

Background:

The new musical comedy **How do I get to Beatville?** attempts to highlight the real philosophies of the literary Beats and meld a romanticized view of how people have viewed the Beats over time (i.e. bongos, berets, lingo). The author/composer has attempted to fuse the two and bring their message into an interesting light for new generations to experience through song and a whimsical script. It is not a biographical account of Kerouac's life but a blending of ideals mixed with strong women leads. The characters were inspired by a set of photos taken from an early Beat journal in 1959 on MacDougal Street in New York City.

Who were the Beats? The Beat generation was a literary movement involving a small group of writers and friends in the 1950's in New York City and San Francisco. The names the most synonymous with this movement are : Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997) and Williams Burroughs (1914-1997). Some of the famous works of the era were: *On the Road* (1957) by Kerouac that epitomized the Beat lifestyle, and Ginsberg's poem *Howl* (1955-56) that set the tone for those earthy Beat poems to follow. The Beat Generation was definitely anti-establishment, rebellious, and it idealized "going on the road." Often, this meant traveling down to Mexico and seeing how the people lived. The Beats were mainly writers and poets living on the edge of poverty to gain a Zen-like self-awareness. However, the 1960's hippie generation overshadowed the 1950's Beat generation and the anti-establishment literary Beats became much forgotten except for stereotyped bohemian types who frequented Cafés. Kerouac himself later hated the clichéd beatniks banging on their bongos. The Beats were the precursors to the Hippies. The main difference is that the Beats were a literary movement (such as the Romantics). The research for this musical was done by consulting and reading: *On the Road* by Kerouac, *The Beat Generation* by Bruce Cook, *The Beat Journey* by Arthur and Kit Knight, and *the Beat Vision* by Arthur and Kit Knight. A vocabulary of the Beat lingo was found in *The Beat Journey*.

Musical Plot Synopsis:

1959, NYC a fictitious Café called Firefly Café (based on the Gaslight Café of MacDougal Street). Mrs. Popov is a Russian immigrant who runs a Café that is frequented by beatniks. She is almost broke and the Café may be forced to shut down. She dislikes the gang of beatniks that loiter in her place. Things get worse when she receives threatening hate-mail for being a suspected communist. The FBI have her number! However, she is merely searching for a better life for herself and her daughter Natasha. Things get worse when Natasha quits school and returns to her mother's Café dressed as a beatnik! Finally, an unrelenting FBI agent with not enough proof against Mrs. Popov as a communist spy decides to pay a beatnik infiltrator money to plant a stolen classified document in Popov's Firefly Café. However, the night of the poetry meeting, the tables get turned, and that gang of no-goodnik beatniks save Mrs. Popov from the FBI agent. She finally accepts them the way they are and reconciles with her daughter.

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(*an off-beatnik musical comedy*)

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Interesting Features:

- strong women characters (lead is a middle-aged Russian immigrant woman and her beatnik daughter)
- references to Kerouac and the Beats throughout in unique ways ("that's not writing, that's typing!")
- 2 Shakespearean scenes from MacBeth in "iambeat" pentameter (MacBeth ACT I, Scene 1 and ACT I, Scene 3)
- references to an American great, Edgar Allan Poe!
- mix of Beat philosophy and McCarthyism of the time
- Russian, jazz, and blues musical influences
- small cast (4 women, 3 men)
- no set changes (takes place in a café)
- minimal props
- piano only required (accompaniment stand-up bass recommended)