



Fireflies

BY MATTHEW BARBER

FIREFLIES

Utah Premiere

By Matthew Barber

Directed by Kareem Fahmy

April 1 - 16, 2022

*Runtime: 1:45 which includes a
15-minute intermission*

SPOTLIGHT

STUDY GUIDE

For Teachers and Students



Pioneer Theatre Company's Student Matinee Program is made possible through the support of Salt Lake County's Zoo, Arts and Parks Program, The Simmons Family Foundation, and The Meldrum Foundation Endowment Fund.

Playwright: Matthew Barber

Matthew Barber was born in Los Angeles, California, and studied film, theater, and literature at UCLA. He enjoyed early careers as an arts journalist and publicist, and continued work with small theaters and arts organizations. This led to a commission to adapt for the stage the Elizabeth von Arnim novel *The Enchanted April*, which premiered at Hartford Stage in 2000, followed by a Broadway production in 2003. It earned that year's Tony Award nomination for Best Play.

His charming adaptation of *Enchanted April* was performed on PTC's stage in 2006.

Looking for his second hit, Barber took a road trip to southern Texas to meet an 80-year-old retired schoolteacher named Annette Sanford, who had written a short story called



Matthew Barber

“Housekeeping.” It centered on Eleanor Bannister, an older retired schoolteacher in a town in rural Texas — living in a house by herself, trying quietly, but desperately, to figure out what to do with the rest of her life while passing the time with nosy friend Grace Bodell.

Barber couldn't get the story out of his mind

“It always just stuck in my mind — the three central characters stayed with me, and I kept mulling them around in my head,” Barber said.

The short story covered just one week in the characters' lives, although Sanford later expanded the story into a novel titled *Eleanor & Abel* that followed the same characters for a year.

“I started thinking about doing a screenplay of a the novel, but I kept coming back to the week: A novel you can pick up and put down. A play needs to be clicking at high speed all the time. I needed everything to be happening in dramatic fury — I

needed the high stakes that need to happen in theater so people come back after intermission.”

Fireflies was the fruit of that examination into the first week in the lives of Annette Sanford's characters and it debuted at Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut in 2017.

Matthew Barber lives in New York City and continues to write plays and develop new works.

newhavenindependent.org

Setting of *Fireflies*: Jackson County, South Texas, July 1995.

Groverdell is a fictional town of 1,742, twenty miles north of the Gulf Coast.



1995 TRIVIA

President: Bill Clinton
Governor of Texas: George W. Bush

Popular films
1: “Toy Story”
5: “Apollo 13”
7: “Batman Forever”

The internet was just starting to take off!

Play vs. Musical

Fireflies is a small play with just four cast members compared to a musical production that can last over two hours with multiple sets, costume changes, and dance numbers. Most producing theatres, like PTC, will perform a mix of plays and musicals over a season.

If you were planning to produce a play or musical, you would consider how many cast members you could have, what your budget is, whether you can have live music or recorded music, where you would perform, and how many people can attend at one time.

A PLAY

A play is a form of literature, usually written by a playwright.

A play tells a story through dialogue and sometimes will include a narrator, who takes the part of the storyteller.



Ass, PTC 2021

A play usually takes place on the stage and is known as a ‘straight play’ because it is performed from a script of dialogue.

A play may include music, but the music is not the means of communicating the story.

There are different types of plays, primarily tragedy (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Of Mice and Men*); comedy (*As You Like It*, *Noises Off*); tragicomedy (*The Merchant of Venice*, *Waiting for Godot*); and melodrama (*Pygmalion*).



The Messenger, PTC 2021

QUESTION: What are other titles that represent each type of play or musical?

A MUSICAL

A musical is a story told through music.

A musical may have a script for the spoken word, but the essence of the story is told through the words of the songs.

A musical can be a book musical (*Les Misérables*, *Cats*); a revue (*Ain't Misbehavin'*); a jukebox musical (*Jersey Boys*, *Rock of Ages*); a concept musical (*Cabaret*, *Follies*); or a rock/pop musical (*Next to Normal*, *Godspell*)

Musicals are generally uplifting and enjoyed for their lighter look at drama.

Musicals encourage multi-talented actors (“triple-threats” like in *Something Rotten*, or “quadruple threats” like in *Once*) to take part in the musical show.



Elf, PTC 2021



Something Rotten!, PTC 2022

differencebetween.net

Putting on a Play:

How to Plan for a Successful Production

1. **Choose a show that you love.** When picking a show make sure the language, number of roles, themes, and style are appropriate for your performers and audience.

2. **Assemble your team of collaborators.** Sample list of jobs on any given production:

Producer	Assistant Stage	Production
General Manager	Manager	Manager
Director	Set Design	Technical Director
Music Director	Lighting Design	Carpenters
Choreographer	Costume Design	Electricians
Production Stage	Sound Design	Follow spot
Manager	Prop Design	operators
	Sound Mixer	

3. **Get your design ideas in order.** Design includes sound, lights, props, and costumes.

4. **Post audition notices.** Be specific about what you want actors to prepare for auditions.

5. **Create a production calendar.** The production stage manager should put together a production calendar, with clear goals, like: “Rehearsal,” “Work through Scene 2/3,” “Designer run,” “Load In,” “Tech,” “Dress Rehearsal.”

6. **Make the rehearsal space comfortable.** Make sure the room is clean and organized.

7. **Always start and end rehearsals on time.** From here it is the director’s job to guide the ship.

9. **Share your process and expectations up front.** When working with performers, it’s important to set clear goals and expectations.

10. **Stage a Scene, then Run Through It.** The director and choreographer are responsible for staging and teaching choreography in an efficient and timely manner. Once a scene of the show is staged, work through the whole scene stopping and adjusting as necessary. Then, run the whole scene off book.

PROJECT:
Pick a play you would like to produce, and create a draft of steps 1-5.

bbbpress.com



Original Cast at the Long Wharf Theatre, 2017: Jane Alexander as Eleanor; Denis Arndt as Abel; Judith Ivey as Grace; Christopher Michael McFarland as Eugene.

ACTIVITY

Title Exercise: Name Game

A title is an important part of the writing process. The title acts as a doorway into the piece – be it a movie, a novel, or a play. A bad title can drive an audience away from your work, or give the wrong impression of your work. On the other hand, pick the right title and your audience could march right through the door.

Use this exercise to practice creating a variety of titles based on a picture.

Part One

1. Select three photographs that you find interesting. They can be a person, a place, an object, a candid shot, or anything that captures your attention. *A great source for public domain photos is flickr.com/commons.*

2. Take a few moments and study each photograph. What is going on? Who is in the photo? Who is in the foreground? Who's in the back ground? What is the landscape? What might be happening outside the frame?

3. Come up with a variety of titles for each photograph. You'll have three titles per photograph.

For EACH photo, come up with one of the following:

TITLE A: Come up with a title that you think **best describes** the picture.

TITLE B: Create a title that **defines the dominant emotion** in the picture.

TITLE C: Use a line of **poetry, or a song lyric as inspiration** for this title.

QUESTION:
Why did Matthew Barber call his play "Fireflies?"

Write Titles Here

Photo 1

A.

B.

C.

Photo 2

A.

B.

C.

Photo 3

A.

B.

C.

Our Equity Cast



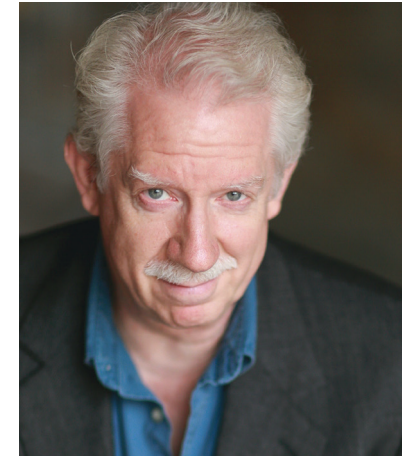
JOY FRANZ (Eleanor Bannister) worked with Stephen Sondheim on many productions. Broadway work includes: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Pippin*, *Sweet Charity*, and *Lysistrata*. Favorite National Tours: *Anastasia*, *Damn Yankees* with Jerry Lewis, and *Hello, Dolly!* with Carol Channing. TV/Film: “Law and Order,” “Royal Pains,” “Allegiance,” “The Carrie Diaries,” “Central Park West,” “Horrible People,” and the upcoming Judd Apatow feature film *Bros*.



JOY LYNN JACOBS (Grace Bodell) Broadway credits include: World Premiere: *Marie Christine*; Revival: *The Music Man*; 1st National Broadway Tours: *Ragtime*, *Show Boat* revival, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *The Sound of Music*, *Having Our Say*, *Oklahoma*, *The King & I* and more. TV: “Harlem,” “Love Life,” “Blacklist,” “Manifest,” “Luke Cage,” “House of Cards,” “Gotham,” “Nurse Jackie.” Voice of Principal character for new Nickelodeon animated series.



TITO LIVAS (Eugene Claymire) Previously seen at PTC in the concert versions of *In the Heights* and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Locally he has worked with Plan-B Theatre, Utah Opera, Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, and Salt Lake Acting Company. Nationwide he has performed with Walt Disney World, National Theatre for Children, TheatreWorks USA, performing for Holland America Cruise Lines and Princess Cruise Lines. Can also be seen in several Hallmark and Lifetime films.



DAVID MANIS (Abel Brown) At PTC he performed in: *Clybourne Park*, *A Few Good Men*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Broadway work includes: *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog In The Night-Time*, *War Horse*, *Henry IV*. Off-Broadway: David Cromer’s *Our Town*; Regional: The Guthrie, Mark Taper Forum, The Old Globe, The Shakespeare Theatre Company. TV includes “Dickinson,” “Bull,” “Onion News,” “Frasier,” “King of Queens,” and a telekinetic weatherman on “The X-Files.”