

The Prom (film)

The Prom is a 2020 American musical comedy film directed by Ryan Murphy from a screenplay by Chad Beguelin and Bob Martin, based on the 2018 Broadway musical of the same name by Martin, Beguelin, and Matthew Sklar. The film stars Meryl Streep, James Corden, Nicole Kidman, Keegan-Michael Key, Andrew Rannells, Ariana DeBose, Tracey Ullman, Kevin Chamberlin, Mary Kay Place, and Kerry Washington, and introduces Jo Ellen Pellman in her film debut as Emma Nolan. Logan Riley Hassel, Sofia Deler, Nico Greetham, and Nathaniel J. Potvin also appear in supporting roles.

A film adaptation of *The Prom* was announced to be in development in April 2019, with Murphy confirming himself to be director and also serving as a co-producer along with Alexis Martin Woodall, Adam Anders, Dori Berinstein, and former DreamWorks Animation chief creative officer Bill Damaschke. Beguelin and Martin were soon after announced to be adapting their book into the screenplay, with Beguelin working with Sklar to rework their songs from the musical for the film. Additionally, Sklar also composed the film's incidental score with David Klotz, while Murphy, Anders, and Peer Åström served as music producers. The cast was filled out starting in June 2019, including Pellman, Streep, Corden, Kidman, Key, DeBose, Riley Hassel, Deler, Greetham, Potvin, Rannells, Ullman, Chamberlin, Place, and Washington. Principal photography took place beginning in December 2019, but was suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, before resuming that July.

The Prom had a limited theatrical release on December 4, 2020, prior to streaming on Netflix on December 11.^[2] The film received mixed reviews by critics, who praised the message, musical numbers and ensemble cast, but criticized the narrative and stereotypes, as well as Corden's performance.^[3]

Plot

In Edgewater, Indiana, James Madison High School's head of the PTA, Mrs. Greene announces the school's prom will be canceled as the lesbian student Emma Nolan planned to attend

The Prom



Official release poster

Directed by	<u>Ryan Murphy</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Bob Martin</u> <u>Chad Beguelin</u>
Based on	<i><u>The Prom</u></i> by <u>Chad Beguelin</u> <u>Bob Martin</u> <u>Matthew Sklar</u>
Produced by	<u>Ryan Murphy</u> <u>Alexis Martin Woodall</u> <u>Adam Anders</u> <u>Dori Berinstein</u> <u>Bill Damaschke</u>
Starring	<u>Meryl Streep</u> <u>James Corden</u> <u>Nicole Kidman</u> <u>Keegan-Michael Key</u> <u>Andrew Rannells</u> <u>Jo Ellen Pellman</u>

with a girl. Emma's girlfriend is Alyssa, Mrs. Greene's closeted daughter. Principal Tom Hawkins supports Emma, but is powerless against the PTA's decision.

Meanwhile, in NYC, Broadway stars Dee Dee Allen and Barry Glickman are disappointed after their show *Eleanor! The Eleanor Roosevelt Story* closes on opening night as the *New York Times* blasts their performances. They are comforted by former sitcom star Trent Oliver, who now only plays forgettable supporting roles, and Angie Dickinson, who just quit the chorus line of *Chicago* after being passed over for the role of Roxie Hart.

Barry realizes they all need a cause to revitalize their careers. Finding Emma's story on Twitter, the actors drive to Indiana with the non-Equity touring cast of *Godspell* and publicist Sheldon Saperstein.

At school, Emma is bullied and harassed by students Kaylee, Shelby, Nick and Kevin, who blame her for ruining prom. The actors barge into the next PTA meeting and attempt to rally support for Emma. Hawkins, a big fan of Dee Dee's, unsuccessfully tries to get her to back off.

The actors book a gig as the entertainment for a monster truck rally, but are booed off the stage for preaching about acceptance. Hawkins tells them the Indiana Supreme Court has ruled that James Madison must allow Emma to attend prom. That evening, he and Dee Dee bond over dinner.

The next day, is promposal day. Barry visits Emma at her grandmother Bea's. She has been living here since her sixteenth birthday when her parents threw her out for being gay. Barry tells Emma that he ran away from home at 16 because he knew his parents wouldn't accept his sexual orientation and has not spoken to them since.

It is later revealed that the PTA has exploited a loophole in the Court's ruling by arranging for her to attend a separate prom alone while the rest of the students go to the real one at a private club. Emma calls Alyssa for support, however she is too scared of losing her mother to come out. Hawkins is disgusted when he learns the real reason that Dee Dee came to Indiana was to use Emma to prop up her career.

The next day, Mrs. Greene holds a press conference about the two proms. Angie comforts a heartbroken Emma, while Barry persuades Dee Dee to get Emma on her ex-husband Eddie Sharp's talk show; in response, she insists that he call his mother Vera and make peace with her. Dee Dee apologizes to Hawkins for lying to him and they reconcile. Emma, upset that Alyssa won't stand up to her mother, breaks up with her.

Trent confronts Emma's tormentors, persuading them to support her with help from the *Godspell* cast. Dee Dee arrives at the motel and tells everyone she traded Eddie her house in The Hamptons for Emma's slot on his show. However, Emma turns the offer down to tell her story her own way. She sings a song she wrote during a livestream, which goes viral.

	<u>Ariana DeBose</u> <u>Tracey Ullman</u> <u>Kevin Chamberlin</u> <u>Mary Kay Place</u> <u>Kerry Washington</u>
Cinematography	<u>Matthew Libatique</u>
Edited by	Peggy Tachdjian Danielle Wang
Music by	Matthew Sklar <u>David Klotz</u>
Production company	Ryan Murphy Productions
Distributed by	<u>Netflix</u>
Release date	December 11, 2020
Running time	131 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$187,430 ^[1]

The actors pool their finances to throw an all-inclusive prom for Emma. Afterward, Dee Dee tells Barry she called Vera, who wants to talk to him. Vera apologizes to Barry for her past treatment of him, so they make peace.

Kaylee, Shelby, Nick and Kevin apologize to Alyssa and Emma for their behavior. Mrs. Greene tries to stop their preparations for the prom. When Alyssa reveals who she really is, her mother leaves. Alyssa and Emma reconcile.

Later that night, Emma and Alyssa arrive early to meet with the actors, Sheldon, Bea, and Vera. Angie learns that she has been cast as Roxie Hart as Tina Louise has contracted shingles, Trent retires from acting to become James Madison's new drama teacher, and Barry is crowned prom king. The students and many teens from the local LGBT community show up to the prom in support of Emma. As the event begins, Mrs. Greene arrives, apologizes, and embraces Alyssa, accepting her for who she is. Dee Dee and Principal Hawkins share a kiss and start a relationship. Emma and Alyssa share their first public kiss and everyone celebrates.

Cast

- Meryl Streep as Dee Dee Allen, a narcissistic two-time Tony award-winning Broadway actress.
- James Corden as Barry Glickman, a narcissistic Broadway actor.
 - Sam Pillow as a young Barry Glickman
- Nicole Kidman as Angie Dickinson, a chorus girl who has been unable to get a chance to portray Roxie Hart in *Chicago*.
- Keegan-Michael Key as Principal Tom Hawkins, the principal of James Madison High School.
- Andrew Rannells as Trent Oliver, a Juilliard graduate who is between gigs and starred in the sitcom *Talk to the Hand*.
- Jo Ellen Pellman as Emma Nolan, a lesbian 17-year-old girl.
- Ariana DeBose as Alyssa Greene, a cheerleader who is Emma's closeted girlfriend.
- Kerry Washington as Mrs. Greene, Alyssa's mother and the head of Edgewater's PTA.
- Tracey Ullman as Vera Glickman, Barry's mother.
- Kevin Chamberlin as Sheldon Saperstein, Dee Dee and Barry's publicist.
- Mary Kay Place as Grandma Bea, Emma's supportive grandmother who raised her when Emma's parents kicked her out of their house for coming out to them.
- Logan Riley Hassel as Kaylee, Alyssa's cheerleader friend who disapproves of Emma taking a girl to prom and has a small tattoo on her wrist.
- Sofia Deler as Shelby, Alyssa and Kaylee's cheerleader friend who also disapproves of Emma taking a girl to prom and has lost her virginity.
- Nico Greetham as Nick, Kaylee's boyfriend whose parents are divorced.
- Nathaniel J. Potvin as Kevin Shield, Shelby's boyfriend.

Soundtrack

The soundtrack was released digitally on December 4, 2020, by Maisie Music, with a physical release on December 18.^[4]

The Prom
(Music from the Netflix Film)

All tracks are written by Matthew Sklar and Chad Beguelin, except where indicated

Track listing

No.	Title	Writer(s)	Performer(s)	Length
1.	"Changing Lives"		<u>Meryl Streep</u> , <u>James Corden</u> and Ensemble	3:09
2.	"Changing Lives (Reprise)"		<u>Streep</u> , <u>Corden</u> , <u>Nicole Kidman</u> and <u>Andrew Rannells</u>	1:54
3.	"Just Breathe"		<u>Jo Ellen Pellman</u>	2:54
4.	"It's Not About Me"		<u>Streep</u> , <u>Corden</u> , <u>Kidman</u> , <u>Rannells</u> , <u>Keegan-Michael Key</u> , <u>Kerry Washington</u> and Ensemble	3:59
5.	"Dance with You"		<u>Pellman</u> and <u>Ariana DeBose</u>	2:35
6.	"The Acceptance Song"		<u>Rannells</u> and Ensemble	3:22
7.	"You Happened"		<u>Pellman</u> , <u>DeBose</u> , <u>Nathaniel J. Potvin</u> , <u>Nico Greetham</u> and Ensemble	3:11
8.	"We Look to You"		<u>Key</u>	2:49
9.	"Tonight Belongs to You"		<u>Cast</u>	5:26
10.	"Tonight Belongs to You (Reprise)"		<u>Pellman</u>	0:43
11.	"Zazz"		<u>Kidman</u> and <u>Pellman</u>	3:08
12.	"The Lady's Improving"		<u>Streep</u>	2:39
13.	"Alyssa Greene"		<u>DeBose</u>	2:20
14.	"Love Thy Neighbor"		<u>Rannells</u> , <u>Sofia Deler</u> , <u>Potvin</u> ,	4:31

Soundtrack album by Matthew Sklar, Chad Beguelin, Adam Anders, and Peer Astrom

Released	December 4, 2020
Genre	<u>Soundtrack</u>
Length	1:00:44
Label	Maisie Music
<u>Singles</u> from <i>The Prom</i> (Music from the Netflix Film)	
1. "Tonight Belongs to You"	Released: November 20, 2020
2. "Wear Your Crown"	Released: November 20, 2020

		Greetham, Logan Riley and Ensemble	
15. "Barry Is Going to Prom"		Corden	2:35
16. "Unruly Heart"		Pellman and Ensemble	3:59
17. "It's Time to Dance"		Pellman, DeBose, Corden, Streep, Rannells, Kidman, Key, Kevin Chamberlin and Ensemble	5:05
18. "Wear Your Crown" (end credits)	Sklar, Beguelin, Adam Anders, Peer Åström	DeBose, Pellman, Washington, Kidman and Streep	3:05
19. "Simply Love" (end credits)	Anders, Beguelin, Sklar	Corden	2:50
Total length: 1:00:44			

Production

The film is based on the same premise as the musical of the same name, that uses music by Matthew Sklar, lyrics by Chad Beguelin, and a book by Bob Martin and Beguelin, based on an original concept by Jack Viertel.^[5] The film is also loosely based around the 2010 Itawamba County School District prom controversy.

CNN notes the film project is on "theme with Murphy's advocacy for more inclusivity in Hollywood" including his spearheading the 2017 Half Initiative, to "create equal representation for women and minorities behind the camera".^[6] Murphy announced plans for the adaptation during a charity performance of the musical at New York's Longacre Theatre in April 2019.^{[7][8]}

On June 25, 2019, Meryl Streep, James Corden, Andrew Rannells and Nicole Kidman were revealed to be cast as the four leads, with Keegan-Michael Key as the school principal.^{[9][10]} Ariana Grande was initially cast as Alyssa Greene, a popular but closeted cheerleader and Emma's girlfriend, but scheduling conflicts with the Sweetener World Tour forced Grande to drop out.^[11] Kerry Washington was cast in October, with Ariana DeBose joining in November, replacing Grande in the role of Alyssa. Jo Ellen Pellman was also cast as Emma following a nationwide search.^{[12][13][14]} Madelaine Petsch also auditioned for Pellman's role.^[15] The project is the first film under Murphy's \$300 million deal with Netflix, and fifth overall.^{[9][16]} On January 25, 2020, Awkwafina dropped out of the film due to scheduling conflicts and Kevin Chamberlin was recast as Sheldon Saperstein.^{[17][18]} On June 25, 2020, Tracey Ullman and Mary Kay Place were revealed to star in the film.^[19]

Filming commenced on December 11, 2019, in Los Angeles.^[20] On March 12, 2020, production was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to this, the leads had wrapped filming, with only two days of second unit filming left, which was initially scheduled to resume in mid-April, but was ultimately

delayed to summer.^{[21][22]} Production resumed on July 23, 2020.^[23]

Release

The Prom had an awards-qualifying limited theatrical release on December 4, 2020, before being released digitally on December 11 by Netflix.^[24] It was the second-most watched film over its first weekend on the platform, before falling to tenth in its second week.^{[25][26]}

Reception

On review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, the film has an approval rating of 54% based on 203 reviews, with an average rating of 5.8/10. The website's critics consensus reads: "Through fiery songs and dance breaks, *The Prom*'s bonanza of glitz, glitter, and jazz hands might be enough to whisk audiences away."^[27] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 55 out of 100, based on 35 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[28]

Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* gave the film four out of five stars, writing that it is "so goofy that you just have to enjoy it". He went on to praise the musical numbers and the film's message of self-love.^[29] Brian Pruitt of *USA Today* also gave the film four stars out of four, calling it a "joyous adaptation".^[30] In *AfterEllen*, Claire Heuchan described the film as "a sweet homage to all the young lesbians and gays finding the courage to live and love authentically."^[31] In his review for *The Hollywood Reporter*, David Rooney noted that "there's something to be said for the wide reach of a Netflix feature that champions the rights of LGBTQ teens, sharing a message that's easy to endorse even if the delivery tends to grate."^[2]

Of the opposing opinion, Mary Sollosi of *Entertainment Weekly* gave the film a "D" grade calling it "narratively sloppy, emotionally false, visually ugly, morally superior, and at least 15 minutes too long".^[32] Jesse Hassenger of *The A.V. Club* gave the film a "D+" describing it as "all-star, feel-good, zazzy nonsense".^[33]

James Corden's performance was criticized as offensive by some; Corden himself is straight while the character is gay and some said his performance perpetuated, and capitalized on, stereotypes of gay men.^[3] Regarding his depiction of a flamboyant gay man, David Rooney wrote that "perhaps aware of the potential minefield for a straight actor playing a flaming gay stereotype, Corden channels the mannerisms without the joy."^[2]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>Art Directors Guild Awards</u>	<u>April 10, 2021</u>	<u>Excellence in Production Design for a Contemporary Film</u>	Jamie Walker McCall	Nominated	^[34]
<u>Costume Designers Guild Awards</u>	<u>April 13, 2021</u>	<u>Excellence in Contemporary Film</u>	<u>Lou Eyrich</u>	Nominated	^[35]
<u>GLAAD Media Awards</u>	<u>April 8, 2021</u>	<u>Outstanding Film – Wide Release</u>	<i>The Prom</i>	Nominated	^[36]
<u>Golden Globe Awards</u>	<u>February 28, 2021</u>	<u>Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy</u>	<i>The Prom</i>	Nominated	^[37]
		<u>Best Actor in a Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy</u>	<u>James Corden</u>	Nominated	
<u>Make-Up Artists and Hair Stylists Guild Awards</u>	<u>April 3, 2021</u>	<u>Best Contemporary Make-Up</u>	Eryn Krueger Mekash, J. Roy Helland, Kyra Panchenko and Donald McInnes	Nominated	^[38]
		<u>Best Contemporary Hair Styling</u>	Chris Clark, Natalie Driscoll, Ka'Maura Eley and J. Roy Helland	Nominated	
<u>Motion Picture Sound Editors Awards</u>	<u>April 16, 2021</u>	<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Musical for Feature Film</u>	Nick Baxter and David Klotz	Nominated	^[39]
<u>Satellite Awards</u>	<u>February 15, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actress in a Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical</u>	<u>Meryl Streep</u>	Nominated	^[40]
		<u>Best Supporting Actress – Motion Picture</u>	<u>Nicole Kidman</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Art Direction and Production Design</u>	Jamie Walker McCall and Gene Serdena	Nominated	
		<u>Best Sound (Editing and Mixing)</u>	Gary Megregian, David Giammarco, Mark Paterson and Steven A. Morrow	Nominated	
<u>Set Decorators Society of America Awards</u>	<u>March 31, 2021</u>	<u>Best Achievement in Décor/Design of a Comedy or Musical Feature Film</u>	Gene Serdena and Jamie Walker McCall	Won	^[41]

Novelization

The UK and Commonwealth novelization rights of the film, written by Sandra Mitchell, were acquired by Penguin Random House's editorial and media development director Holly Harris, who did a pre-emptive deal with Creative Artists Agency and William Morris Endeavor.^[42]

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External links

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