**Fun Home**

Sunday, October 21, 2018
Bovard Auditorium
University of Southern California

**KNOW BEFORE THE SHOW**
- *Fun Home*, first performed in 2013, was the first mainstream musical centered around a young lesbian.
- Before it was a Tony Award–winning musical, *Fun Home* was a best-selling memoir in comics form by Alison Bechdel.
- Bechdel coined the “Bechdel Test” in her long-running comic *Dykes to Watch Out For*.
- This production of *Fun Home* is fully student-produced and -performed by Dorothy’s Friends Theatre Company.

**FUN HOME**
The musical *Fun Home* is an adaptation by Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori of Alison Bechdel’s 2006 memoir-in-comics of the same name. It is about Bechdel’s coming of age, including her discovery of her lesbian identity, and her relationship with her gay father.

The musical version opened off-Broadway at the Public Theatre in 2013 and on Broadway in 2015. It swept the Tony Awards that year, winning Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, Best Original Score, Best Leading Actor in a Musical, and Best Direction of a Musical.

**ALISON BECHDEL**
Cartoonist Alison Bechdel has been an underground favorite for decades for her long-running comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For* (1983–2008), one of the earliest ongoing representations of lesbians in popular culture. She came to mainstream critical and commercial success with the 2006 publication of *Fun Home*, a memoir in comics form, which spent weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list. She published a second graphic memoir, *Are You My Mother?*, in 2012.

Bechdel has said, “The secret subversive goal of my work is to show that women, not just lesbians, are regular human beings.”

**THE BECHDEL TEST**
The Bechdel Test is a feminist litmus test for films, TV shows, books, and other works of fiction. The test asks: Does it feature at least two women who talk to each other about something other than a man or boy? If not, it fails the Bechdel Test.
MUSICAL THEATRE AND QUEER CULTURE
Musical theatre has long been associated with gay culture. Gay men are key figures in the history of modern American musicals—Leonard Bernstein, Cole Porter, Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim. And the genre’s often campy aesthetic has become a kind of national vernacular among American gay men. But musical theatre has not historically been as much of a lesbian thing. The last few decades have seen lesbian characters in a few musicals, such as Rent and Falsettoland, but Fun Home was the first mainstream musical to feature a young lesbian as the protagonist.

DOROTHY’S FRIENDS THEATRE COMPANY
Dorothy’s Friends Theatre Company is a student-led theatre production company at USC. They focus on putting positive queer stories onstage and uniting a diverse community through celebration.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION
○ In the New York Times, Ben Brantley wrote, “Fun Home isn’t just a coming-out story or a coming-of-age story. Its universality comes from its awareness of how we never fully know even those closest to us.” Do you agree that we never fully know even the people we are closest to? What are the implications of this in your life?
○ Think of the last three movies or TV shows you saw—do they pass the Bechdel Test? Or try it another way: how far back in your own watching or reading history do you have to go to find three titles that pass the Bechdel Test?
○ If musical theatre has been so substantially created by queer people, why do you think it is only recently that mainstream musicals are centering queer protagonists?
○ Why does it matter to see people of various identities represented in popular culture and entertainment?

IF YOU LIKED FUN HOME, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT …
○ The graphic memoir Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic by Alison Bechdel
○ Alison Bechdel’s long-running comic Dykes to Watch Out For
○ Other musicals about queer identities and experience such as Avenue Q, Rent, and Falsettoland
○ The USC LGBT Resource Center lgbtq.usc.edu
○ Dorothy’s Friends Theatre Company on Facebook facebook.com/dftcUSC
HANNAH SCHILPEROORT of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight’s performance. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g., journal articles and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

  DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PN56.V54 F889 2012

  LEAVEY LIBRARY: PN6727.B3757 Z46 2006

  DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PN6710.G7375 2011

  DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY AND LEAVEY LIBRARY: PN6714 .C49 2010

  DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PS3561.R584 F86 2015

  DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PN6714 .D73 2013

RECOMMENDED MUSIC

  MUSIC LIBRARY: M1508.T47 F86 2016

RECOMMENDED ARTICLES


McBean, Sam. “Seeing in Alison Bechdel’s Fun Home.” Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies, vol. 28, no. 3(84), 2013, pp. 103-123.


RECOMMENDED DATABASES

**GenderWatch**
GenderWatch features publications that focus on the impact of gender across a broad spectrum of subject areas including media, health sciences, political science, and more.

**JSTOR**
Fields covered include: anthropology, ecology, economics, education, finance, mathematics, philosophy, political science, sociology, literature, biology.

**LGBT Life with Fulltext**
Premier resource to the world’s literature regarding Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Transsexual issues.

**ProQuest Social Science database**
Core collection of social sciences journals including gender studies, sociology, and cultural studies.

**Women’s Studies International**
Index to the core disciplines in women’s studies and feminist research.