



# Last Train to Nibroc

by Arlene Hutton

September 30 – October 29  
Previews Sept. 28 & 29

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Study Guide Written by Cyndy Kurtz & Sandra Midkiff  
Layout & Design Sandra Midkiff

# Last Train

## Plot Summary

*Last Train to Nibroc* is the beautiful journey of Raleigh, a soldier who dreams of becoming a writer, and May, a young woman who desires to become a missionary. Their unexpected friendship develops as they travel by train from California with the coffins of, as Raleigh notes, "two of the greatest authors of the century," Nathaniel West and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Though their individual dreams lead them to separate destinations they are re-united at the Nibroc Festival a year and a half later. They soon discover their hopes and their relationship are on a different track. Arlene Hutton's tender romantic comedy is a sweet story of a young man and woman, transformed by the simple intersection of their lives.

## Character Breakdown

**May**—twenty-one or twenty-two. From a small town in Kentucky. She is sincere and honest in her beliefs.

**Raleigh**—About the same age. From a nearby town. Just a good guy, slow to anger and quick to laugh.

## Scene Breakdown

### Scene One

December 28, 1940.

A train, somewhere west of Chicago.

### Scene Two

Summer 1942.

A park bench near a woods

### Scene Three

Spring 1943.

May's front porch.

Photo Courtesy of [hometown.aol.com/rscha57066/deertrailmuseum.htm](http://hometown.aol.com/rscha57066/deertrailmuseum.htm)

## Author's Note

"The idea for the first scene of *Last Train to Nibroc* came to me while reading a biography of S.J. Perelman, who was a brother-in-law to the author Nathanael West. West died in a car accident in December 1940, and his body was shipped east by train. Also on the same train was Sheila Graham, for her companion F. Scott Fitzgerald had also passed away, and it is very likely that she was accompanying his body across the country to Maryland.

I put two young people from Kentucky on that train, basing them very loosely on my parents, who in real life had been falling in love at just about that time. *Last Train to Nibroc* is a patchwork quilt of family lore and stories I heard as a child, all stitched together to tell the fictional tale of May and Raleigh. When I wrote the one-act version, which is

the first scene of the full-length, I had no idea how the details about Raleigh and May would payoff later. Indeed, May was originally called "Mary." An early typo amended it to "May," and I liked that better, not realizing that it would be important in Scene Three. When setting up Raleigh's epilepsy in the first scene, I also had no idea, until I read it on my computer screen, that Raleigh would become ill at the end of Scene Two, or that



Charity Parenzini as May and  
Timothy Horner as Raleigh  
Photo Credit: Matthew Lawrence

# to Nibroc



## Author's Note Cont'd

May would misunderstand his sickness in the way she does. Moments like these were as much a surprise to me when I wrote them as they are for the audience seeing the play.

It has been extremely rewarding to see the audience response to this little play. The senior citizens are delighted to revisit their past, of course, but I have especially

enjoyed the enthusiasm of teens and young adults who gain insight into the lives of their parents or grandparents, discovering that the "good old days" were not so simple and that stories of love and forgiveness are universal to all ages."

--Arlene Hutton, New York City, June 11, 1999.



Photo Courtesy of  
[www.imagejournal.org/glen/05](http://www.imagejournal.org/glen/05)

Arlene Hutton (Playwright) is the pen name of actor/director Beth Lincks, who began writing plays five years ago as a Participating Artist at

Alice's Fourth Floor and is currently a member of the LAB Theatre Company. Born in Louisiana and raised in Florida, Beth received her B.A. in Theatre from Rollins College and her M.F.A. in Acting from Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory. She has been an active member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and actor/director artist-in-residence at several colleges. As Producing Artistic Director of The Journey Company, Beth has presented works at national and international festivals, receiving grants from One World Foundation, PALA, the Joelson Foundation and 21st Century Playwrights, as well as an Independent Artist Challenge Grant from The Field. She is a member of New Dramatists and Dramatists Guild, and is the current Tennessee Williams Playwriting Fellow at Sewanee.

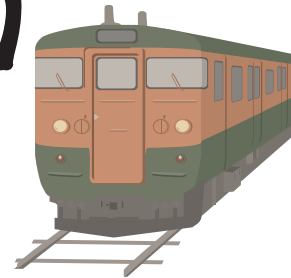
She is the author of *LAST TRAIN TO NIBROC* (NYC Drama League Best Play nomination), *AS IT IS IN HEAVEN* (Edinburgh Festival Fringe) and *SEE ROCK CITY*, and also a three-time Samuel French Short Play Festival Winner and a four-time Heidemann finalist. Her plays have been produced in New York City, London, across the US and around the world. She is currently working on the third play in her trilogy that began with *LAST TRAIN TO NIBROC*, as well as a play about the Brontë family. When she is not traveling, Beth lives in New York City.

## Other Works

*I DREAM BEFORE I TAKE THE STAND*  
*ACADEMIA*  
*women@work*  
*CLOSING COSTS*  
*STUDIO PORTRAIT*  
*THE PRICE YOU PAY*  
*AT THE TONE*  
*HOUSEPLAY*  
*FRIENDS FOR LIFE*  
*MAN IN THE BASEMENT*  
*CHOCOLATES ON THE PILLOW*

# On the Train

"We're riding with two of the greatest authors of the century. We're all on this train together." -Raleigh



## F. Scott Fitzgerald

Frances Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, and named after the writer of the national anthem.

Fitzgerald attended Catholic prep school, then Princeton, where he honed his writing skills and built a strong ambition for personal achievement. An undistinguished student, he left



Photo Courtesy of [www.hofstra.edu/images/Cul\\_Fritz/jpg](http://www.hofstra.edu/images/Cul_Fritz/jpg)

Princeton to join the army, but never saw combat. He continued to write, and the 1920 publication of his first novel, *THIS SIDE OF PARADISE*, brought him overnight fame and the hand of the beautiful Zelda Sayer.

Fitzgerald made most of his money writing for magazines, primarily the *Saturday Evening Post*. He wrote of aspirations and idealism, as well as loss, and was one of the first to incorporate strong, independent women in his stories. While a hit with readers, his personal life was not successful. Eventually Zelda became mentally ill and was permanently confined to a sanitarium. A distraught Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood to try his hand at screenwriting. He died there of a heart attack at the age of 44. His huge popularity as a writer didn't really take hold until 1945-50, when *THE GREAT GATSBY* was recognized as a classic American novel.

## Nathanael West

West was born Nathan Weinstein in New York City. His parents were German Jews who had emigrated from Lithuania.

Though an unenthusiastic student, Weinstein earned an advanced degree from Brown University. He changed his name soon afterward. West managed small hotels and worked as a journalist in the early days of his writing career. He wrote with deep pessimism about the American Dream and good intentions

gone bad. When one of his novels, *MISS LONELYHEARTS*, went into film production, he moved to Hollywood. There he became a scriptwriter and wrote his classic *DAY OF THE*



Photo Courtesy of [www.shsu.edu/~eng\\_wpf/authors/pictures/N-West.jpg](http://www.shsu.edu/~eng_wpf/authors/pictures/N-West.jpg)

*LOCUST*. West published only 5 novels, but was responsible for a dozen screen plays. The story goes that West was so distraught over the death of F. Scott Fitzgerald on December 21, 1940, that he crashed his car near El Centro, California the next day, killing himself and his bride. His premature death brought him a popularity that he had failed to achieve in life.

# Kentucky

May & Raleigh grew up in Kentucky. May in Corbin and Raleigh in Woodbine.



**Corbin, Kentucky** is known for two things: the founding of Kentucky Fried Chicken in 1940, and the Nibroc Festival.

The Nibroc Festival began in 1952. Then, as now, it is a time of concerts, rides, food, a parade, and children's activities.

A busy railroad, timber and farming center,



Photo Courtesy of [www.corbinkentucky.us/location.htm](http://www.corbinkentucky.us/location.htm)

Corbin is close to the beautiful Cumberland Falls State Resort. The population of Corbin is over 7700.

**Woodbine, Kentucky** is an unincorporated town of less than 1000, located three miles south of Corbin. It has a farming and livestock economy.

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## Tent Meetings

May: "I went to the tent meetings at the campgrounds. To hear all the preachers."

Tent meetings have been around for most of America's history. Just as May goes to the tent meetings to hear the preachers, Christians and non-Christians would attend these meetings. Traveling preachers from one denomination or many would speak to those who attended.



Photo Courtesy of [freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~springport/pictures62/6256.jpg](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~springport/pictures62/6256.jpg)

Singing and preaching take place every night for a week or more in each location.

Tent meetings still take place, though they are not the social highlight they once were for rural communities.



# Facts

Raleigh: "It's epilepsy, May, not leprosy."

**Epilepsy** is a neurological condition that can produce brief disturbances in the brain's electrical functions. When someone has epilepsy, normal communication between brain cells may be interrupted by thousands to millions of extra-strong simultaneous electrical impulses. These bursts can occur at any time and cause a wide variety of sensations and body movement. Symptoms vary from the mild—staring into space and "zoning out"—to unconsciousness and convulsions. Often epilepsy can be controlled by medication and diet, but some cases defy treatment.

At least 150 causes of epilepsy have been found. Seventy percent of the time, however, no reason is ever discovered. Causes may include brain injuries or infections, tumors, strokes, fevers, lead poisoning, and prenatal injury.

**Leprosy** is a disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*. It affects the skin, eyes, mucous membranes, bones and nerves. It can disfigure its victims and leave them blind, and paralyzed in the hands and feet. It can also rob the limbs of sensation. Treatment for the disease wasn't discovered until the late 1940s. Before that time it was a feared infectious condition, often associated with a curse, and victims were ostracized by society. Today treatment is easy, using a combination of drugs. Still close to 400,000 new cases are reported every year.

## Terms from Nibroc

- Ashbury College: a Methodist church school in Wilmore, Kentucky.
- Buggytop Shelton: a well-known bootlegger in Corbin, Kentucky, who made and sold moonshine up through the 1940's.
- Dixie Dog: a restaurant on Main Street in Corbin, famous for its hot dogs with chili.
- Jake Leg: Jake was a cure-all medicinal tonic made from an extract of Jamaican ginger. For decades it was sold over the counter safely and profitably, as its 70% alcohol base made it an easy way to get around Prohibition laws or avoid liquor taxes. But in 1930 the manufacturers decided to water Jake down to increase profits. Their dilutant of choice was an industrial solvent that was highly toxic to the spinal cord, partially paralyzing 50,000 people. Jake leg or Jake walk was a dead give away that the victim had been imbibing this popular drink.
- "Lamb of God": a hymn sung at revival meetings during the call to the altar, also known as "Just as I Am."
- Sharecrop: a rented farm
- Switch: a thin, pliable limb from a bush or small tree, used for spanking.

# The War

## End of Isolationism

Long ago, colonists came to America from Europe to escape many hardships for a better life in the West.

The long ocean journey emphasized the separateness of the New World, and the different values and interests it held. These were the beginnings of

isolationism. In his Farewell Address, George Washington proclaimed that Europe had "a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation," and that America should "steer clear of permanent alliances." Expansion and wars followed without America wavering from this stance. Even in WWI the US fought as an associate power to Anglo-French forces, not as an ally. America rejected the Treaty of Versailles, and refused to join the



The Bombing of Pearl Harbor  
Photo Courtesy of  
[teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer\\_pol\\_hist](http://teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer_pol_hist)

League of Nations. Neutrality Acts were passed in '35, '36, and '37, ensuring that America would not be entangled in any European wars through ill-advised alliances.

In 1940 isolationism was dealt a blow with German victories and the Battle of Britain. If the Axis were to succeed in Europe and Asia, America might be the next target. Spurred on by Hemingway's glorification of the Spanish Civil War, thousands of young men enlisted, hoping for adventure and a shot at glory. Additionally, three months of public debate resulted in the first peacetime draft in American history, signed into law in September 1940. Many Americans still supported the America First Committee for non-

intervention, and as late as the fall of 1941 80% opposed declaring war on the Axis. All debate ended, however, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. With the declaration of war, all fit males aged 21-44 were required to register for a lottery system (with exceptions for conscientious objectors and those in critical professions). Millions enlisted outright, anxious to defend their homeland.



<http://freepages.military.rootsweb.com/~worldwarone/WWII/>

# Women and War

World War II forever changed the role of women in American society. Less than a decade before, there was strong discrimination against working women, with a third of the country's male population unemployed and jobs in short supply. Now the war took men out of the workforce just as the war machine was gearing up. Women were needed to fill the gap. Eighteen million women were working by 1945 in jobs ranging from secretary to bomb assembler, from teacher to steel worker. Rosie the Riveter became the symbol of the production might of the American woman.

It was a unique time for women. Most female workers were married, over 35, and a third had young children, yet it was the first time that many had money of their own. Suddenly their patriotism had an outlet—they were allowed to participate and contribute to the war effort, and had opportunities to learn new skills and advance in their careers. But it was not an

easy time. They experienced harassment on the job, and judgment by a society unready for such rapid change. Wages were 60% what men made for the same work. Many women were denigrated for taking soldiers' jobs, for damaging the family and society, and for keeping wages low. Still, women went to work in growing numbers, and continued to do so after the war as families sought greater affluence.

Women did not limit their war work to civilian jobs. Many served in the fledgling OSS, precursor to the CIA. As in WWI, 12,000 Army and Navy nurses served at home and abroad. But it was increasingly obvious that women were needed to serve in the armed forces in roles that allowed the maximum number of men to be freed for combat. In May 1942 the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was formed. This was not a move toward equality, however. Women earned less money for the same rank, received



Photo Courtesy of the National Archives

no overseas pay, no life insurance, no veterans medical benefits, no death benefits, no POW protection, and would not be allowed to have men under their command.

Over 150,000 women served in North Africa, the Mediterranean, Europe, the Southwest Pacific, China, India, Burma, the Middle East and at home. Aside from the hardships of war suffered by all, WAACs were also targeted by society and their male military counterparts. They were painted as immoral women and blamed for changing the home front. They were often subjected to intensive discipline, given mundane work, and refused transfers or promotions. Still, their value to the military was increasingly obvious, and in

# More on War

## Women continued...

1943 the WAACs became the Women's Army Corp (WAC), complete with pay, privileges and legal protection equal to men.

Over 650 women received medals at the end of the war. In 1948 the WACs became a permanent part of the army. In 1978 the WACs were abolished and women were assimilated into all but the combat branches of the regular Army.

Whether at home or abroad, in the workplace or in the military, WWII proved that women, like men, are "only content as they feel they are contributing." \*

\*Eleanor Roosevelt



Charity Parenzini as May and Timothy Horner as Raleigh  
Photo Credit: Matthew Lawrence

## Rationing

'Making do with less' was the motto on the American Homefront. Following the example of its British cousins, America soon began the rationing of critical goods. The Office of Price Administration (OPA) was set up in 1941 to set rationing regulations. With the military getting first claim on products such as steel, aluminum, coal, wood, rubber, gasoline, items like cigarettes and foods such as coffee and sugar, American families began feeling the pinch. Within a short period of time, ration books had been issued to every family member in the country. For those who disobeyed ration rules, punishment was strict. "Punishments ranging as high as *Ten Years' Imprisonment or \$10,000 Fine or Both*, may be imposed under United States Statutes for violations thereof arising out of infractions of Ration Orders and Regulations." (from United States of American, War Ration Book One). With rationing came a thriving black market for the scarcer products.



Photo Courtesy of National Archives



Photo Courtesy of National Archives



Photo Courtesy of US National Archives

# The Designs

Designers take the director's vision for a play and make it a reality.

## Set Design—Mark Lund



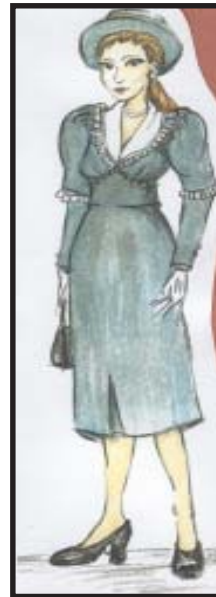
## Costume Design—Sarah Burch



Raleigh



Raleigh



May



May



# The Company

## The Cast



**May  
Charity Parenzini**



**Raleigh  
Timothy Horner**

## Production

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Director **Karen Lund**

Stage Manager **Rebecca Patterson**

Set Designer **Mark Lund**

Costume Designer **Sarah Burch**

Sound Designer **Mark Lund**

Lighting Designer **Andrew Duff**

Props Designer **Mark Lund**

Assistant Director **Charissa Huff**

Sound Board Operator **Carlo Nakar**

Dramaturg **Cyndy Kurtz**

Assistant Stage  
Manager **Suja Hart**

We are so glad you are joining Taproot Theatre for a student matinee performance. Audience Etiquette is important for everyone to experience an enriching and educational experience. See you at the performance!

### Audience Etiquette

- It is appropriate to talk quietly until the performance begins.
- If you need to use the restroom, please do so before the performance begins. Restrooms are located in the upper and lower lobbies.
- Be sure to be seated before the performance begins
- No food, gum, candy or beverages are to be brought into the theatre.
- Please don't wear headphones during the performance.
- Please turn off watch alarms, cellular phones, and other electronic devices.
- Students who disturb other members of the audience may be asked to leave the theatre and wait in the lobby.
- Remember: you will get an opportunity to talk with the actors and director at the end of the performance. Be prepared with questions about the production!
- Enjoy the Show!

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