

BOY

My

Greatness

by Zoe Senese-Grossberg  
Directed by  
Lee Engelman

July 2<sup>nd</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>

6663 El Cajon Blvd, Suite N

at The MOXIE Venue, this is not a MOXIE Production  
Made Possible by a grant from the Prebys Foundation



# Dramaturgy



# Notes

As with many things about Shakespeare's life and work, it's impossible to fully understand who the boy players in his company were. It is because of a long legacy of scholarship that we have the skeleton of information we do now.

We know from surviving financial documents that these boys were usually held in apprenticeship contracts; they were legally bound in service of older, experienced actors. They would enter these apprenticeships as preteens, and exit as young adults who had been trained by their mentors to become men, both onstage and off.

We know from the structure of Shakespeare's plays that the King's Men probably had between 3 and 5 boy players in their company at any given time, and that they played women's roles as well as children, nymphs, and other knavish sprites.

We know some audience members referred to boy actors using she/her pronouns; we also know the blurring of these gender lines caused horrified backlash from the growing Puritan movement.

We know, based on lawsuits and contemporary writing, that these boys and young men were legally and socially vulnerable, and were sometimes trafficked or kidnapped.

Beyond the work of generations of scholars, Boy My Greatness is also built on the things we emotionally, instinctually know. In 1606 or 2026, we understand the vulnerability of young performers, the fluidity of identity as you come of age, and the intimacy of growing up with someone.

If you want to learn more about the historical period these boys are finding their way in, I highly recommend the Arden Shakespeare Collection and the work of scholars Will Tosh and Evelyn Tribble. But if you want to understand what it means to be a queer person, a performer, a young man—the people you pass on the sidewalk can tell you just as much as Shakespeare can.



LOUD FRIDGE

*Presents*

**BOY**  
*My Greatness*

written by Zoe Senese-Grossberg

Directed by Lee Engelman

*"Boy My Greatness"*

is presented by special arrangement with the playwright,  
and made possible by a generous grant from the Conrad  
Prebys Foundation.

*"Boy My Greatness"*

**runs approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes  
with one 15 minute intermission**

*Production Sponsored by Beth Goodman*

**\*ANY VIDEO AND/OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THIS  
PRODUCTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED\***

# Director's Note



The vast majority of theater audiences will never see the inside of a rehearsal room. By contrast, most of an actor's working life is spent inside various rehearsal spaces. We have strong opinions on floor material and inside jokes about speaker sound quality. Sometimes we rehearse in beautiful, comfortable theaters with refrigerator access and a lounge (thank you again to the University of San

Diego for lending us your space). Sometimes we rehearse in church lobbies, dance studios, backyards, community center rec rooms, closed restaurants, or apartment roof tops. The one unifying factor of all these spaces is that they are designed to disappear the moment that an audience floods into the seats.

Boy My Greatness, however, thrives under the flickering rehearsal room lights. Taking place almost entirely in the backstage world, it dives into the intrusion of conservative religious values into art and into the lives of artists, sexual assault in theatrical spaces, and the heartbreak of growing out of roles that defined your world view and self-worth. Rather than sinking into the heaviness of some of its subject matter, the show is just as often romantic and laugh-out-loud funny, reflecting the joy, camaraderie, and loving attention to detail that make the arts what they are. Boy My Greatness provides the opportunity to look deeply into the different ways that we express gender both in private and in public in a world that is growing increasingly hostile to trans and queer bodies and voices, while also celebrating the joy of creation. Despite being set in 1606, almost every second of the show could easily (and often does) play out in a rehearsal room in 2026.

To be able to look hundreds of years into the past and see our own struggles and blessings reflected back is a remarkably special thing. To be able to directly match some of the most recognizable pieces of text in the English language to the lives of the queer people who are far too often left out of the historical narrative is more special still. Working on this show with this remarkable group of actors, designers, and stage managers has been inspiring in ways that I frankly lack words for.

I hope that you will love the story, characters, and world of Boy My Greatness as much as we do.

*Lee Engelman*

Dedicated to my Grandma Sheila, who made sure a Shakespeare obsessed kid from a sports family was able to see hundreds of plays, and always absolutely adores when I'm costumed in pretty dresses and skirts (even though I much prefer trouser roles and sword fights)

# Zoe Senese-Grossberg

## Playwright's Note



The boys who played Shakespeare's women are a cultural joke. They are a throwaway line, blurred out in the background of biopics, if they are mentioned at all. When I sat down to write this play I was shocked by the lack of scholarship on them; by how much their presence was written off, undermined, and unexplored.

And yet at the same time I was struck by how present they are in Shakespeare's canon itself. I found them in Rosalind and Viola; in Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. They are in the metatheatrical prologue to *Taming of the Shrew* and in Beatrice or Cressida's impassioned cries of "if I were a man." Their presence is essential to understanding every Shakespearean heroine and much of the men too.

People love to fantasize that there were disguised women among Shakespeare's players but all the evidence supports the fact that Shakespeare's great female roles were all played by boys between the ages of 12 and 22. What did it mean to be trained to be a woman at the age when we learn to become our assigned genders? How did it feel to be a child asked to embody characters decades older than you -asked to play love scenes opposite adults? How did it feel, in your 22nd year -the year I had just finished when I started this play- to be violently thrust back into a rigid, gendered world? What does it mean to make theater? What does it mean to grow up? And what does it mean to try to be a man or a woman? Is it ever real? Or are we always just playing a part?

This play does not attempt to answer these questions, only to ask them, and to ask them of us as well. Our world is not so different from that of the boy players. Like them we see art threatened by religious conservatism; like them our lives are ever interrupted by plague; and like them we continue policing expressions of gender nonconformity and queerness.

*Boy My Greatness* takes place before we had any modern language like "trans" or "queer." The characters in this play are articulating experiences they cannot understand and thus cannot self identify. However, *Boy My Greatness* has always been an undeniably queer story. It is for this reason that it was censored in Oklahoma last year. Without denying the gray areas that this play exists in I want to acknowledge that this play was always written to explore trans femininity in particular. I feel it is important to make this explicit in our current moment where trans women in particular are being targeted.

I thus dedicate this play to all of the incredible trans and specifically trans feminine performers who have helped me create this work. You live within it and it is as much yours as it is mine. A play will always be shaped by and belong to its actors as the boys surely knew...

# BOY *My Greatness*

by Zoe Senese-Grossberg

Directed by Lee Engelman

## Cast

In alphabetical order by Last Name

Jacob Lopez	Thomas "Tom" Reade
Jaysten Merced Ares	Henry "Harry" Lawes
August Nickoli	Robert "Robin" Howard
Michael Rodriguez	John Sharpe
Maybelle Shimizu	Samuel Clark
Phoenix Velona	Henry "Hal" Fletsher

## Production Team

Liliana Talwatte	Producer
Syd Gager	Stage Manager
Kandace Crystal	Intimacy Director
Mashun Tucker	Lighting Design
Hayden St. Clair	Sound Design
Heather K. Nunn	Costume Design
Christy Reid	Scenic/Props Design
Jacob Bruce	Fight Director
William BJ Robinson	Music Coordinator
Jackson Taitano	Choreography
Jeff Neitzel	Special Makeup Design
Amelia Simpson	Dramaturg/Assistant Director
Fiona Fleisher	Assistant Stage Manager
Hayden St. Clair, Marlowe Rose Greenhalgh	Scenic Crew

# About the Cast

*Jacob Lopez*



**Thomas "Tom" Reade**

(he/him) is excited to be returning to Loud Fridge in *Boy My Greatness!* Select credits include: *Airness* (D Vicious), *Spring Awakening* (Melchior), and *Newsies* (Davey). Special thanks to his family, his friends, and his cat Yoshi for all their support. "Gender is who you are, and sexuality is who you want." IG: @jacobvlopez

*Jaysten Merced Ares*



**Henry "Harry" Lawes**

(he/him) is excited to be a part of *Boy My Greatness*, as well as making his first performance at Moxie Theatre. Recent Credits include SDSU mainstage productions as Captain/ Priest in *Twelfth Night*, Ensemble/*Hamlet 3/ Claudius Understudy* in *Hamlet* and most recently *Father* in their *Skull and Dagger* club's adaptation of *Eurydice*. He has taken part in *Accademia Dell'Arte's* Summer intensive program in Italy, *MiraCosta Community College's* Actor's Academy, and is a recent graduate of *San Diego State University*.

*August Nickoli*



**Robert "Robin" Howard**

(he/they) is thrilled to be apart of *Boy My Greatness* as Robin. Most recently, you may have seen him in *The University of San Diego's* production of *Dog Sees God* as *Beethoven*. Other credits include *#46* in *The Wolves*, *Hanschen* in *Spring Awakening*, and *Smee* in *Peter and The StarCatcher* at USD. August would like to thank his friends and family for thier unconditional support- he hopes you enjoy the show!

# Michael Rodriguez



## John Sharpe

(he/him) is a local stage and film actor. Select credits include Vanguard: Macbeth; Coronado Playhouse: A Midsummer Night's Dream; New Fortune: As You Like It; San Diego International Fringe Fest 2022: Castaways; Vanguard: Julius Caesar; Praxis Stage: The Plague; Flat Earth Theatre: Anouilh's Antigone. Wellesley Players: Love's Labour's Lost. Tattooed Potato: Nightmare Dreamer; Meade Theatre Lab: We Fight We Die; Guerrilla Rep: Strings. Michael holds an M.A. in Theatre History, Literature, and Theory from IU-Bloomington.

# Maybelle Shimizu



## Samuel Clark

(they/he/she) is thrilled to be making their Loud Fridge mainstage debut this summer, especially getting to don the persona of an antagonist! Previous Mini Fridge credits: Starspeare, No (Exit) to Mars, the Hogfather, Triple Threat Throwdown. Other local credits: the Apiary (New Village Arts), Weather Busters of Beachcastle (La Jolla Playhouse POP tour), Tootsie, School of Rock, Into the Woods (Moonlight), Bottle Shock! (CCAЕ), Bull in a Chinashop (Diversinary). instagram: @maybelle.shimizu

# Phoenix Velona



## Henry "Hal" Fletcher

(he/him) is thrilled to be making his Loud Fridge debut! When not in a full production, Phoenix can be found either performing at, or terrorizing the general public in various theme parks in Southern California. Past credits include: Alfred Hallam (Alice By Heart), Percy Jackson (The Lightning Thief), Natalie Haller (All Shook Up), and SpongeBob SquarePants (The Spongebob SquarePants Musical) He wishes to thank his dad, his friends, the production team, and the three cats that live in his house for all of their support. @phoenix.velona

# About the Crew

## Lee Engelman

### Director

(they/them) is delighted to make their Loud Fridge directing debut after having worked with Loud Fridge as an actor on Twelfth Night of the Living Dead (Malvolio). Lee is a San Diego based actor and director, with degrees in English and Theater from the University of San Diego. Lee has a deep passion for Shakespeare and Shakespeare-inspired work and has previously played roles such as Hamlet (Hamlet), Lady Macbeth (Macbeth), Ariel (Tempest), Juliet (Romeo and Juliet), and Viola (Twelfth Night). Most recently, they directed Henry V with Vanguard Theater Company. When not working on their latest Shakespeare based project, Lee can be found editing legal documents as a litigation paralegal, bodysurfing, or talking a friend's ear off about Shakespeare at a local cafe.



## Syd Gager

### Stage Manager

(they/them) is thrilled to be stage managing their first production with Loud Fridge. Syd stage managed Heroes of the Fourth Turning, Almost Maine, Anon(ymous), The Wolves, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime, and Spring Awakening for USD. Syd has also assistant stage managed for the Old Globe/USD MFA Program (Mother Courage, Judas Iscariot, and Tiger at the Gates) and Playwright's Project's Plays by Young Writers. Syd is so grateful to Lee for their leadership and hopes the cast and crew enjoyed creating this art piece as much as they have.



## Kandace Crystal

### Intimacy Director

(she/her) is glad to be back with LFTG after Intimacy Directing Ripped and Airness. Select intimacy credits include: A Midsummer Night's Dream (The Old Globe), Dog Sees God (USD), and Spring Awakening (Oceanside Theatre Company). IG: @KandaceCrystal





## Mashun Tucker

### Lighting Design

(he/him) is an Artist based in San Diego. He has worked with multiple companies in the area including Coronado Playhouse, New Village arts, The Old Globe & The Previous San Diego Rep. He is excited to be returning to Loud Fridge Theatre on such a unique project. You may have seen his work on *We Lovers*. Mashun is grateful to be able to help bring this special work to your eye view.



## Hayden St. Clair

### Sound Design

(they/them) Previous sound designs: *Unnecessary Farce* (Scripps Ranch Theatre); *Audition Sides* (Riot Productions); *Every Brilliant Thing*, *This Side of Heaven*, & *Antigone* (Concordia University Irvine). Education: Theatre BA, Concordia University Irvine; acting, directing, design, and technical production. They would like to thank the cast, crew, and creative team for all their efforts putting on this tragically beautiful (beautifully tragic) production. Many thanks to those that support live theatre, like you! [haybalecreations.carrd.co](http://haybalecreations.carrd.co)



## Heather K. Nunn

### Costume Design

(she/her) recently earned her MFA from San Diego State University where she designed *RENT* as well as the world premiere of *Ziggy, Stardust & Me*. Locally, her work includes *Vanya and Sonia* and *Masha and Spike* (Cygnet Theatre), *Lend Me a Soprano* (Scripps Ranch Theatre), *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* (Moxie Theatre), and *Twelfth Night of the Living Dead*, *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, and *We Lovers* (Loud Fridge Theatre Group). Originally from Portland, Oregon, she has designed for Broadway Rose, Outer East Playhouse, and Staged.

# Christy Reid

## Scenic/Props Design



(she/her) is honored to be working with Loud Fridge for the first time. Her recent experience includes serving as charge artist for The Rise and Fall of Little Voice at Backyard Renaissance and as set designer for The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee at Lamplighters Theatre and Shrek with Center Stage Productions. Last year, Christy won Aubrey Awards for Best Set Design, Best Prop Management, and Best Special Effects. When not working on sets, she enjoys spending time with her husband and four children. Follow her on Instagram @palettedreamerartistry.

# Jacob Bruce

## Fight Director



(he/him) is a San Diego-based director, fight choreographer, and staging consultant who's work has been featured at local theatres such as The La Jolla Playhouse, The Old Globe, San Diego REP, Diversionary, Loud Fridge, USCD, and USD, where he teaches stage combat, acting, and serves as the Operations Manager of the Theatre Department. You may have also seen his work as an actor both onstage and on camera.

# William B.J. Robinson

## Music Coordinator



(he/they) is an adopted Black, Puerto Rican, and White queer international arts educator, director, and composer. BJ moved from New Jersey to San Diego in 2009, and they've worked throughout San Diego, with churches and schools to non-profits and professional companies. They founded their private arts studio, El Studio del BJ, in 2015, offering services from voice coaching and audition prep to music reading and songwriting. Musical Direction credits include 'Twelfth Night' (Loud Fridge), 'I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change' at Vanguard Theatre, as well as 'High School Musical', 'Seussical Jr.', & 'Disney's Descendants The Musical' at Scripps Theatre Arts. Currently, BJ is Director of Music & Art at Christ United Presbyterian Church in South Park SD, creator/host/curator of Tough Talk, and a board member for Riot Productions & Loud Fridge Theatre Group.

# Jackson Taitano

## Choreographer



(they/them) graduated from CSU Chico with a BFA Musical Theatre and a Minor in Dance. They made their New York Debut in Clay Mommy (Lior Rosenblatt). Jackson has been working with Playground Players Productions, a San Diego based Youth Theatre program, to bring dance and performing arts to Middle and Elementary School Students. Jackson is so happy to be a part of this amazing team.

[jacksontaitano.com](http://jacksontaitano.com)

# Jeff Neitzel

## Special Makeup Designer



(he/him) is so excited to finally be working with Loud Fridge! He has worked as Prop Designer with Backyard Renaissance for their last few seasons, including: Witchland, Misery, The Dark Heart of Dooley Stevens, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Waverly Gallery, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf and The Rise and Fall of Little Voice. He is concurrently a Properties Artisan at The Old Globe Theater, and the Make-up Artist Coordinator for The Haunted Hotel LLC.

# Amelia Simpson

## Dramaturg/Assistant Director



(she/they) is thrilled to be returning to LFTG! In addition to assistant directing *Airness*, favorite direction and assistant direction credits include *Ros. & Guil.*; *Bonnie and Regina*; and *Twelfth Night*. Her dramaturgical work includes *Exit*, *Pursued by a Bear*; *King John*; and *Edward II*. A recent SDSU graduate, they also work across San Diego as a scenic painter (Old Globe, Cygnet Theatre, LFTG, SDSU). You can find her @ameliamayb. Thank you for being here, and for allowing this company to tell this story.

# Fiona Fleisher

## Assistant Stage Manager

(she/her) is so excited for her first production with Loud Fridge, and to be working with so many incredible professionals! She is going into her junior year at University of San Diego, having previously worked on Dog Sees God (Van's Sister/Crew), Spring Awakening (ASM), and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime (Sound Designer). She thanks her parents for their endless support, and hopes you enjoy the show!



## Special Thanks to:

- The Moxie Venue, Ruth Russell and Scripps Ranch Theatre, The University of San Diego Theatre Department, Kay Marian McNellen, Lu Garcia, Jessica Tran, Sheila Engelman, & Angie Spring.

## Volunteers

Usher Coordinator: Wendy Naylor

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## About



Loud Fridge Theatre Group (LFTG) is committed to using the performing arts to make NOISE in the San Diego theatre community, by nurturing inclusive collaboration on- and off-stage, by uplifting local artists both creatively and financially, by creating accessible theatrical experiences for all people, and by embracing interdisciplinary creativity to tell stories that are bold, honest, and diverse. LFTG is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. To learn more, visit [www.loudfridge.com](http://www.loudfridge.com).

## Board

Board: Kate Reynolds, Estefanía Ricalde, BJ Robinson, Hayden St. Clair, Liliana Talwatte, Michael Amira Temple

Recognized based on contributions from September 1st, 2025 - June 24th, 2026

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# BOY *My Greatness*

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### What is our Open Fridge Policy?

We believe that theatre should be accessible to all people. Therefore, our Open Fridge Policy ensures that all tickets to our productions are available at no cost to attendees. This policy aims to break down barriers, making theatre welcoming to everyone and supporting our mission to build an inviting and inclusive community.

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The untold stories of San Diego's Drag performers

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