was married and retired by the end of the spring.

The next year brought on a few new characters. ECU's dramaturge Jen-Scott Mobley joined as the mentor and my partner Talen Piner as the music director/choreographer to complete this project by spring semester. In our first meeting, I remember Jen-Scott saying, "It needs more. And I think you want more"; the show I was writing wasn't a small revue; it was a full-scale biographical musical. The entire fall semester was then dedicated to rewrites. Every week, I was in Jen-Scott's office presenting new material, new characters, and new scenes. During the semester, we had 2 incredibly different live readings with actors from the ECU theatre program in order to hear the work we created. But by Christmas break, we had a full functioning, 2-hour long libretto.

## CONTEXT

Dorothy's life story opens dramatically with Dorothy, at the end of her life, and the ensemble singing "Seesaw". The character Dorothy narrates the show as she and other characters in her life act through chronological flashbacks. Despite her father's and her first husband's objections, Dorothy begins writing with composer Jimmy McHugh. The pair writes together for many revues, including *Blackbirds* of 1928 at Harlem's Cotton Club featuring the popular song "I Can't Give You Anything But Love". "Then the Depression hit". Finding barely any work for 3 years, the pair moves to "The Sunny Side of the Street"-Hollywood- and splitting up soon after arriving. Dorothy works with a few composers here and there but soon finds a perfect match with Jerome Kern. The two write countless songs for Hollywood movies and even win an Oscar for "The Way You Look Tonight" from their hit film *Swing Time*. After a few years of writing with Kern, Dorothy falls in love and marries her second husband Eli LaMarr. Shortly after the marriage, Dorothy's brother Herb visits Hollywood and the two visit a carnival in which Dorothy finds inspiration for her newest musical: *Annie Get Your Gun* with Ethel Merman. Dorothy rushes to Jerry's house to share her new idea but discovers he is in the hospital, suffering from a cerebral hemorrhage. Act One ends as Dorothy laments Kern's death with the song "April Fooled Me".

Act 2 opens with the show-stopping number, with Ethel Merman at the center, "There's No Business Like Show Business". To pull her out of the dumps, Dorothy's brother Herb encourages her to "Pick Yourself Up" by writing *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn* with Arthur Schwartz. Dorothy accepts and soon goes on to write the show *Redhead* starring Gwen Verdon. Gwen does agree to star in the musical as long as Bob Fosse directs. After a few meetings and requests from both Verdon and Fosse, the two join the team and *Redhead* wins Best Musical at the Tony's. However, soon after *Redhead* opens, Herb passes away and Dorothy is again left without a partner. As the year's pass, Dorothy is found at a bar, desperately trying to adhere to the new composers in New York City. Cy Coleman appears on the scene and asks "Sweet Dorothy" to write with him to which Dorothy replies "Thank god someone asked." Together the pair writes many hits, such as "Big Spender", for their new musical *Sweet Charity* again

starring Gwen Verdon and directed by Bob Fosse. The critics glorify the new musical and celebrate Dorothy even though she's "long in the tooth." Tired of the criticism and obstacles of being a working woman lyricist, Dorothy and the female cast join together to throw away society's expectations in the song "Something Better Than This". After the number, Dorothy quickly sums up her next and last musical "Seesaw" and decides that though she will not be well remembered, "it's still been a hell of a ride." But before leaving, all members of the cast sing "Lovable Lunatic" to celebrate Dorothy's legacy.

After completing the script and story, our second semester was dedicated to the spring performance. Talen Piner and I were incredibly excited to get started with casting, organizing, and producing our production; the student-run production company at ECU, 5th Street Players, chose different productions to produce so Talen and I were on our own. Thankfully, we found a home for *Lovable Lunatic* at the Magnolia Arts Center, 5 minutes away from ECU. Christmas break and the first month of January were dedicated to research, blocking, and arranging the ensemble numbers: by the time of auditions, Talen and I were ready for a cast. The rehearsal process came with many bumps and changes but because our cast, mentor, and other productions were flexible and supportive, our production was a success. We had two incredible shows at Magnolia on April 7th at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM that inspired and educated students, parents, professors, and members of the Greenville community. Our wild rehearsal process could be summed up perfectly by Dorothy Fields: "It's almost impossible to do a show these days, but you do it anyway, for love."

## CONCLUSION

Writing, organizing, and directing this piece has helped me grow immensely as an artist. Through this show, Dorothy Fields will be known and remembered by the people who watch and listen. And thanks to Nick Leach from the ECU Film Department, the musical can be viewed online for all to enjoy at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eWWmHfDKR8&t=2168s>

*Lovable Lunatic* is not just a story; this educating and entertaining musical brings attention to Dorothy Fields' incredible work and inspire young women and men to "Pick Yourself Up, Dust Yourself Off, and Start Again!"



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APPENDIX I

POSTER



APPENDIX I

PROGRAM

CAITLYN LEACH & TALEN PINER  
PROUDLY PRESENT...

# LOVABLE LUNATIC

THE LIFE & LYRICS OF DOROTHY FIELDS

*In conjunction with the East Carolina University School of Theatre & Dance,  
the East Carolina University Honors College, and the  
Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities program*

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
2:00 pm & 8:00 pm  
Magnolia Arts Center | Greenville, NC

**ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED BY**  
CAITLYN LEACH

**BOOK BY**  
CAITLYN LEACH & TALEN PINER

**LYRICS BY**  
DOROTHY FIELDS

**MUSIC BY**  
JIMMY McHUGH, JEROME KERN, ET AL.\*

\*JIMMY McHUGH, JEROME KERN, CY COLEMAN,  
ALBERT HAGUE, ARTHUR SCHWARTZ AND IRVING BERLIN



**DRAMATURG/MENTOR**

JENNIFER-SCOTT MOBLEY, PHD

**SCENIC DESIGN/COSTUMES BY**

CAITLYN LEACH\*

**CHOREOGRAPHY BY**

TALEN PINER & CAITLYN LEACH\*\*

**MUSIC DIRECTOR/ARRANGED BY**

TALEN PINER

**DANCE CAPTAIN**

TALEN PINER

**VOCAL CAPTAIN**

JORDAN RAY MARTIN

**PROPERTY MASTER**

AYLA MAULDING

**LIGHTING DESIGN BY**

JONATHAN DESPER & TALEN PINER

**WARDROBE CREW**

KELLY TOPPIN & ELORA MONÉT

**LIGHT BOARD OPERATOR**

JONATHAN DESPER

**STAGE MANAGER**

ELORA MONÉT

**DIRECTED BY**

CAITLYN LEACH & TALEN PINER

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Running time is approximately two hours including one 15-minute intermission.

This performance includes smoking and haze.

The creation of any photograph, video, or audio recording by camera, cell phone, or any recording device whatsoever represents a copyright infringement and is strictly prohibited by law.

Caitlyn Leach and Talen Piner and the School of Theatre & Dance do not own the rights to any of the music presented in this production; the use is strictly for educational and theatrical purpose.

The characters and real persons portrayed in *Lovable Lunatic* are based on fact and thus is a biographical portrayal of such individuals, but the concepts, actions, and thoughts of them are works of fiction.

The plagiarizing of any and all choreography, original music, or scenes presented in this production is strictly prohibited.

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\*All costumes graciously provided by the ECU Costume Department and the Wilson Arts Council

\*\*All choreography by Talen Piner and Caitlyn Leach with the exception of "Ernie Fitch's Twitch" and "Big Spender": choreography excerpts by Robert Louis Fosse ©1959, ©1965

## CHARACTERS

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Dorothy Fields.....	Mila Bolash
Herb Fields.....	Dustin T. Nguyen
Lew Fields.....	Maury Allen Williams
Jimmy McHugh.....	Alex Fernandez
Jerome Kern.....	Drew H. Wells
Cy Coleman.....	Pierce Williams
Ethel Merman.....	Casey Scarboro
Gwen Verdon.....	Samantha Dempsey
Joe Weber.....	Jonathan Desper
Jack Weiner (Dentist).....	Jordan Ray Martin
Adelaide Hall.....	Brandi Campbell
Gertrude Lawrence.....	Olivia Manlove
Eva Kern.....	Karley Kornegay
Lily Pons.....	Olivia Manlove
Lucille Ball.....	Brandi Campbell
Fred Astaire.....	Pierce Williams
Ginger Rogers.....	Samantha Dempsey
Billie Holiday.....	Brandi Campbell
Frank Sinatra.....	Alex Fernandez
Bob Fosse.....	Maury Allen Williams
Announcer/Newsboy.....	Jonathan Desper
"Seesaw" Soloist.....	Alyssa Davis
Dorothy Fields (u/s).....	Alyssa Davis

### ENSEMBLE

Brandi Campbell, Alyssa Davis, Samantha Dempsey, Alex Fernandez, Karley Kornegay, Olivia Manlove, Jordan Ray Martin, Dustin T. Nyugen, Talen Piner, Casey Scarboro, Drew H. Wells, Maury Allen Williams, Pierce Williams

### SWING TIME CAST

FRED ASTAIRE & GINGER ROGERS; Brandi Campbell, Alyssa Davis, Alex Fernandez, Karley Kornegay, Olivia Manlove, Jordan Ray Martin, Talen Piner, Maury Allen Williams

## ORCHESTRA

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CONDUCTOR.....	Talen Piner
REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST.....	Brad Collier
PIANIST.....	Evan Whitfield
TRUMPET.....	Sean Brinsfield
ALTO SAXOPHONE/FLUTE.....	Joshua Rorrer
PERCUSSION.....	Kalen Thigpen

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

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### PROLOGUE - Present Day

"Seesaw".....Soloist, Dorothy, Full Company

### ACT ONE - 1923-1945; Manhattan, The Cotton Club, Hollywood, The 1936 Oscars®

"Camp Paradox Song".....Joe, Lew

"Look Who's In Love".....Dentist

"I Feel A Song Comin' On/Look Who's In Love".....Dorothy, Dentist

"I Feel A Song Comin' On (Reprise)".....Dorothy, Ensemble

"I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby".....Adelaide

"Exactly Like You".....Gertrude

"Sunny Side of the Street".....Dorothy, Jimmy

"Too Many Tomorrows".....Lew

"I Won't Dance".....Dorothy, Jerome

"Lovely to Look At".....Jerome, Eva

"A Fine Romance".....Fred & Ginger, Billie, Frank

"The Way You Look Tonight".....Swing Time Cast

"April Fooled Me".....Dorothy

~ ~ ~ INTERMISSION ~ ~ ~

### ACT TWO - 1946-1974; Imperial Theatre, Manhattan, Half Note Club

Entr'acte.....Orchestra

"There's No Business Like Show Business\*".....Ethel, Ensemble

"Pick Yourself Up".....Herb, Dorothy

"Erbie Fitch's Twitch".....Gwen

"Nobody Does It Like Me".....Ethel

"Sweet 'Dorothy'".....Cy, Dorothy

"Big Spender".....Gwen, Girls' Ensemble

"(There's Gotta Be) Something Better Than This".....Dorothy, Girls

"Seesaw (Reprise)".....Dorothy

"(You're A) Lovable Lunatic".....Full Company

### ENCORE

"(It's Not Where You Start) It's Where You Finish".....Full Company

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ALL MUSIC & LYRICS ORIGINALLY FROM: *Seesaw* (1973 musical), *Weber & Fields* (1920s vaudeville), *Redhead* (1959 musical), *Every Night at Eight* (1935 motion picture), *Lew Leslie's Blackbird Revue of 1928/Blackbirds of 1928* (revue), *Lew Leslie's International Revue* (1930), *Sweet Charity* (1966 musical), *Roberta* (1935 motion picture), *Swing Time* (1936 motion picture), and *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946 musical & 1999 revival).

\*Lyrics by Irving Berlin

## CO-DIRECTORS' NOTE

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"The name of Dorothy Fields on a playbill has enlivened many a theatre season."

-Excerpt from the original  
1966 PLAYBILL® for *Sweet Charity*

This daring dream of a musical began almost two years ago when we began thinking of what to do for our Senior Honors Project. But we knew from the beginning we wanted to educate and entertain. Thus, began the journey of *Lovable Lunatic*...

I (Caitlyn) knew I wanted to write a musical about a famous artist of some capacity. I was deeply inspired by Mollye Otis' *The Way You Look Tonight*, a revue about Jerome Kern in which I performed freshman year. The music, the nostalgia, and the undying optimism of that era spoke to me. It was a start.

I (Talen) was on a ship. BUT, knowing I had to complete a Senior Honors Project upon my return to ECU, I knew I wanted to write and arrange an entire musical. And choreograph. And graduate. But I just didn't know where to start. Enter Caitlyn.

I (Caitlyn) wanted to write a revue about someone no one knows about. Someone that needs her story to be told. And the perfect match for that was one of the most influential lyricists in the Golden Age of musical theatre: Dorothy Fields.

We bet you've never heard her name until tonight.

Well, all that is about to change. Presented to you tonight is her story of endless positivity and perseverance embedded in her lyrics. Dorothy Fields truly was an American treasure.

We hope this musical inspires women and men of all ages to:

*"Pick themselves up, dust themselves off,  
and start all over again."*

Enjoy the show.

-Caitlyn Leach & Talen Piner  
Co-Directors of *Lovable Lunatic*

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## SPECIAL THANKS

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CAITLYN & TALEN WOULD LIKE TO GIVE A HUGE SHOUT-OUT TO:

Jennifer-Scott Mobley  
Stephen Harding and  
Magnolia Arts Center  
Delta Childers-Smith, Rebekah Rose,  
and the ECU Costume Department  
Brad Collier, Karrie Rushing,  
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Evan Whitfield  
Bennett Gundacker  
Matty Reda  
Sandy & Bill Leach  
Rose & Tad Piner  
Steve Witchey and the  
Wilson Arts Council  
William K. Brooks and  
5<sup>th</sup> Street Players  
Ann Garland, Todd Fraley,  
and the ECU Honors College  

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Jayme Host  
and the ECU Dance Department

Mollye Otis  
The ECU School of Music  
Aimee Radics  
Jean Christian Barry  
Collin Yates  
Patch Clark  
Michael Tahaney  
Jeni Parker, 'Sparker' Parke  
and the ECU Prop Department  
The East Carolinian  
Tommi Galaska  
Reid Parker  
Chaz Coffin  
Anthony T. Matrejek  
Jessica Doyle-Mekkes  
Nancy 'Nan' Howells  
and all who donated to  
the GoFundMe® fundraiser

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FOR HELPING BRING DOROTHY'S INCREDIBLE STORY TO STAGE.



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Photo courtesy of "Forebears: The Great American Songwriting Of Dorothy Fields", Maria Sherman, NPR Music, 2017.



One year ago, the ECU School of Theatre and Dance lost their leader, director, professor, and friend....

This performance and the musical presented are dedicated to the late, great John Shearin.

"The time will come to close my eyes and see the guiding light."



APPENDIX III

EXAMPLES OF SCORE

B♭ Trumpet 5. I Feel A Song Coming On (Reprise)

*Dorothy, Ensemble*

Jimmy Mc., Dorothy F.

With building intensity 11 3 It's building...

Undying optimism 23 40

12 21 5

148

155 Freely, together 3

142

Vo. drums keep on drum - min' -

Vo. drums keep on drum - min' -

Vo. drums keep on drum - min' -

Pno.

148

Vo. 'Cause I feel a song -

Vo. 'Cause I feel a song -

Vo. 'Cause I feel a song -

Pno.

5. I Feel A Song Coming On (Reprise)

*Dorothy, Ensemble*

Jimmy Mc., Dorothy F.

With building intensity

DOROTHY: *mp* And now \_\_\_\_\_ that my trou - bles are gone.

SA

TB

Piano

8

Vo. Let those heav - en - ly drums go on drum - min', *f* 'cause I feel a song

Vo.

Vo.

Pno.

152

Vo. com-in' -

Vo. com-in' -

Vo. song com-in' -

Pno.

157 Freely, together

Vo. on!

Vo. on!

Vo. on!

Pno.

APPENDIX IV

PRODUCTION STILLS

