



Bright Star
Dramaturgy
Presentation

Madison Mintzer- Dramaturg

Who?

-*Bright Star* is a collaboration between comedian Steve Martin, and folk singer/songwriter Edie Brickell

-Longtime friends and collaborators in the Bluegrass world

-*Bright Star* is an extension of their album “Love Has Come For You”, which features the song “Sarah Jane and the Iron Mountain Baby”. This song initially inspired the story of *Bright Star*



Concept for the show

Fable

This story is classified as a fable, with its large scale setting, formulaic plot, and moral concept all leading to a happy ending where love triumphs and the sun shines again.

Time Jump

This play takes place in two time periods (the 1920's and 1940's). This provides the production a quality of magic and heightened storytelling.

Themes

The themes of this show heavily relate to the themes of bluegrass music: family, hope, death, and love..

So What Is The Story?

-On August 14, 1902 - William Helms, a farmer from Missouri, stopped along a stream on his travels

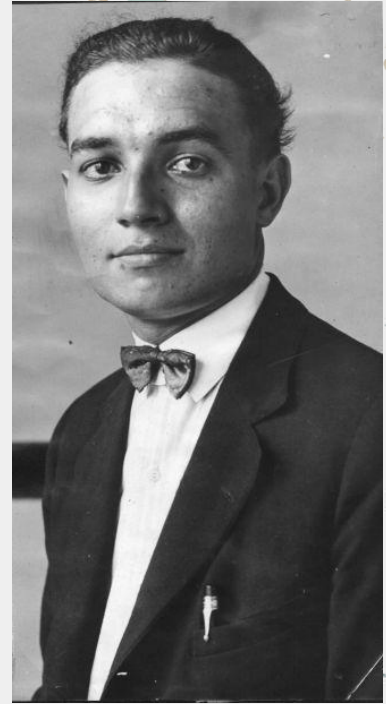
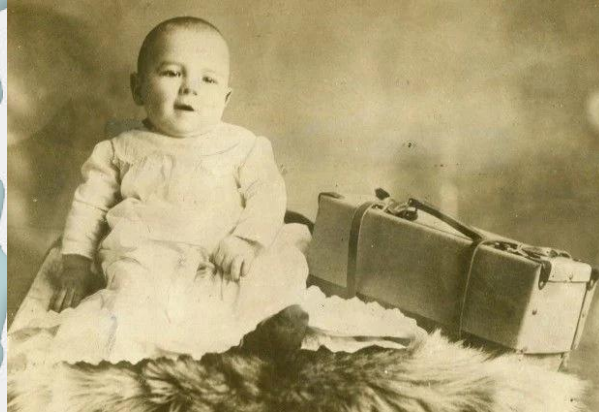
-He heard a “muffled cry” that sounded like a baby and happened to find that the cry was coming from a suitcase in the river

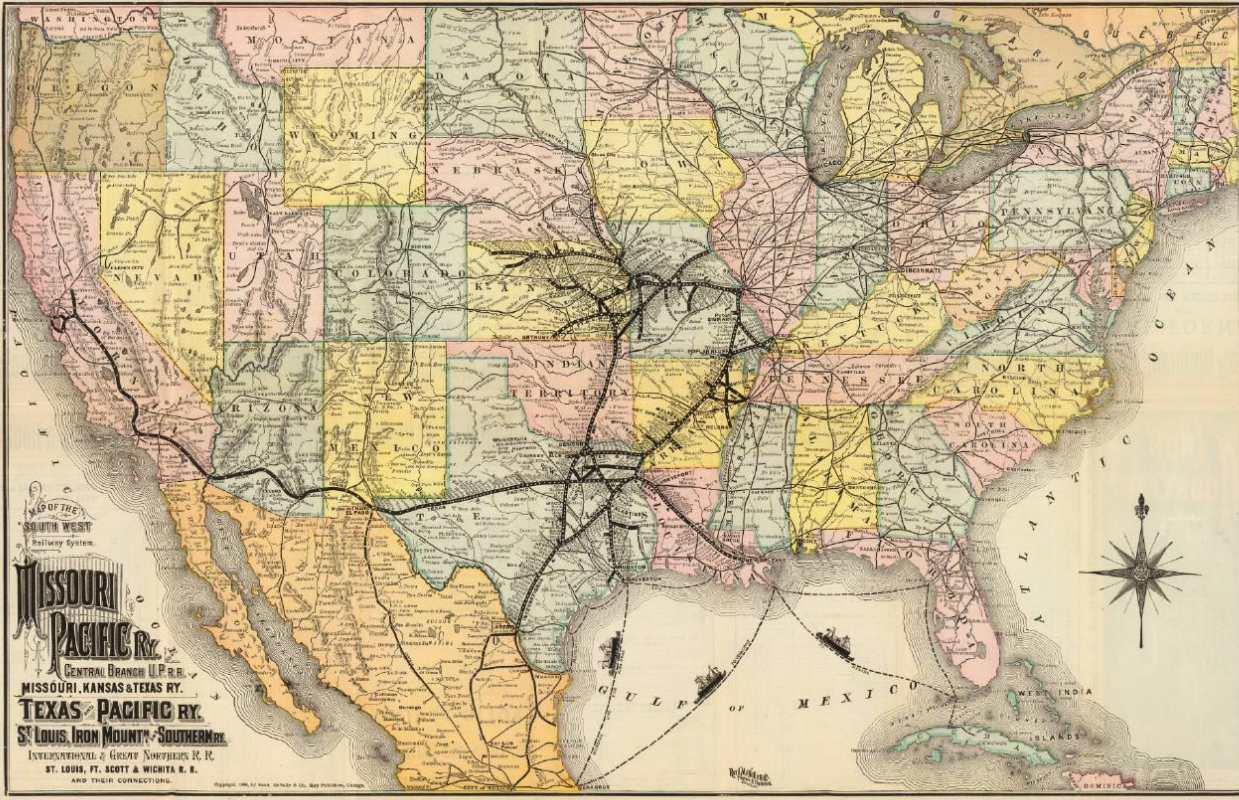
-He ended up taking the baby in with his wife and naming him William Moses Gould Helms. The child was later nicknamed “The Iron Mountain Baby” after the railroad he was found near.



William Moses Gould Helms
1902-1953

“The Iron Mountain Baby”





MAP OF THE
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 Railway System.
MISSOURI PACIFIC RY.
 CENTRAL BRANCH U.P. R.R.
 MISSOURI, KANSAS & TEXAS RY.
TEXAS PACIFIC RY.
 ST. LOUIS, IRON MOUNTAIN & SOUTHERN RY.
 INTERCONNECTED & GEARING NORTHERN R. R.
 ST. LOUIS, FT. SCOTT & WICHITA R. R.
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The Missouri Pacific Railway Company, a member of the U.P. System, has the honor to announce that it will, on and after the 1st of July, 1901, reduce the rates of freight and passenger fares on its lines to the lowest practicable rates, and will also reduce the rates of freight and passenger fares on its lines to the lowest practicable rates, and will also reduce the rates of freight and passenger fares on its lines to the lowest practicable rates.

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HOT SPRINGS OF ARKANSAS
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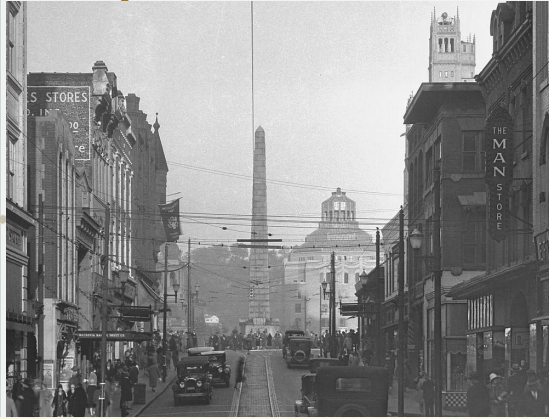
LOWER RATE THAN EVER BEFORE
 ON THROUGH AND LOCAL TRIP.

PULLMAN RATES.

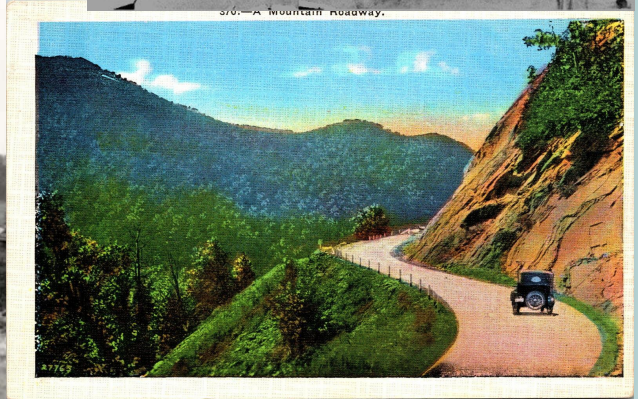
Class	Day	Night	Day	Night
1st	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2d	.75	.75	.75	.75
3d	.50	.50	.50	.50
4th	.375	.375	.375	.375
5th	.25	.25	.25	.25
6th	.125	.125	.125	.125
7th	.0625	.0625	.0625	.0625
8th	.03125	.03125	.03125	.03125
9th	.015625	.015625	.015625	.015625
10th	.0078125	.0078125	.0078125	.0078125

Iron Mountain Railroad

1920s North Carolina



376.—A mountain roadway.



1940s North Carolina



Bluegrass Instruments

-The typical bluegrass band includes:

- 5-string banjo
- Flat-top guitar
- Fiddle
- Mandolin
- Bass

-Traditionally acoustic instruments

-Heavily influenced by traditional Scottish/Irish/English music, blues, American country music

-All about the sound and the story



History of Bluegrass Music

1600s

Settlers came to America & brought over Irish, Scottish, English traditional music

Early 1900s

Invention of the phonograph brought the developing music style into people's homes

1938-1939

Bill forms a band known as "Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys", together they formed what is now known as bluegrass music

1945

Earl Scruggs joins the band, with his unique three-finger picking style

1945-present day

Bluegrass music continues to grow and become a popular form of music making, reflecting many different styles

Characteristics of Bluegrass

from the MasterClass article [“Bluegrass Music Guide: History and Artists of Bluegrass”](#)

-**Acoustic instrumentation:** Bluegrass rarely uses electric instruments and instead centers around the acoustic components of a string band.

-**Fast tempos:** Compared to traditional country music, most bluegrass songs tend to move at a very brisk pace. This, combined with bluegrass songwriters' preference for major keys, makes bluegrass an upbeat, jaunty genre.

-**Off-beat comping:** When bluegrass players perform accompaniments, they typically favor off-beats or upbeats, rather than downbeats.

-**Virtuosic playing:** The bluegrass genre can be a great medium for virtuosic soloing on acoustic instruments.

-**The high, lonesome sound:** Multi-part vocal harmonies are common in bluegrass music. The lead vocal, usually a high tenor, croons in a high, lonesome sound, while the other singers harmonize in what bluegrass players call a "stack."

-**Frequent reinterpretations of folk standards:** Some bluegrass bands perform mostly original songs, but many others center their repertoire around interpretations of traditional folk songs from the United States, England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Storytelling In Bluegrass Music

-Religion: Most bluegrass songs are rooted in religion. They are either adapted from hymns or bible verses, or promote devotion to God.

-Life/Death: Songs can also be a reflection on the beginning or ending of life. Whether it's celebratory about a new child, or mournful and about an untimely passing, this music carries heavy emotion.

-Story Songs: Many bluegrass songs are simply stories put to words. Bluegrass was used as a form of oral storytelling/ record keeping, so both personal stories and historical events were captured in the lyrics.

-Love Songs: Bluegrass is also about love. Most love songs are about finding a wife and settling down to start a family, however some of them also have a more casual, sensual quality.

-Fable/Myth: Fables and myths are a large topic in bluegrass music as this is also oral storytelling. Old cultural myths and stories help keep ties to their origins.

-Joke/Party Songs: Bluegrass is also a community-building activity. Many songs are written to be danced to or be enjoyed in a large group for entertainment purposes. Oftentimes, the lyrics are clever and witty, with an upbeat tune to go along with it.

Interested In Listening to Bluegrass Music?



Scan on Spotify to listen to a mix of modern and classic Bluegrass greats!