

MY DETECTIVE
WATSON
A SHERLOCK HOLMES
MUSICAL

My Dear Watson

A SHERLOCK HOLMES MUSICAL

ABOUT THE SHOW

My Dear Watson is an original musical with books, lyrics, and music by Orlando area composer Jami-Leigh Bartschi. It is based on the Sherlock Holmes stories, and it specifically centers around the friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson.

My Dear Watson was conceived by Bartschi while pursuing her Master's Degree in Liberal Studies at Rollins College. Bartschi's idea was to create and develop a full-length musical production based on the Sherlock Holmes stories to fulfill the requirements of her thesis project.

Not just entertaining stories, the Holmes works by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle make for an intriguing study on character relationships in Victorian literature. Conan Doyle's plot and character devices were unprecedented for their time and have profoundly influenced every detective story since.

To read the full academic thesis paper, please visit <https://scholarship.rollins.edu/mls/18>

AT A GLANCE

Structure and Length

My Dear Watson is a non-recitative book musical in two acts, with a total running time of approximately two hours including intermission.

Setting and Source Material

My Dear Watson is set in the original period of the late nineteenth century. It combines quotes, characters, and plot elements of several original Conan Doyle stories, including *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Valley of Fear*, "The Adventure of the Three Garridebs," and "The Final Problem," all tied together in an original way. This allows the audience to be taken all the way from Holmes and Watson's initial introduction to the showdown with Moriarty in only a couple of hours.

Children and Families

While *My Dear Watson* was not written specifically for children, many parents may find it suitable for family viewing depending on the age and maturity of those attending.

The show contains:

- Minimal mild language
- Depiction of a crime scene where a murder has taken place
- A few scenes containing or alluding to firearm use with a loud noise
- An implicit tobacco reference (Holmes carries a pipe)
- No sexual themes or references

More Information

Further details about the show, including links to sample videos/tracks and merchandise, can be found at the website below.

THE PLAYWRIGHT



Jami-Leigh Bartschi is a music educator, playwright, musical director, and composer, originally from Milford, Connecticut.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music and a Master's Degree in Liberal Studies from Rollins College. She has been recognized as Teacher of the Year, and she has accompanied and musical directed numerous productions, including *West Side Story*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Cinderella*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Young Frankenstein*, and *Pirates of Penzance* among others.

She lives with her husband in Longwood, Florida.

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RESOURCES REQUIRED

My Dear Watson is written for maximum production flexibility.

Characters and Actors

The musical features eight characters who may perform with or without an ensemble.

Leads

- SHERLOCK HOLMES (baritone), the detective. Tall, thin, and pale. Very eccentric, unemotional, but brilliant. Impeccably dressed in gentleman's attire. Always smokes a pipe throughout the story.
- DR. JOHN WATSON (tenor), Holmes' roommate, friend, and partner in detection. Medium height, thin, but strong. Neatly dressed in gentleman's attire with a gentleman's walking stick with a curved handle. His leg was wounded in the war, so he walks with a limp.

Supporting

- PROFESSOR MORIARTY (baritone/bass), the evil arch nemesis. Tall, thin, and pale, like Holmes. Dresses in dark, upper class gentleman's clothing except for his several disguises.
- INSPECTOR LESTRADE (baritone or mezzo-soprano), the bumbling Scotland Yard inspector. Can be played by either a male or female actor.
- MRS. HUDSON (mezzo-soprano/alto), Holmes' and Watson's landlady. A Middle-class elderly Scottish woman.

Featured

- CECIL BARKER, a middle-aged, rugged American man.
- MR. DOUGLAS, a wealthy, middle-aged American man from new money.
- MRS DOUGLAS, wealthy British woman in her early-30s from new money.

Sets and Costumes

Sets and costumes may be very simple or as elaborate as resources allow.

The 2014 production of *My Dear Watson* by The Master's Academy utilized more elaborate, traditional sets and backdrops inspired by a steampunk design in a proscenium style theater. To the right are examples of Baker Street and Reichenbach Falls.



In other productions with more limited resources, the show has been staged very effectively using projections or simple props to set the scene. To the left, a simpler set from

2016 by Empty Spaces Theatre Company used projections to alter the scene from the streets of London to a Switzerland hotel lobby and more with minimal need for scene changes.

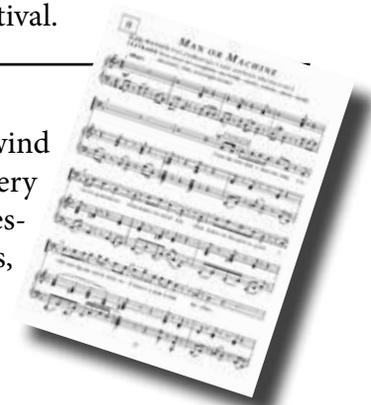
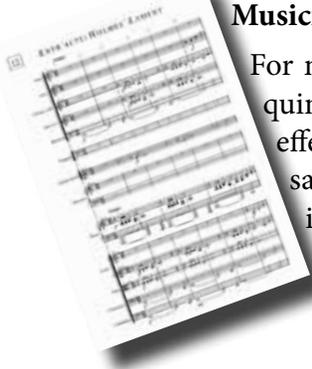
The 2018 Valencia College production used some simple movable props to hide the frequently-used Baker Street set, leaving the floor level of the black box open for more flexible settings like Birlstone Manor (right).



If even more strapped for resources (e.g. in a festival setting where the entire stage must be loaded or struck in 15 minutes), the show can be put on with a few small pieces of furniture and light props, as shown to the left at the 2017 New York Musical Festival.

Musicians

For maximum effect, the musical is scored for string quintet, woodwind quintet, piano, and percussion. However, the show can be performed very effectively with only a piano and violin, or a track may be used if necessary. Professional quality Libretto/Vocal Books, Piano/Vocal Books, individual part books, and the Full Score are readily available.



PRODUCTION HISTORY



2014 MASTER'S ACADEMY

My Dear Watson made its world premiere at the Annie Russell Theater on the campus of Rollins College in Winter Park, FL. The original run was produced by The Master's Academy, a private school in Oviedo with a renowned performing arts program. Hundreds of local patrons were the first to see this work over four shows in three days in May 2014.



2016 EMPTY SPACES

My Dear Watson was performed professionally for the first time March 3-7, 2016 at the Mandell Studio Theater in the Lowndes Shakespeare Center. The show was helmed by John DiDonna, a 24-year veteran of Orlando theater. His company, Empty Spaces, is known for the eclectic perennial favorite *Phantasmagoria* and many other productions both original and familiar.



2017 NY MUSICAL FESTIVAL

My Dear Watson made its New York Debut in July 2017 at the prestigious New York Musical Festival, which nurtures the creation, production, and public presentation of stylistically, thematically, and culturally diverse new musicals to ensure the future vitality of musical theater. Our creative team was thrilled by this amazing opportunity to introduce this production to a new audience in the musical theatre capital of the world!



2018 VALENCIA COLLEGE

My Dear Watson returned home for its first collegiate production at Valencia State College in June 2018. John DiDonna, artistic director of Valencia's theater program, returned to direct this production. We were extremely gratified to see how this new generation of actors, musicians, and crew members breathed life into the show and were honored to sell out every performance well in advance!



2019 CHICAGO MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

My Dear Watson headed to the Second City in February 2019 at the Chicago Musical Theatre Festival, which showcases musical theatre writing talent and puts shows in front of publishers who can help further develop and distribute shows. For the first time, we're delighted to have our actors and creative team sourced entirely from Chicago's rich pool of talent, joining us to introduce this production to a yet another audience in a city with a fantastic tradition of arts and theatre!

REVIEWS

It was shrewd of Bartschi to focus on the unconventional friendship of Holmes and Watson as the emotional centerpiece of her musical: How to love a difficult person is a fascinating question... the music, lyrics and storyline [are] filled with pleasing twists and turns. An Act One murder mystery lets the audience see violin-loving Holmes strut his stuff and is solved with his usual, nearly omniscient flair... Bartschi's music delightfully hints at a bygone era and is full of motion, like the whirring of focused brain waves. She has composed it in such a way that the very notes sound intelligent... A three-piece musical ensemble adds greatly to the show's atmosphere. The orchestration allows each to shine: piano, cello and, of course violin — just how Holmes would want it.

— Matt Palm, *Orlando Sentinel*

The melodic score, orchestrated with a piano and violin, gracefully moves up and down the scale. The bowler hat, the pipe, and the teapot all bring us into the world of London, where grisly murder makes headlines. The creative team has done a lot right to establish the world of the play. With NYMF so quick and "on the fly," the antique tables and chairs easily blend to the backdrop, complete with a projections by Dana Mott. Pocket watches fly though. It's magical and moving in the way that musical theater should be.

— Marcina Zaccaria, *Theater Pizzazz*

The bromance is real... The musical never shines more brightly than in those moments when Watson ponders his strange friend and their strange, but endearing, relationship. Fittingly, the back and forth between Holmes and Watson is clever and delightful (the audience I saw the show with absolutely loved it); and these moments also rank among the show's best. In fact, Bartschi's script very successfully elucidates the relationship between the two characters, digging into the heart of the friendship by revealing both characters' true feelings - beneath their teasing banter and Holmes's aloof facade.

— Erin Kahn, *Stage Buddy*

With some revision, *My Dear Watson* has good potential to go to another stage after this Festival and do a more extended run. It has some good music, including songs that tell a story. Several of the songs are lovely ballads. The music covers an aspect of the Sherlock Holmes stories not usually seen... [Bartschi's] devotion to the famous fictitious detective shines through in this musical... I developed an interest in learning and seeing more of [Sherlock Holmes stories] from going to this show. When a musical does that for a viewer, it tells you that the show should continue on!

— Karen Nowosad, *Let's Go to the Theater*