

- I cannot wait to see that. I wanna ask too, since you mentioned like people leaving the theater, after someone comes and they view this show, and they partake in this process, 'cause this is certainly a process. After you've partaken in the process of, "Choir Boy," how do you want people to feel when they leave? And what pieces of this show are you setting up to kind of be a really good discovery for someone as they're leaving the theater, they're still discussing this work?

- The big one that the team from Denver brought into the room, and this is like a big 10, and again, this is represented in the writing, this isn't a thing that they're just like putting on top of it that they feel, but the different ways in which young black boys show and receive love and their ability to give, and show, and receive love, and I think that that's the big thing I want the girls to see is how many different ways that Black boys can love. You know?

- Wow!

- Again, when they turn us into adults, they also hyper sexualize us, and so like stripping that away and just being like, wow! And also showing there is a straight character who shows love to a gay character, that's completely platonic, but when do you get to see that a lot?

- Yeah.

- Where there's not a fight involved. There's gay character showing other gay characters love. There's grown men showing like a familial, platonic teacher-student love. There's a student showing like that same platonic love from the other end, student-teacher. There's so many different ways in which... And straight Black boys loving other straight Black boys. It's there's so many facets and multitudes to Black love. It's not just simply like the pretty Black couple on Instagram who just got married. Black love is so much larger than that.

- Yeah. We're not a monolith, so you can't expect us-

- Let's be clear on. Be clear.

- Nicholas, that literally gave me chills, 'cause I'm like, maybe even thinking about a younger version of myself, that's like, wow! Like what it would have meant for more people and not Black folks, the other folks, more people in the room and in spaces to be like, these Black students know love and they're deserving of knowing that love and sharing it with each other. Yeah, wow! Yeah.

- It's big. The play is big. It's only a hundred minutes, but it's a monster. This is not no. This is not simply just a play about a little boy, a gay boy and his woes.

- If you were able to have a conversation with that young, Black, queer, gay student that's sitting in the audience who is self reflecting in a lot of these moments, and that's going, I identify with this. I see this and I see myself in this piece, what is something that you would wanna say to that student? I would tell them what you're feeling is exactly

true. You deserve better. And if you can just hold out, you need to do your best to hold on. Find the people who see you. Find the people who want to see you. Find the people who want you to see them and just hold onto them for dear life. You belong here. And a lot of these kids, and again a lot of these adults do not believe so. This is not something that everyone grows out of. Some of these people are just going to be terrible. And that has nothing to do with you. It has nothing to do with you. Just keep pushing through. Just keep pushing through 'cause on the other side, all of this, everything that you've built up, everything that you've made of yourself thus far, a lot of the things that these same people are trying to beat out of you are the exact things that you need to hold onto because there are other people out there who are not only just like you but there are other people out there who are completely different from you who will love every inch of it.

- Listen, 'cause one day you will find that Nicholas Bernard.

- Listen.

- You will find yourself a Brodrick Ryans. I see you and I love you.

- Hey, babe.

- And I will celebrate you.

- You will. They're out there. They're out there. You're not the only one.

- Absolutely.

- You're far from it.

- That's that extended family. I mean, there's nothing like it. But I do wanna ask you, can you name just off the top of your head like three things that you think of when you start thinking of the context and the literal text of this show?

- Well, actually the four things that I've started to glean out of this with help from the directing team of Jamil Jude and Shermona Mitchell as well as like looking at the text and over and over and over again is at the top of the show, there's a song called, "Trust and Obey." And then also at the top of the show, Ferris and this is not a spoiler because it's literally on the first page. Ferriss asks his headmaster a question, "Is it better to be feared or respected?" And I think that those four things are what are holding the entire play up. When is it time to trust? When is it time to obey? When is it time to respect or be respected? When is it time to make someone fear you or be feared? Or when is it time to fear someone? And I think and not just again we were trying not to dive deep in, but not even just on that end but on the other end when we're talking about like receiving love, how do you step into a place of receiving love? We think of obeying people as them telling you what to do despite you not wanting to do it but you have to obey your parents. Is that not love?

- Yeah.

- But is it always love when you have to obey your parents? Your parents want you to trust them. You wanna trust your... All you wanna be respected but sometimes fear is used. Do we get the wires crossed? Are we doing that implicitly? Do we know the difference now that we're using it correctly? Those four things just keep swirling around in me. The idea of trust, the idea of obeying, the idea of respect, and the idea of fear seem to be the things that are circulating for me throughout this text.

- Yeah. Yeah, thank you for that. Nicholas, I also want you just to tell me or share what about this process and this project is really helping you grow as a person and as an artist. As a person just in the way that any process, every process that I do hope is to grow as a person, whether it is on one end, the greatest process I've ever done and filled with nothing but love and joy or on the other end I'm trying not to go to jail. And all of those processes helped me grow as a better person and artist because for better and for worse, I love being around other artists and clocking things that make joy and admiration arise in me from other people. As an artist, I definitely, I've always been very aware of the shining set of tools I have in my toolbox but I've always interested in everyone else's. And self-awareness being a very big thing about me. It's the more I do these things, the more you'll hear me yell about this every single day. But just being aware of what I can do and what I cannot do and what I wanna do and what I shouldn't do, and then seeing how those questions arrive in other people and how they respond to them I think makes it twofold for me becoming a better person and becoming a better artist 'cause I don't think you can become a better artist by becoming a better person, maybe a better performer. Sure. You can definitely become a better performer without becoming a better person but not a better artist at all. And I think that is what really I'm taking from this, is just watching these talented people, watching their triumphs and their struggles and watching the way they maneuver and navigate this text as well as other bodies as well as the space, as well as expectations. Some of these people from out of town watching how they... But they're out of town but they did the show in Denver. Watching how these other actors navigate, honestly knowing the show better than any of the other actors who are in there not because we haven't been reading or not studying but it's a different thing to study a show and it's a different thing to do the show. And this is gonna be a different show, different cast, different city. And it's not like a carbon copy, or even a cut and paste, or honestly not even to a certain point it's becoming like a loose reference. It's morphing into something else. But just watching these people just like watching other people live. For the exact reason why we come to the theater anyway, it's the same thing in rehearsal like watching other people live.

- For non-theater folks they would not know the term but when we say be off book, watching someone work when they're off book as opposed to watching when they're still trying to learn and figure it out, it's a completely different thing.

- Absolutely.

- Yeah. I imagine that that's a lot of what's probably also happening in that space is that you're being able to watch someone who's off book do the whole thing and just morph it and change it and play with it even more. There's more creativity there a little bit 'cause they have that freedom to be like, I'm not holding a book or I'm not relying on someone to give me a line because I don't know-

- Absolutely.

- Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing all of this, Nicholas. This was absolutely fantastic. I just wanna say thank you everybody for joining and watching and listening to this Show Talk. You can follow me personally @brodrickryans on IG, if you would like to. That's B-R-O-D-R-I-C-K-R-Y-A-N-S. If you would like to follow my podcast, you can follow me @timeoutbrodrick on Instagram. Nicholas, why don't you tell the kiddos where they can follow you? You can find me at @njapaul, J-A-P-A-U-L Bernard on Instagram.

- Please, please, please purchase your tickets to see, "Choir Boy," at [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org). Get those tickets. I feel like they're going to sell out and so fast. Once people really come in and see the show, I already know. I'm like, I've loved this story for a long time but knowing that it's gonna be in our city and folks that I know are gonna be in there consuming and doing this work. I can't wait. Please get your tickets. If you have any questions, or comments, concerns, please send those over to us at Fifth Avenue as well. We're happy to take those, but thank you for joining us for this Show Talk.

- And thank you me, baby. This was cute. This was cute.