
MIRABEL
THE MUSICAL
Parmer Fuller & Narcissa Vanderlip

BASED ON A TRUE STORY



Californians Parmer Fuller
and Narcissa Vanderlip
were shipped off
to a repressive and competitive
Swiss boarding school
when they were eight years old.

Years later they met again
and married.

They wrote a musical
about their intense
boarding school experience:
MIRABEL.



GLORIOUS HEALTH, RIGOROUS DISCIPLINE AND THE BEST EDUCATION IN THE WORLD!

SYNOPSIS

Serena, a 12-year old from Los Angeles, is dumped by her movie-star mother at a strict Swiss boarding school in 1962. 6,000 miles from home. Alternately gung-ho and self-doubting, Serena competes against another American, Nick, 13, the top-dog at school. He seesaws between liking Serena and rejecting her for a Spanish coquette, Olivia. Nick bets that he can climb to Olivia's room at night and get a kiss. When he is almost caught, Serena takes the fall for him and is punished. She runs away, but is brought back to school, caned and shamed.

The parallel story of MIRABEL, stemming from Serena's effect on the teachers, concerns the elegant headmistress Metz's increasingly desperate need for control and the escapist teacher Bovay getting past a crushing broken engagement to step up and change the culture of the school.

In the spring, when Olivia gets the lead role in the year-end play despite Serena's superior talent, Serena gets Olivia kicked out of school. Torn by guilt, Serena leads Nick and the other kids in a wild scheme to get Olivia back. Nick and Serena are caught and the scheme seems to fail, but the adult fall-out from their rebellion is such that the nature of the school is transformed. Metz loses her storied self-control, Bovay replaces Metz as headmistress, Olivia returns to school, and Nick and Serena, once rivals, are now more than friends.



THEME

MIRABEL is about privileged but vulnerable children stuck in a boarding school far from home and family. MIRABEL resonates in today's society of busy parents, dual incomes, single-parent families, after-school programs and babysitters. In our age of out-sourced parenting, MIRABEL speaks to the importance of who is taking care of the children, and how. Separation and abandonment are universal themes, as are the care, love and laughter needed to overcome them.

"If you can't be with
the one you love, honey,
love the one you're with."

— Stephen Stills





MUSIC

The music for MIRABEL contrasts the old and the new. Strains of military marches, choral songs, and even a yodel reflect the traditions of the school and Switzerland. Elements of rock, pop, calypso and jazz underline the rebellious tendencies and newfound freedoms that challenge those traditions. Dramatic underscoring heightens the emotional contours of the story.

GENRE

There is a limited repertoire of family friendly shows. Regional theatres and smaller venues across the country remount reliable standards like "Annie," "The Sound of Music," "Beauty and the Beast," "The Wizard of Oz," or "Mary Poppins" every few years. These kinds of shows with broad appeal help companies survive commercially. MIRABEL could be a welcome modern addition to this repertoire.



SETTING

The story takes place in a resort village in the Swiss Alps in 1962-63 over the course of the academic year at the Chalet Mirabel, a prestigious boarding school for young children of the well-off and the well-connected. The dark, austere, three-story wooden chalet with a terrace and upstairs balconies houses classrooms and common rooms on the ground floor, boys' rooms on the second floor, and girls on the top floor. The set conveying these three levels transforms for some scenes into the Palace Hotel, the epitome of Alpine luxury–and, at the very end, into a new, colorful and light-filled version of the chalet itself.



CHARACTERS



SERENA WARD

(12) American, the new girl at school, alternately gung-ho and self-doubting.



NICK REMINGTON

(13) American, 5th year veteran, smart, egotistical, knows all the angles.



ANNE-MARIE BOVAY

Teacher of "La Petite Classe", still crushed from a broken engagement that has turned her into a chocoholic.



GABRIELLE METZ

Headmistress, teacher of "La Grande Classe", haughty, elegant, a control freak.



SAMANTHA SHAW

Serena's mother, a glamorous,
divorced American film star



TRUDI

The housekeeper, pinched, obsessed with cleanliness and order.



FRIEDA MEYER

Matron of the Boys' Floor, frilly, sewing or knitting at every
opportunity, distracted.



PIA SANTINI

Vigorous matron of the Girls' Floor,
sports teacher and fitness fanatic.



CLAUDINE BERNSTEIN
(9) French



"LITTLE MAGNUS" MALMSTEN
(6) Swedish



THEO PANADAKOS
(14) a competitive, smart-aleck Greek boy



SERENA
(12) Los Angeles



NICK
(13) Boston

Chalet Mirabel



KOKO CHENG
(12) Serena's klutzy roommate from Hong Kong, loves to draw and paint



OLIVIA DE VALENDE
(12) daughter of Spanish-Venezuelan aristocrats, very pretty object of Theo and Nick's affections; coquette, spoiled, a perfect little princess around the teachers



HUGO MATEMBEH
(12) son of a minister of a new African republic, a bookworm nervously drumming on every surface.



ALICE FITZ-HAVEN
(13) daughter of a British father and a mother from India, likes to know everybody's business



JENNIE FITZ-HAVEN
(8) British-Indian, Alice's little sister

STUDENTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

The characters at this international school are a diverse mix from many countries. The origins of most characters as written can be changed for casting purposes.







CASTING NOTES

CAST BREAKDOWN:

- 16 total – 6 Girls, 4 Boys, 5 Women, 1 Man
- 7 of the 10 children can be played by college students or young adults.

DOUBLING:

- Trudi also plays Samantha Shaw and Frau Krankenfuessli (the Palace Concierge).
- Meyer also plays the Marquesa.
- Santini also plays a Palace Waitress.
- The Marqués also plays the Chauffeur, the Postman & the Policeman.

OPTIONAL EXPANDED CAST:

- Optional Kids Ensemble: children ages 6 to 14 from any country in the world...
- Optional Adult Ensemble: Teachers, Cook, Maids, Palace Staff, Hotel Guests...

THE STORY

ACT I



September 1962. In Los Angeles, Serena, 12, and her movie star mother are excited about going to Europe. The actress, about to shoot a film in Rome, tells her daughter about the wonderful opportunities Serena will be getting at a premier boarding school in Switzerland.

Singing the praises of the Chalet Mirabel, the headmistress (Metz), the teacher of the younger class (Bovay), and three staff members proudly welcome the new American student and her mother.





The next day, the martial depiction of The Mirabel Routine (including the precise morning emptying of chamber pots and timing of the breakfast gong) abruptly reveals the cold precision and control the institution imposes to achieve excellence.



That night, as the kids prepare for bed, Olivia, a coquette, spoiled, Spanish-Venezuelan aristocrats' daughter, object of Nick and Theo's attentions, teases Serena. After lights out, Serena longs for her mother in the song Back Home Again as Bovay, recently dumped by her fiancé, laments her broken dreams.

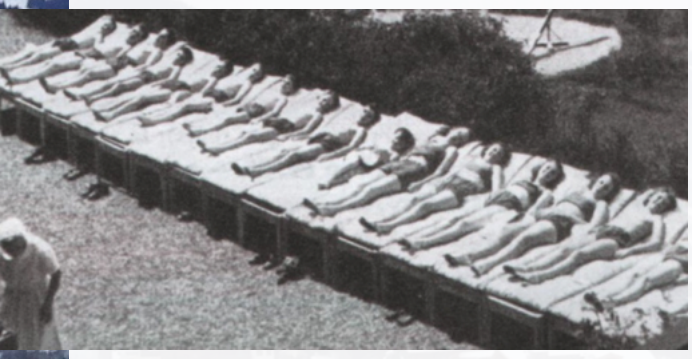
Metz runs her classroom with a firm hand. She appreciates Serena's intelligence. Wily top-dog Nick, 13, scion of a Boston banker, worries about facing this new rival. Nick and Serena try to one up each other reciting lines from *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

One of the students is so afraid of asking to go to the bathroom that he pees on the floor. As the other kids make fun of him, Serena asks why they don't stand up for one another. Nick tells her that the only way to survive here is to mind one's own business (I C 2 Me, U C 2 U).



October. In a comic song (It's Me, It's Me!), Metz trumpets her self-avowed greatness. Three staff members mimic her behind her back.

November. The postman arrives. The kids hope for a letter; many are disappointed. Serena writes her mom, begging to be taken home. Leaning over her shoulder, a matron reads the letter and rips it up. Cocky Nick shows Serena how to fool the censor: he writes a florid love poem to Olivia, hiding it under an innocuous letter to his father. Serena, in turn, hides her pleading letter to her mom under an unobjectionable one. Nick then slides Serena's letter into the departing postman's pouch.



Weekly report cards are read out loud to the entire student body, shaming the weaker students. Given a lower conduct grade stemming from a sassy remark, Nick is furious at being beaten for the first time by Serena, who gets the best grades in school. Their rivalry intensifies.

During the supervised siesta, Nick manages to leave his cot and steal chocolates from the office. He presents them to Olivia, infuriating Theo. Nick then goes to piano practice. He launches from his classical piece into a wild boogie-woogie, making his classmates laugh and getting a reprimand from the matron.



That evening, in the forbidden No Man's Land between girls' and boys' floors, Serena compliments Nick on his boogie-woogie. They discover their shared love of music and theatre (Maybe He Isn't So Bad). Olivia spots them and runs off to tattle, but Nick and Serena decamp before they are caught.

A Sunday in December. Olivia's parents host a party for her at the elegant and cozy Palace Hotel in the village. Bovay stuffs herself with chocolates as a substitute for love in The Chocoholic Song. Nick and Serena dance together, awkwardly at first, then start enjoying themselves. Theo mocks them as "the perfect couple". Nick ditches Serena to cut in on Theo dancing with Olivia. Olivia's overly protective father, the Marqués, grabs Olivia away from Nick and stops the dance. Serena overhears Nick tell Theo he was just dancing with Serena to make Olivia jealous. To prove his love for Olivia, Nick bets Theo his Swiss Army knife that he can climb up to Olivia's room at the next full moon and get a kiss from her.



Back at school, Metz berates Bovay for bringing the kids back from the party noisy and late, and hints at firing her.

On a freezing December night under a full moon, Nick climbs the outside wall of the chalet to Olivia's room (Gotta Be Brave), but ends up in Serena's room by mistake. Serena ridicules his bet; he ignores her warnings. As Nick taps on Olivia's door, Bovay starts her rounds on the floor below, checking on the kids' rooms. Olivia sees Bovay's flashlight coming and shoves Nick out into the hall. Serena grabs him and hides him back in her room under her bed. Bovay enters before Serena can get back under the covers.



Still stung by Metz's criticism, the usually lax Bovay decides to enforce the rules and punish Serena for being out of bed after lights out. She places Serena, nose to the wall, at the end of the dark hallway. Serena is devastated as she sees Nick exit her room and sneak into Olivia's.

As a snowstorm brews outside, Serena, miserable and homesick, bolts and runs away in her bathrobe to the Palace Hotel. She sneaks up to her mother's hotel room and knocks on the door. Her mother opens the door and, shocked, takes her daughter into her arms.



Waking up the next morning, Bovay realizes she left Serena in the hallway all night. Serena cannot be found anywhere. The school is in an uproar. The police are called.

Again putting career ahead of family, Serena's mother ignores her daughter's heartbroken pleas, drags her back to school, accompanied by the police, and leaves.





All sing of Serena's impending punishment for running away: Metz and the staff re-affirm the need for discipline; Bovay questions her own behavior and passivity; the kids are relieved that they themselves are not in trouble; and Nick is baffled by this girl who took the fall for him. Serena, more alone than ever, sings Is There No One?. Bovay is handed the carpet beater to cane Serena. She throws it down. Metz hands it back to Bovay. Afraid of getting fired, Bovay gives in and strikes Serena. Blackout. Spot on Serena, who lifts up her head in defiance.

ACT II

A week later, at dinner on the last day of Serena's quarantine: she has not been allowed to speak all week and has had to remain in her uniform smock, even during dinner when all dress up. Though the school is celebrating Olivia's birthday, Serena sits alone at a table apart, not allowed to participate in the Happy Birthday Yodel.

When everyone goes upstairs to bed, Serena is finally released from her punishment and permitted to speak. She asks Bovay why parents put their kids in boarding school, and why does the school beat its students. The non-plussed Bovay deflects the question by getting Serena excited about performing in the year-end play about William Tell at the Palace Hotel.



February. Olivia's roommate reveals that while Nick did go into Olivia's room, there was no kiss. Nick, profoundly embarrassed, loses the bet and his Swiss Army knife to Theo after all.

Bovay argues with Metz about how Metz has cast the school play, giving Serena only a small part. In separate sardonic monologues, they express their rising mutual disdain (A Tail of Two Sillies).

Early March. Serena grudgingly agrees to deliver one of Nick's risqué love letters to Olivia. But, before she does, the cast list is put up: Nick and Olivia have the leads. Serena is devastated. Enraged (Feel Like Hell), she takes Nick's letter, addresses it to Olivia in care of the Marqués at the Palace, and slips it surreptitiously in the departing postman's pouch.

The first "William Tell" rehearsal is a tedious affair. Olivia recites her lines with Nick like a robot. Serena coaches the grudging Olivia by playing the scene herself with Nick. Serena's demonstration turns Olivia into a better performer and wows Nick.

Later, the Marqués arrives in a fury, incensed by the risqué love letter to Olivia he found waiting for him when he arrived for a visit at the Palace. He pulls his daughter out of school.

To everyone's consternation, Metz does not give Serena Olivia's part. Metz is still angry about Serena's running away, and how it reflects on the reputation of the school and of Metz as headmistress.



Serena, feeling deep guilt over having caused Olivia's removal from school, searches for a way to get her back (Be A Hero). She realizes Olivia and the Marqués are still staying at the Palace Hotel before traveling home. Serena suggests that during a rehearsal at the Palace, they find and "misplace" Olivia's passport until the end of the school year, so she can't leave and has to come back to school and be in the play. As the craftiest, Nick reluctantly agrees to sneak his way into Olivia's hotel room to find the passport.







Serena's mother writes her that she has gotten a part on Broadway, and will be able to keep Serena with her for an extended run in the fall.

In a sequence that runs like a speedy and scary farce, with Serena as the ringleader, the kids sabotage a rehearsal of "William Tell" at the Palace Hotel, to allow Nick enough time to find the passport in Olivia's room upstairs. Nick almost turns back, but finally realizing his affection for Serena, overcomes his fears (Gotta Be Brave Reprise). The wild affair involves Nick searching all over the Palace, Theo trying to find him, Nick then trying to find Theo, their hiding from the Marqués and other adults, Serena leading the kids through a series of stalling tactics and screw-ups, and, as director, Metz gradually losing her cool.







At last, Nick finds the passport. When he makes a belated stage entrance saying the wrong line, Metz goes ballistic. She slaps Nick and then slaps Serena for coming to his defense. Bovay stops Metz cold (Farce Ending).

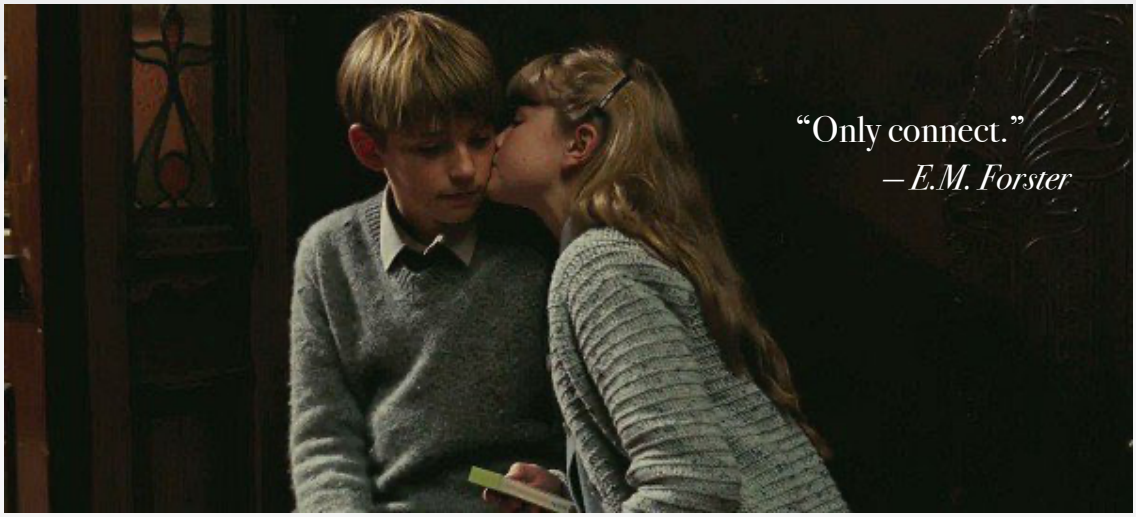
As the kids exit the Palace, Bovay has Nick and Serena confess their caper to the furious Marqués. The two kids explain how much everyone wanted Olivia back in the play. Serena admits that she sent the letter. Bovay tells the Marqués that it is the misguided culture of the school that has resulted in children doing stupid things. She threatens that, if he does not bring Olivia back to school immediately, she will reveal his attempts at doing his own "stupid things" with a Palace staff member. (It's Here I Belong).

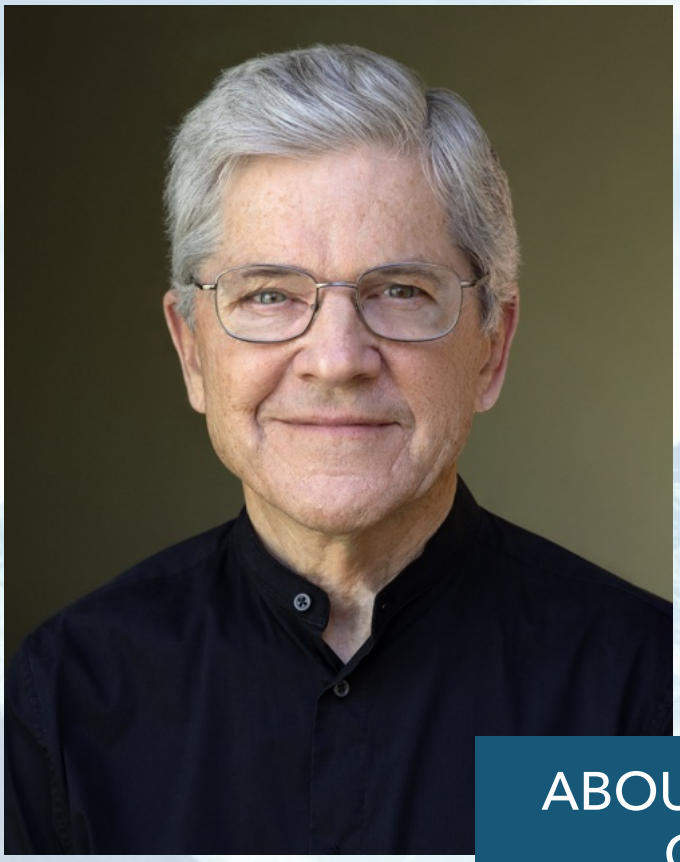
At the year-end performance of "William Tell" at the Palace, Olivia bursts onto the stage - she is back! Nick, as William Tell, shoots the apple off his son's head. With Bovay's permission, Serena leads her schoolmates in rocking out the final song of the tradition-bound play (Homeland).



After the curtain calls and applause, the Marqués, as board chair of the school, announces that Metz is stepping down and Bovay is the new headmistress. Serena tells her mom she wants to stay another year. Theo finally wins Olivia over.

Back at school, Serena and Nick sing You Are The One (an answer to Is There No One?). Serena dubs Nick her knight with the carpet beater. They kiss. Led by Bovay, the kids and staff transform the school, filling it with flowers, flags, color and light. Bows.





ABOUT THE CREATORS

PARMER FULLER
(Story, Music & Lyrics) has written four musicals, an opera, a ballet and a symphony. He won the 2012 Ovation Award for Best Score for a New Musical for "STATIONS" and was also nominated for Best Book for a New Musical. He has been Music Director and Conductor for over 600 performances of 70 musicals. He was Music Director of the San Diego Civic Light Opera at the Starlight Bowl for 14 years, conducting four musicals there each summer. He won San Diego's Craig Noel Awards twice for Best Musical Direction. He has taught and conducted musical theatre at USC for over twenty years. He has scored a television series and more than twenty movies. His orchestral suite "Spirit of the Eagle", drawn from two Westerns he scored, was performed by the Boston Pops. As a concert and society pianist, Parmer has entertained Presidents Reagan, Ford, Bush Sr. and celebrities such as Pavarotti and Robert Redford. He has a Harvard University B.A., an Indiana University M.M. and a Ph.D in Music Composition from UCLA, where he won the Mancini film scoring prize and multiple Sinatra jazz awards.

NARCISSA VANDERLIP (Story, Book) is Producing Executive Director of ETC Theatre Company, a nonprofit co-founded with Parmer Fuller in 2000. She has produced youth and professional musicals, Boom Kat Dance Theatre productions, Shakespeare in the Gardens, fund-raisers with musical theatre entertainment, and community outreach programs to children's agencies, homeless shelters, rehab programs and senior care centers. ETC has received 6 Ovation nominations, won the 2012 Ovation Award for Best Score of a New Musical, and co-produced the award-winning Hulu web series "Complete Works". Narcissa has worked in film production on locations from Buffalo to Budapest, for directors Sam Peckinpah, Woody Allen, James Caan, Roger Corman and Oscar-winner Claude Lelouch. She has designed costumes, written screen-plays, articles, translations in four languages, grants, and attended nonprofit manage-ment trainings thanks to the L.A.County Arts Commission. Raised in California, Switzerland and Paris, she has a French Baccalauréat w/honors, a Cornell B.A. cum laude in Philosophy, and a University of Wisconsin Masters in Communication Arts.





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