



Writer Daniel Zaitchik.
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Darling Grenadine came about in an old fashioned kind of way, which seems appropriate for a show that nods to the starry-eyed movie musicals of yesteryear. I had a collection of tunes that needed a home and they had an old-fashioned, theatrical feel that didn't quite fit with the other material I was performing as a singer-songwriter at the time. I knew they belonged to a story. I just had to find it.

Before the plot formed, the spirit was clear. What I could identify was the world in which these songs lived, so I spent some time strolling around in that world. It was an offbeat, vintage universe. I was in Manhattan—gorgeous, romantic Manhattan. The Manhattan you imagine before you ever visit. I moseyed. Falling autumn leaves, falling snow. An upright piano, an upright bass. There were kazoos. Lots of kazoos. And oh—a marionette Labrador Retriever with the voice of a trumpet. It was a colorful place full of surprises.

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But strolling around patiently waiting for a story to fall from a tree wasn't quite enough. I had to start shaking branches. So I began writing. A lot. Too much. Some good. Some bad. (Most bad). As I wrote scenes and added new songs, the atmosphere slowly sharpened, themes emerged, and my main characters materialized: Harry, a fanciful commercial jingle writer with dreams of writing something bigger; and Louise, a fiercely smart actress understudying the lead role in a hit Broadway show. I liked these two. I wanted to get to know them.

As I played in this world, I realized what I wanted to write: a stylized and playful romance that didn't sacrifice substance. I wondered if it was possible to develop a love story with all the humor and magic of an MGM classic that also tried to honestly explore contemporary people in difficult situations.

Could I take these stock characters we recognize from old tuners—the Actress and the Composer—and allow them to be substantial, multidimensional people? Could I have toe-tapping numbers at the same time that our characters are facing relatable human struggles that arise in relationships: fear, responsibility, self-sabotage?

Our story is set in motion when Harry waits to meet Louise at her stage door. We learn that he struck gold years ago with a jingle he wrote for a popular burger chain. And although it seems he's been living an easy, charmed life ever since, we begin to wonder if there might be something more complicated going on...

I've always been someone who bounces between serious and silly, light and dark. I find humor in tragedy and wistfulness in joy. *Darling Grenadine* has become a way for me to share my experience of life and relationships through characters and songs. I tried to make something equal parts whimsy and honesty, escapism and confrontation, humor and pathos.

I wondered: Would an audience be willing to go on this zig-zag journey? Fortunately, when I presented selections of the work at a concert in February 2015, the answer seemed to be "Yes." Folks appeared to be tickled and moved by the parts we shared, eager to embrace both the silly and the serious. Director Kristin Hanggi, who happened to be in the audience that night, connected to the material and encouraged me to buckle down and finish writing the show.

After completing a first draft of *Darling Grenadine* in Spring 2015, we presented a staged reading in Los Angeles. I continued to refine the work at the Johnny Mercer Foundation Writers Colony at Goodspeed, and last summer it was selected for the 2016 National Music Theatre Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center.

I'm eager to see *Darling Grenadine* staged with movement, orchestrations, and design elements, and I'm thrilled that Goodspeed is providing the vital space for this next step. There's only so much one can learn about a musical in a reading setting, so I'm incredibly excited to see the show on its feet and pinpoint the work that needs to be done.

There's a quote famously attributed to Michelangelo: "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." It's unclear whether Michelangelo actually said these exact words, but I appreciate the sentiment. The creation of this musical felt like revealing a sculpture. I started with a big chunk of material and this summer I'll continue to chip away at it. I hope you'll think of Goodspeed as an open studio where you can come take a peek at this emerging angel. I'm confident he'll have all his teeth and maybe even two legs by the time you stop by. And if he has wings, well damn—the next round's on me.