

# FUN HOME

## PARENT/CAREGIVER GUIDE

Use this guide to jump-start a conversation with your child about the performance they saw recently – not only will you get to learn about what your child experienced, but it will also help them to process and reflect upon the onstage material.



## THE STORY BASICS...ART REFLECTS LIFE

*Fun Home* the musical is based on Bechdel's graphic memoir of the same name, a graphic novel telling her story, sharing her reflections and memories. The main thrust of the plot is Alison trying to reconcile her own coming out as a lesbian with her father's closeted and repressed sexuality and his apparent suicide, which occurred, in real life and in both the play and the book, four months after she came out to him. The setting is almost a character itself, the family funeral home, or the "fun home," which serves as a dark backdrop for lives lived entwined with secrecy.

**It's a Musical:** This show is a musical, so the actors will sing intermittently throughout. There will be spoken dialogue as well, but all performers will sing at some point.

**Nonlinear Timeline:** In many ways, this is a memory play; Adult Alison trying to make sense of her past through her art (cartooning). Because of this, we bounce back and forth from current day to memories of Alison's childhood and young adulthood. Lisa Kron, who wrote the book and lyrics for the show shares that in this show, the past always understands itself as the present, and that the more innocent the characters in the past are of what will happen in the future, the more deeply felt the tragedy is when it arrives. If they are predicting or expecting it, it loses gravity.

**Three Alisons:** Three actors play Alison at three different points in her life (Small Alison-Approximately 9 years old, Medium Alison-about 19, Adult Alison-Written as 43). Adult Alison is aware of the other two Alisons but they aren't aware of her. She's looking back, they are moving forward to an unknown future.

**Live Musicians:** The creative team members of *Fun Home* are choosing to have a seven piece orchestra on stage with the actors to provide live musical accompaniment.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was the performance about? ( Did it connect to history? To something else you've seen?)
- What did the performance make you think about? (Did it spark any new thoughts or give you any new understanding?)
- How did you connect ideas in the performance to ideas or realities in your own life? In your school work? In the rest of the world?
- Can you remember something about the performance that you particularly liked or disliked? If so, what was it and why did it stand out to you?
- Did you have a favorite moment in the performance? Tell me about it.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE CONTENT

- What does it mean to "come out"? Why might it be scary to come out – to peers, to parents, etc.? How might you react if a friend came out to them? What would be a supportive way to react?
- Why are honesty and trust important in healthy relationships? What makes a relationship healthy and supportive? What characteristics of healthy relationships did you see in the show? What about characteristics of unhealthy relationships?
- Shame and hopelessness were the source of Alison's father's pain, and often are the precursors to suicide – what can we do when we feel shame or hopelessness to get through it, seek support, and not let it overtake us? How can we support friends, peers, and loved ones if they are going through challenging times?

