

Violet



the **STUDY GUIDE**



Based on the Short Story
"The Ugliest Pilgrim" by
Doris Betts

Music by
Jeanine Tesori

Lyrics and Book by
Brian Crawley

Directed by
Tracey Copeland-Halter



NASHVILLE
REPERTORY
THEATRE

the **STUDY GUIDE**
by Mike Sallee Jr

the PLOT

Winner of the Drama Critics' Circle Award and Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical when it premiered Off-Broadway in 1997, and then on to a Tony-nominated Broadway debut in 2014 with a revised version, VIOLET is a moving musical featuring show-stopping anthems, ranging from American-roots to folk to gospel. With a score from Tony-winning composer Jeanine Tesori (CAROLINE or CHANGE; THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE; SHREK; FUN HOME) and book and lyrics by the acclaimed Brain Crawley (A LITTLE PRINCESS), VIOLET is inspired by the short story, THE UGLIEST PILGRIM by Doris Betts, astounding critics and audiences alike in two separate decades.

As a girl, Violet was struck by a wayward axe blade when her father was chopping wood, leaving her with a visible scar across her face. With enough money finally saved she's traveling across the Deep South in 1964 towards a miracle - the healing touch of a TV evangelist who will make her beautiful. Although she may not succeed in having the scar on her face healed, Violet is able to repair those scars that are lying deeper than her skin. On the way, she meets a young, African-American soldier whose love for her reaches far past her physical "imperfections."

VIOLET is a powerhouse piece of theatre that needs no more than a few chairs and talented performers to take an audience's breath away. It is a must for companies that are dedicated to depicting moving stories onstage.



the CAST & CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Kelsey Brodeur as VIOLET - The title character, a young North Carolina woman whose face was scarred in a childhood accident. She is stubborn and prickly, but filled with equal parts hope and obsession that she may heal and be made beautiful.

Mike Sallee, Jr. as FLICK - An African-American soldier; a dreamer and go-getter. He doesn't enjoy the army, but enjoys the respect it garners him. There is something gentle, good about him, not to be interpreted or confused with weakness or lack of authority.

Nathan Quay Thomas as MONTY - A paratrooper and Flick's friend from basic training. Rough around the edges. Self-consumed, but not necessarily purposefully so. Fighting his own demons.

Riley West as YOUNG VI - Not quite as guarded or prickly as her older self, but still tough and stubborn. She has a keen curiosity and the rough edges of being brought up solely by her father.

Matthew Carlton as FATHER - A simple, widowed man who lovingly raises his daughter alone doing the best he can with the little knowledge and resources he has to do so. Stern but friendly, smart but uneducated. Accidentally scars Violet's face while he is chopping wood.

Beth Anne Musiker as OLD LADY - A former beauty in her heyday. Staunch, tired and frustrated with life. Actor doubles as Hotel Hooker.

Ryan Greenwalt as PREACHER - An impassioned, theatrical man who preaches with all the bravado he can muster. Once had a true healing touch but has lost it in his quest to become a showman. Dismissive and egotistical. Actor doublings include: Radio Singer, Bus Driver 1, Bus Driver 4.

Austin Jeffrey Smith as LEROY EVANS - A citizen of Spruce Pine with a dog named Roscoe. Not very bright. Actor doubles as a Radio Soloist, Bus Driver 3, and Bus Passenger.

Piper Jones as MUSIC HALL SINGER - The singer at the dance hall in Memphis. The actor doubles as a Bus Passenger.

Jennifer Whitcomb-Oliva as LULA BUFFINGTON - A member of the volunteer choir that sings for the Preacher's telecast. Sings for God with passion and power. African-American. Actor doubles as Almeta (Landlady) and Bus Passenger.

Lawson Marchetti as VIRGIL - The Preacher's assistant. Knows the smoke & mirrors of the Preacher's show and must begrudgingly deal with anyone who might derail it. Actor doubles as Billy Dean, Bus Driver 2, Radio Singer and Bus Passenger.

the composer **JEANINE TESORI**

JEANINE TESORI won the Tony Award for Best Original Score with Lisa Kron for the musical Fun Home. She has also written Tony-nominated scores for Twelfth Night at Lincoln Center; Thoroughly Modern Millie (lyrics, Dick Scanlan); Caroline, or Change (lyrics, Tony Kushner); and Shrek The Musical (lyrics, David Lindsay-Abaire). The production of Caroline, or Change at the National Theatre in London received the Olivier Award for Best New Musical. Her 1997 Off-Broadway musical Violet (lyrics, Brian Crawley) opened on Broadway in 2014 and garnered four Tony nominations, including Best Musical Revival. Opera: A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck (libretto, Tony Kushner; Glimmerglass) and The Lion, The Unicorn, and Me (libretto, J. D. McClatchy, Kennedy Center). Music for plays: Mother Courage (dir. George C. Wolfe, with Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline), John Guare's A Free Man of Color (Lincoln Center Theater, dir. George C. Wolfe), and Romeo and Juliet (Delacorte Gala). Film scores: Nights in Rodanthe, Every Day, and You're Not You. Ms. Tesori is a member of the Dramatists Guild and was cited by the ASCAP as the first female composer to have two new musicals running concurrently on Broadway. She was the founding artistic director of Encores! Off-Center at New York City Center, and a lecturer in music at Yale University. Most of all, she is the proud parent of Siena Rafter.



Listen to:
Jeanine's Interview on
Rep Chats
w/Artistic Director
Micah-Shane Brewer



the book / lyricist **BRIAN CRAWLEY**

Brian Crawley is a playwright and screenwriter. He wrote the book and lyrics for *A LITTLE PRINCESS* (composer Andrew Lippa) which debuted at Theatreworks of Palo Alto in the summer of 2004. He also wrote the book and lyrics for *VIOLET* (composer Jeanine Tesori) which was mounted Off-Broadway by Playwrights Horizons in 1997, then remounted in a concert version in 2003 to help inaugurate their new theater. Other musicals he has written include *EVANGELINE* with Ted Dykstra, and *DOWN THERE* with composer Lewis Flinn. He appears in the documentary *ONE NIGHT STAND*, in which he writes a short musical in 24 hours with composer Gabriel Kahane. For the libretto of *VIOLET*, Brian won the Kleban Award. Prior to the Playwrights Horizons production, and on its behalf, *VIOLET* was given the Richard Rodgers Musical Production Award and an AT&T OnStage Award. Afterwards, besides a Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Musical, *VIOLET* received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical over all the year's Broadway offerings (as did Paula Vogel's play *HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE*; the first time two off-Broadway pieces took these top awards in the Drama Critic Circle's history). Brian's plays have been developed or staged at Lincoln Center, New York Theater Workshop, the National Alliance of Musical Theatre, and the Eugene O'Neill summer theater conference. He majored in Theater Studies at Yale and has an MFA in Acting from the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Brian is a member of the Dramatists Guild.





Doris June Betts was born in Statesville, North Carolina in 1932, the only child of Mary Ellen and William Elmore. In 1950 she graduated from Statesville High School, and attended the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. While an undergraduate student she married then law student Lowry Betts, who later became a district judge in Chatham and Orange Counties, North Carolina; they had three children. She won the Mademoiselle College Fiction contest during her sophomore year (1953) for the story "Mr. Shawn and Father Scott". After working as a newspaper reporter for a number of years, she joined the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1966. She received the UNC Putnam Book Prize in 1954 for her first book, *The Gentle Insurrection*, three Sir Walter Raleigh Awards (1958, 1965, and 1973) for the best fiction books by a North Carolinian, a Guggenheim Fellowship in Creative Writing (1958-1959), the North Carolina Award and Medal (1975), the Distinguished Service Award for Women (Chi Omega), and the John Dos Passos Award from Longwood College. She has also written articles for professional journals, lectured at writers' conferences, and delivered speeches on major college campuses. In 1980 she was named a UNC Alumni Distinguished Professor of English. She received the Tanner Award for distinguished undergraduate teaching in 1973 and the Katherine Carmichael Teaching Award in 1980. "The Ugliest Pilgrim", the most widely printed of her stories, became an Academy Award winner as a short film titled "Violet", and in 1998 was the basis of a musical that won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Coinciding with her retirement from teaching, an endowed chair was named in her honor, The Doris Betts Distinguished Professor in Creative Writing. She served as the Chancellor of the Fellowship of Southern Writers.

- [Doris Betts, IMDb](#)

Doris Betts, an award-winning novelist and short-story writer whose characters grappled with religious faith, freedom, captivity and original sin in tales steeped in the Southern literary tradition, died on April 21st at her home in Pittsboro, N.C. She was 79.

Mrs. Betts, who taught English literature and creative writing for 30 years at the University of North Carolina, published six novels and three collections of short stories, one of which, "Beasts of the Southern Wild", from 1973, was a finalist for the National Book Award.

Her fiction was often compared to Flannery O'Connor's for its deceptively simple style and the way it evoked grand metaphysical conflicts in the prosaic events of people's lives. But where O'Connor's vision was often dark, hers was often hopeful, if only provisionally.

- [Doris Betts, Novelist in Southern Tradition, Dies at 79](#)



the short story "The Ugliest Pilgrim"



the short film "Violet"



the writer

DORIS BETTS

During the show's original production, the team was adamant about not having any type of cosmetic effect to create an actual scar on Violet.

Why is this significant to plot?

How does this relate to the theme of inner beauty?

Form a group to share your answers to the initial prompt and continue the conversation.

List the similarities in your answers and discuss.

List the differences in your answers and discuss.

Bonus Question: Violet's 'scar' is based on outer beauty. This can be seen as an insecurity, but isn't the only one that exists. Discuss the other characters of the show. Did they display any 'scars' different or similar to Violet's?

Rex Humbard

(Aug. 19, 1919 - Sept. 27, 2007)



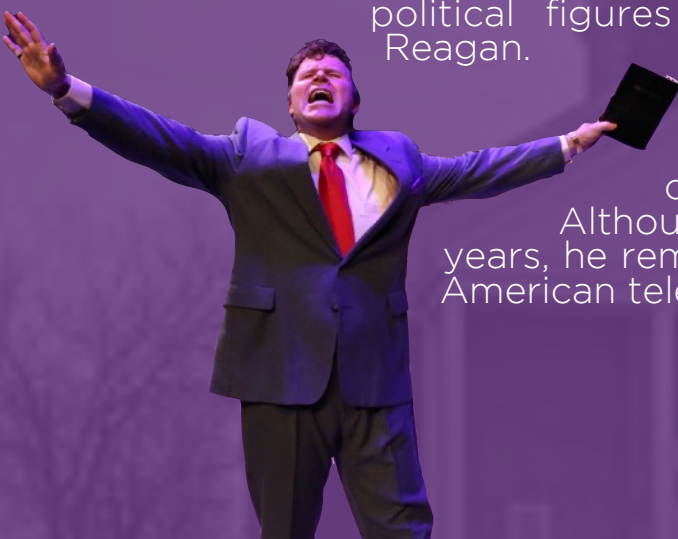
Televangelist: A televangelist is a Christian minister or preacher who spreads their message through television broadcasts. These broadcasts can range from sermons and religious teachings to fundraising appeals and personal testimonials. Televangelists often have a large audience and may have their own ministries, churches, or media companies. They can be found on both mainstream and religious television networks and may also have their own online platforms for broadcasting their message. The term "televangelist" is a combination of "television" and "evangelist," which refers to a person who actively seeks to convert others to Christianity.

Rex Humbard was a prominent American televangelist who gained widespread popularity in the mid-20th century through his televised religious broadcasts. Born on August 13, 1919, in Little Rock, Arkansas, Humbard began preaching at a young age, and his ministry quickly grew in popularity as he began broadcasting his sermons on radio and later on television.

Humbard's broadcasts were known for their charismatic style and focus on the healing power of faith. He also incorporated music into his services, and his singing and guitar playing were a prominent feature of his broadcasts. Over the years, Humbard's ministry expanded to include multiple TV stations, a Bible college, and a megachurch in Akron, Ohio.

Despite his popularity, Humbard was not without controversy. He was criticized by some for his opulent lifestyle, which included a private jet and a mansion in Florida, and for his association with political figures such as Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

Humbard continued to preach and broadcast his message until his death on September 21, 2007, at the age of 88. Although his influence has waned in recent years, he remains a significant figure in the history of American televangelism.



the World in 1964

In 1964, the United States was experiencing significant social and political changes, including:

The Civil Rights Movement: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. This legislation was a major victory for the Civil Rights Movement, which had been fighting for equal rights for African Americans for many years.

The Vietnam War: The United States had become increasingly involved in the conflict in Vietnam, with U.S. military personnel participating in combat operations. Protests against the war began to grow, with many young people questioning the government's involvement and calling for an end to the conflict.

The Space Race: The United States was in the midst of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and the two countries were engaged in a race to explore space. In 1964, NASA launched the first manned mission of the Gemini program, which aimed to develop the skills needed for a successful manned lunar landing.

Popular culture: The 1960s saw the rise of popular culture movements such as the Beatles, the hippie counterculture, and the feminist movement. These cultural shifts challenged traditional values and norms and contributed to a growing sense of social change and upheaval.

Overall, 1964 was a year of significant change and transition for the United States, with major developments in civil rights, politics, and culture shaping the country's future direction.

