



The artwork for the July debut of Brooke di Spirito's musical adaptation of Fitzgerald's neglected second novel, featuring (at right) a young, talented cast, including the writer herself (top center) playing Gloria Gilbert Patch. (Courtesy: Instagram)

## TO THE ADAPTERS BELONG THE SPOILS:

### A Pandemic-Delayed Musical Version of *The Beautiful and Damned* Debuts (Appropriately Enough) in Port Washington on Long Island

by Walter Raubichek

It is generally agreed among literary historians (that's us!) that Fitzgerald's East Egg is based on the section of Port Washington, Long Island, called Sands Point, a peninsula that reaches into the great, wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. (For this occasion, we will restrict Westport to an influence on West Egg and ignore the pesky Glen Cove enthusiasts). So it seemed quite appropriate that on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *The Beautiful and Damned* that an adaptation of Fitzgerald's second novel be presented at the Landmark on Main Street theater in Port Washington, so central to his third novel, over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend.

This musical adaptation with the script, original songs and choreography by the remarkable twenty-two-year-old Brooke Di Spirito (who also plays Gloria) is directed by Jason Summers, who is artistic director at a professional theater in Mamaroneck in Westchester County, the Sandbox. Di Spirito wrote the adaptation while an undergraduate at Northeastern University three years ago ... and since then the production has been postponed three times due to the pandemic, first at her school and then twice at Landmark. So this opening comes after several frustrating years of thwarted expectations (rather appropriate considering the themes of the novel).

Di Spirito's *Beautiful and Damned* is an impressionistic version of the story that does follow closely the arc of the doomed relationship of Anthony Patch and Gloria Gilbert, the dialogue and lyrics stressing the corrupting effect of the desire for money on youthful aspirations towards happiness. The small orchestra (piano, violins, bass, drums) gives the production the proper early Jazz-era flair, and the singers are all capable, particularly Mike

Jubak, Jr., who plays Anthony and does possess a passing resemblance to the young F. Scott.

It is very encouraging to see Fitzgerald's second novel have such an appeal for a young artist like Di Spirito. She has caught the some of the lyricism and many of the ironies of the novel. In their early years of bliss the dream of Anthony and Gloria in this production is to move to Venice and begin a family. When a ruined Anthony at the close is informed that he has finally inherited his grandfather's money, Gloria tells him, "Now we can move to Venice!" Anthony replies sadly, "I used to know someone who wanted to live in Venice."

Anthony Patch, one more boat against the current. 🌀

Check out Walter's latest essay "*Fitzgerald among the Smart Set*" in William Blazek, David W. Ullrich, and Kirk Curnutt's collection *The Beautiful and Damned: New Critical Essays*, published this fall by Louisiana State University Press. Learn more about this production at [www.thebeautifulanddamned.show](http://www.thebeautifulanddamned.show).