ALANIS MORISSETTE’S
jagged
little
pill
THE MUSICAL

STUDY GUIDE
For almost 200 years, The National Theatre has occupied a prominent position on Pennsylvania Avenue—"America's Main Street"—and played a central role in the cultural and civic life of Washington, DC. Located a stone’s throw from the White House and having the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site as its “front yard,” The National Theatre is a historic, cultural presence in our Nation’s Capital and the oldest continuously operating enterprise on Pennsylvania Avenue.

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Written and Curated by Jordan Ealey (they/she), Dramaturg
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www.nationaltheatre.org

Jade McLeod and Lauren Chanel in the North American Tour of JAGGED LITTLE PILL ©NTF2022, Jordan Ealey.
Jagged Little Pill is recommended for ages 14 and up.

The composer and lyricist of the Tony Award-winning Jagged Little Pill, Alanis Morissette is a singer-songwriter. Her 1995 album, Jagged Little Pill, earned a Grammy Award for Album of the Year and is listed in Rolling Stone’s 500 Greatest Albums of All Time. She currently holds the record for most number ones on the weekly Billboard Chart for any female soloist, group leader, or duo member.

Glen Ballard, Music
The composer of the Tony Award-winning Jagged Little Pill. Glen Ballard is a composer, record producer, and lyricist. He is best known for co-writing and producing the 1995 album, Jagged Little Pill, for which he earned a Grammy. He has written songs for artists such as Michael Jackson, Evelyn King, Lea Salonga, and Paula Abdul. Ballard has also ventured into more musical theatre, providing music and lyrics for Ghost: The Musical (2011) and Back to the Future: The Musical (2020).

Diablo Cody, Book
The book writer of the Tony Award-winning Jagged Little Pill. Diablo Cody is a writer and producer. Cody first gained recognition with her blog-turned-memoir, Candy Girl: A Year in the Life of an Unlikely Snoper (2005). Cody is the screenwriter of the 2008 hit film, Juno, which she received an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, the BAFTA Award for Best Original Screenplay, the Independent Spirit Award for Best First Screenplay, and the Writers Guild of America Award for Best Original Screenplay. She has created and written other projects for the screen such as United States of Tara (SHOWTIME, 2009-2010), Jennifer’s Body (2009); Young Adult (2011), Ricki and the Flash (2012); and Tully (2018). She won the Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical for Jagged Little Pill.

Diane Paulus, Director
Originally directed the Broadway debut of Jagged Little Pill. Diane Paulus is a director and producer. She is the artistic director of the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Known for her progressive stagings of musicals, Paulus has directed shows such as Hair, The Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess, Pippin, and 1776. She has been nominated for the Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical four times.

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Choreographer
The original choreographer of the Tony Award-winning Jagged Little Pill. Cherkaoui is a dancer, choreographer, and director. He has made over 50 choreographic pieces and received two Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production, three Ballet Tanz awards for best choreographer (2008, 2011, 2017), the KAIROS Prize (2009) and the Europe Prize Theatrical Realities (2018).

RESOURCES:
National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
National Sexual Assault Online Hotline: online.rainn.org
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-797-7233 or www.thehotline.org
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP or samhsa.gov/find-treatment

Content Warnings
Please note: This production contains strong language, adult themes, drug use, and moments of sexual violence that some may find triggering.

Jagged Little Pill addresses many topics of contemporary life, including sexual assault, opioid addiction, transracial adoption, gender and LGBTQIA+ identity, marriage struggles and mental health.

Read on for some additional context that will help set the stage as you experience this Tony and Grammy Award-winning new musical. Please visit www.jaggedlittlepill.com/resources to learn more about the show’s partner organizations, who have countless resources that speak to the many topics covered in the show.

SEXUAL ASSAULT
Central to the plot of Jagged Little Pill is an instance of sexual assault between two teenagers. While this production does not contain any nudity, please be aware that a simulated assault is briefly shown, and that this scene could be triggering for some audience members.

ADDITION
Jagged Little Pill includes a character who is struggling with an opioid addiction. Mary Jane is a seemingly perfect Connecticut mother and wife, who’s consumed by her addiction to prescription pills. In one scene, she overdoses on opioids in her home and is found unconscious.

Additional Creative Team:
Riccardo Hernandez, Set Design
Emily Rebholz, Costume Design
Justin Townsend, Lighting Design
Finn Ross, Video Design
Bryan Perri, Musical Direction
Tom Kitt, Arrangements

Please take care of yourself when you watch Jagged Little Pill, as the topics do get heavy and can be hard to take in all at once. But the artful direction, the poetic and funny dialogue, and the ever-lasting music of Alanis Morissette are enough to make this story worth the watch.

Lauren Chanel and the company of the North American Tour of JAGGED LITTLE PILL

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Lauren Chanel and the company of the North American Tour of JAGGED LITTLE PILL
A jukebox musical is a genre of musical theatre where all of the songs in the production have already existed somewhere else. Typically, the songs will be taken from popular music, usually dedicated to a single artist or group. In the 17th and 18th centuries, lots of opera and operettas would use popular songs for parody. Musical comedies and burlesques in the 19th century began to interpolate genres such as spirituals, minstrel songs, and other popular music into them.

Some examples of jukebox musicals include:

- *Ain’t Misbehavin’* (1970), using the music of Fats Waller
- *Mamma Mia* (1999), based on the music of ABBA
- *American Idiot* (2009), based on the music of Green Day
- *Jersey Boys* (2005), based on the music of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons
- *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical* (2017), based on the music of Donna Summer
- *Mamma Mia* (1999), based on the music of ABBA
- *American Idiot* (2009), based on the music of Green Day
- *Jersey Boys* (2005), based on the music of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons
- *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical* (2017), based on the music of Donna Summer

**JUKEBOX MUSICAL ACTIVITY: COMPARISON & CONTRAST**

Read the lyrics and context for each version of *You Oughta Know*. Highlight the changes you see and reflect on why each change was needed. What are the similarities? Do you feel like it keeps the same feeling for both versions?

**“You Oughta Know” (Original Version)**

**CONTEXT:** The song is about the end of a relationship that Morissette experienced. Though she has not confirmed which of her former partners she specifically wrote the song about, many have claimed it is about them.

I want you to know, that I am happy for you
I wish nothing but the best for you both

An older version of me
Is she perverted like me?
Would she go down on you in a theater?
Does she speak eloquently
And would she have your baby?
I’m sure she’d make a really excellent mother

‘Cause the love that you gave that we made
Wasn’t able to make it enough for you
To be open wide, no
And every time you speak her name
Does he know how you told me
You’d hold me until you died
‘Til you died, but you’re still alive

And I’m here, to remind you
Of the mess you left when you went away
It’s not fair, to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You, you, you oughta know

You seem very well, things look peaceful
I’m not quite as well, I thought you should know
Did you forget about me, Mr. Duplicity?
I hate to bug you in the middle of dinner
It was a slap in the face
How quickly I was replaced
And are you thinking of me when you fuck her?

**“You Oughta Know” (Musical Version)**

**CONTEXT:** Frankie and Jo are best friends, but are also lovers. Frankie, unaware that their relationship is more than casual, falls in love with Phoenix, one of their classmates. After Frankie reveals this to Jo, Jo uses this song to end their relationship.

[JO]

I want you to know, that I am happy for you
I wish nothing but the best for you both

The perfect version of me
Is he perverted like me?
Would he go down on you in a theater?
So he speaks eloquently
And you can have his baby?
I’m sure you’d make a really excellent mother

‘Cause the love that you gave that we made
Wasn’t able to make it enough for you
To be open wide, no
And every time you speak his name
Does he know why you told me
You’d be there until you died
‘Til you died, but you’re still alive

And I’m here, to remind you
Of the mess you left when you went away
It’s not fair, to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You, you, you oughta know

You seem very well, things look peaceful
I’m not quite as well, I thought you should know
Did you forget about me, Mrs. Duplicity?
I hate to give him so much to live up to
It was a slap in the face
How quickly I was replaced
And are you thinking of me when he fucks you?
(ORIGINAL VERSION) cont

‘Cause the love that you gave that we made
Wasn’t able to make it enough for you
And you’re still alive
Does she know how you told me
You’d hold me until you died
‘Til you died, but you’re still alive
And I’m here, to remind you
Of the mess you left when you went away
It’s not fair, to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You, you, you oughta know

‘Cause the joke that you laid in the bed
That was me and I’m not gonna fade
As soon as you close your eyes, and you know it
And every time I scratch my nails
Down someone else’s back, I hope you feel it
‘Cause the love that you gave that we made
Of the mess you left when you went away
‘Til you died, but you’re still alive
And I’m here, to remind you
Of the mess you left when you went away
It’s not fair, to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You, you, you oughta know

(MUSICAL VERSION) cont

‘Cause the love that you gave that we made
Wasn’t able to make it enough for you
To be open wide, no
And every time you speak his name
Does he know how you told me
You’d be there until you died
‘Til you died, but you’re still alive
And I’m here, to remind you
Of the mess you left when you went away
It’s not fair, to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You, you, you oughta know

[JO & COMPANY]
Ohh...

‘Cause the joke that you laid in the bed
That was me and I’m not gonna fade
As soon as you close your eyes, and you know it
And every time I scratch my nails
Down someone else’s back, I hope you feel it
Well, can you feel it?
Well I’m here, to remind you
Of the mess you left when you went away
It’s not fair, to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You, you, you oughta know

Think of your favorite album that you have ever listened to. What if you were asked to adapt that album into a musical? How would you do so? Use the space below to dream of that.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO
LGBTQIA+ IDENTITIES

Courtesy of The Anne E. Casey Foundation

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: An enduring emotional and/or physical attraction (or non-attraction) to other people. Sexual orientation is fluid and encompasses a variety of labels, including gay, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual.

LESBIAN: A woman who is attracted, emotionally and/or physically, to other women.

BISEXUAL: A person who is attracted to people, regardless of gender identity.

GAY: A person who is attracted, emotionally and/or physically, to someone of the same gender. The term can be used by men, women or individuals who identify as nonbinary.

TRANSGENDER: A person whose gender identity and/or gender expression do not match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.

QUEER: An adjective used by some people, particularly younger people, whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual. Queer was once used as a pejorative term and has been reclaimed by some—but not all—members of the LGBTQ community.

INTERSEX: A person born with sex characteristics that are not typical for male or female bodies. Sex characteristics are physical features relating to sex—including chromosomes, genitals, hormones and other reproductive anatomy—as well as secondary features that emerge from puberty. Intersex is an umbrella term, and intersex characteristics and traits are not always apparent or identified at birth.

ASEXUAL: A person who is not sexually attracted others and has no desire to engage in sexual behavior. Asexuality differs from celibacy in that a person who is celibate is sexually attracted to others but chooses to abstain from sex.

GENDER IDENTITY is a person’s internal identification as male, female, something in between or something other than the two conventional gender options. A person’s gender identity is not visible to others and can match or differ from their assigned sex at birth.

CISGENDER: A person whose gender identity matches the sex—male or female—originally identified on their birth certificate (i.e., people who are not transgender). Cisgender, which is pronounced si-gender, describes only a person’s gender identity—not their sexual or romantic attractions.

ENBY: A person who does not identify as exclusively male or exclusively female and usually prefers “they” as a pronoun. Enby is the phonetic pronunciation of “NB,” which stands for nonbinary. Not all nonbinary individuals prefer or use this term.

GENDER NONCONFORMING: A person who does not adhere to the traditional expectations—in terms of their appearance or behavior—of their assigned gender. Some of these individuals identify as transgender but others, for example, masculine lesbians, do not.

GENDER FLUID: A person whose gender expression or gender identity—or both—changes over time. Not everyone whose gender identity or expression changes identifies as gender fluid.

REMEMBER:
SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME. 😊

COULD YOU HAVE YOUR OWN
Jagged Little Pill

IN MUSICAL
Two actors in “Jagged Little Pill” also issued their own responses to Schell’s statements. Celia Rose Gooding, who was Tony-nominated for the show but is now leaving it for “Star Trek: Strange New Worlds,” posted on Twitter: “This is unacceptable. Nobody should have to put off necessary medical treatment for a show, ever.”

Another cast member, Anthony Cipriano, also announced that they were not returning to the show, citing “the harm that many trans + non-binary and marginalized folks on-stage cast members and off have endured throughout the years.” He also wrote, “Representation, mental and physical health are extremely important. I’m hopeful for a more equitable future where the right changes and protection are put into action.”

This is not the only controversy “Jagged Little Pill” has dealt with recently. The musical was also criticized for erasing non-binary narratives. In the pre-Broadway run of “Jagged Little Pill” in Boston, the character of Jo (played by Tony winner Lauren Patten) was perceived by many to be non-binary, using they/them pronouns. Yet when the show came to Broadway, Jo presented as a cis woman and the creative team denied that Jo was ever non-binary.

The producers released a statement clarifying they had sought to portray Jo as a character “on a gender expansive journey without a known outcome.” They admitted they “made mistakes” in how they handled the character’s evolution from Boston to Broadway. “In a process designed to clarify and streamline, many of the lines that signaled Jo as gender non-conforming, and with them, something vital and integral, got removed from Jo’s character journey. Compounding our mistake, we then stated publicly and categorically that Jo was never written or conceived as non-binary. That discounted and dismissed what people saw and felt in this character’s journey. We should not have done that.”

Patten acknowledged the controversy around her character during her Tony Award acceptance speech for best featured actress. “I want to thank my trans and nonbinary friends and colleagues who have engaged with me in difficult conversations [and] that have joined me in dialogue about my character Jo.”

In a Twitter post, Gooding referenced multiple issues the show’s faced: “I cannot ignore the harm ‘Jagged’ has done to the trans and nonbinary community, including cast members on stage, off stage, and behind the scenes in the production-making process. They are owed a space to exist and perform free of transphobia, and the opportunity to tell their own stories.”

**The Musical**

Jade McLeod and the North American Touring Company of JAGGED LITTLE PILL.

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**Authors’ Equity to Investigate ‘Jagged Little Pill’ for Workplace Safety Issues**

by Deep Tran | Originally printed on Backstage.com | October 1, 2021

“Jagged Little Pill” may have won two Tony Awards but it has also become the site of multiple controversies around workplace safety and allegations of harm against its trans and nonbinary artists. As a result, four actors have left the production, and the show is currently under investigation by Actors’ Equity Association.

“Jagged Little Pill,” written by Diablo Cody and featuring the music of Alanis Morissette, features characters struggling with opioid addiction, sexual assault, and sexual identity.

Last week, an actor on “Jagged Little Pill,” Nora Schell, posted on Twitter about why they left the show: “During previews for the Broadway run of ‘Jagged Little Pill’ I was intimidated, coerced and forced by multiple higher ups to put off CRITICAL AND NECESSARY surgery to remove growths from my vagina that were making me anemic. Surgery my doctor told me was urgent.”

Schell wrote that they told the stage manager, company manager, and the creative team they needed surgery for their polycystic ovary syndrome: “I was struggling with on again off again anemia due to the amount of blood loss my PCOS was causing.” They also wrote that they were coerced by the team at “Jagged Little Pill” to continue performing, even when they were “going in and out of consciousness,” and collapsed backstage.

“I pleaded with the higher up who insisted I stay, and I begged for permission to go home and contact my doctor for an emergency appointment,” they wrote. “I was told to push through.”

Schell also alleged that one of the people who coerced them into performing was stage manager, Ira Mont, who is also an Equity member and vice president of Equity’s national council. “This SM allowed me to be intimidated into performing when I was clearly not well,” wrote Schell.

In response, Equity has said they have hired New York labor attorney Micah Wissinger to “conduct an independent review of the workplace at Jagged Little Pill on Broadway,” said the union in a statement. “A partner at Levy Rainer, Wissinger has extensive experience in labor and employment law, including conducting workplace investigations and representing transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.”

Schell is non-binary.

The producers of “Jagged Little Pill” also announced that they are launching an investigation. They have hired lawyer Jay Hewlin, of the Hewlin Group. Said producers Vivek J. Tiwary, Arvind Ethan David, and Eva Price in a joint statement: “We are deeply troubled by the recent claims that have been made by a former cast member. We met with our cast and members of our core creative team today to let them know we take this matter very seriously, and to share with them the actions we are taking in response.”

Though Jagged Little Pill is a feat for a musical and explores a lot of topics related to mental health, queer identity, transracial adoption, drug addiction, sexual assault, and more, sometimes that does not always translate behind the scenes. The following article details some of the controversy surrounding Jagged Little Pill, especially as it relates to nonbinary identity.
FURTHER THINGS
“YOU OUGHTA KNOW” (AND WATCH!) ABOUT

ALANIS MORISSETTE’S
jagged little pill
THE MUSICAL

Watch some of the original music videos for JAGGED LITTLE PILL!

YOU OUGHTA KNOW

HAND IN MY POCKET

Watch the JAGGED LITTLE PILL Tiny Desk Concert!

Watch the PBS News Hour spotlight on JAGGED LITTLE PILL