

BY JO CALDWELL

# SPRING MUSICAL BRIGHT STAR

## A SWEEPING TALE OF LOVE AND REDEMPTION

Putting a musical on during a Pandemic was no easy feat, but it didn't take long for the theatre department to know it had to be done, no matter what.

Teachers, actors and theater crew came together to create an unforgettable show what would be performed on an unforgettable stage--McNicholas Green.

"Performing outside was a much different experience. Outside we were at the mercy of the elements, and we had to figure out how to how to connect with each other from a great distance," Ella Hagg '21, who played the lead character said.

As Alice Murphy, Ella Hagg led the cast with her beautiful voice and acting talent in *Bright Star*.

"I spent a lot of time practicing my lines and songs on my own, which was an interesting challenge for me and the rest of the cast," Hagg said. "When we all got to rehearse in person and piece the show together, there was an air of camaraderie and

excitement which aided us in producing a meaningful show in such an unconventional way."

Within the play, audiences followed Alice in two separate stages of her life. The first stage shows when she is young and free, and in a relationship with Jimmy Ray, which results in her infant son being tragically whisked away from her.

The other, two decades later, reveals her as an accomplished editor of the Asheville Southern Journal. During this time she runs into a young writer named Billy who carries with him a hand-knit sweater which connects the two as mother and son.

"*Bright Star* tells a story of perseverance and emphasizes the importance of love. Seeing ambitious thespians come together in the name of the arts at RJ has been the most rewarding part for me and has reminded me exactly why I am so grateful for the theatre community," Hagg said.

**2. SINGING** "Please Don't Take Him," Mayor Dobbs, played by Ryan Oldham '22, rushes over with the suitcase that he will put the baby in. Ensemble member Gwyneth Theobald and Amber Harvey are surprised by the circumstances. Photo by Frances Sullivan



**3. LUCY GRANT**, played by Amber Harvey '21, sings "Another Round," a song about letting loose and relaxing. "I enjoyed how lighthearted Lucy was. It really helps to be one of the good mood characters to help make everyone feel better and to put a smile on people's faces," Harvey said about playing Lucy. Photo by staff

**4. SINGING "IF YOU KNEW MY STORY"** Alice, played by Ella Hagg '21, shares the emotion of what her life has been like after she fell in love and her baby, Billy, was taken from her unexpectedly. "Seeing the arts persevere has been incredible. ... At Regis we had the unique opportunity to put on a show that I think is the most fitting for this unprecedented period in history," Hagg said about the production. Photo Frances Sullivan



### THE SHOW MUST GO ON

THEATRE PUTS ON A PRODUCTION DESPITE THE CIRCUMSTANCES

**9. BEHIND THE SCENES** Mr. Pantoja gives the cast and crew a pep talk about their performance. Although Coronavirus made theatre extremely difficult, students and the crew worked together to overcome vast spacing and acoustic challenges.



**10. HANNAH GROVE '21**, sings *Another Round* as a member of the ensemble. Hannah's main role was Momma Murphy, Alice's Mother. "I think my favorite thing about the musical this year has been the optimism of the cast. We all had to learn a musical completely over Teams, which was certainly a learning curve for everyone. When we're rehearsing in person, there was such a sense of gratitude for just being there with cast mates. This experience has certainly been a light in my life," Grove said. **11. MAYOR JOSIAH DOBBS**, played by Ryan Oldham '22, sings *A Man's Gotta Do* to his son Jimmy expressing his reasoning on why Jimmy and Alice should not be together. "My favorite thing about being in the musical was the intimacy of having such a small cast. I got to know everyone very well," said Oldham about being in the musical. Photos by Frances Sullivan and staff



**5. HOLDING UP** his baby sweater, Billy, played by Soren Freund '22, admires it. Because his mother had knitted for him as a child, it helped him connect to his past. "Billy was such a fun character to play on stage (or grass) because he is so hopeful and optimistic. I feel like I get to bring a positive energy to the story which makes me happy. I also loved singing in a southern accent, it's really fun," Freund said about playing his character. **6. DARYL AMES**, played by Addison Wesissart '24, sings *Another Round* with the characters Lucy and Billy. Her character brought a fun energy to the show. **7. DADDY MURPHY**, played by Ruby Cripe, steals the baby from a pleading Alice. **8. SINGING ALWAYS WILL** to her love Billy, Margo Crawford, played by Jordan Miller '21, confesses her love for him. "I loved that she and I were really similar; it was a fun role to play and her song was so sweet," Miller said about playing Margo. Photos by Frances Sullivan and staff



### IN CONSTANT MOTION

PERFORMING ON THE GREEN



**BRYNNE DIXON '22 AND MR. MERKLING**, Technical Theatre Director, make sure the set is stable for the dress rehearsal of *Bright Star*. The drama tech crew worked hard each practice to move the set on and off McNicholas Green. The play was outside to keep social distancing regulations. Photo by Frances Sullivan

### BEHIND THE SCENES

TECH & SOUND CREW

**ZACH BILLINGS, '24** "My favorite part of crew was being able to meet new freshmen and hang out with them, as this year has been hard to meet new people. I also really enjoyed learning new things about sound tech and how it works."

**EMMA DONOVAN, '21** "My favorite thing about doing the musical was getting to be together and put on a show regardless of the circumstances the world is in right now."

**ASHLEY WATTS, '23** "I was a part of sound crew and figuring out sound for an outside performance. When the weather is a factor, it's a challenge. We can do rehearsals but they aren't as effective when the weather can change, as opposed to controlled conditions inside the theater."

**JESSICA HINDSLEY, CHOREOGRAPHER** "Jessica joined RJ five years ago. She is amazing thespian who knows all aspects of stagecraft, with a specialty in costumes and properties. I can't imagine directing a musical without her, she is part of the RJ family," Aldo Pantoja said.

**ALDO PANTOJA** "The Crew that really stepped up in this show was the sound crew. The whole show rested on their shoulders and they did a fantastic job with this outdoor production."

Photos by Frances Sullivan