

# INSIDE THE MUSICAL GUIDE:

# WONDER BOY

AUGUST 15 - 29, 2022

**BOOK, MUSIC, AND  
LYRICS BY**

Jaime Jarrett

**DIRECTED BY**

Jéhan Òsanyìn

**MUSIC DIRECTION BY**

Michael Nutting

This “Inside the Musical” Guide offers supplementary curriculum containing educational content, interactive activities, opportunities for reflection, and resources based on the themes of the radio play *Wonder Boy*. This guide can be utilized before or after experiencing the radio play.

Questions? Reach out to [educationprograms@5thavenue.org](mailto:educationprograms@5thavenue.org)

Content contributors: Jaime Jarrett, Jéhan Òsanyìn, Nina Williams-Teramachi    Graphic design by Kevin Calhoun

2021/22 SEASON  
SPONSORS



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ABOUT THE SHOW

About Radio Plays.....	3
Synopsis.....	5
Character Breakdown.....	6

## EMBRACING VOCAL EXPANSIVENESS.....7

## ACTIVITIES

Wonder Boy's Costume.....	9
Transformations: Shaping Who We Are.....	10

## RESOURCES.....11

## GLOSSARY.....12





*Wonder Boy* was recorded in Seattle by a stellar local cast featuring Gloria Alcalá (they/them), Rheanna Atendido (she/her), Rhys Daly (he/him), Rachel Guyer-Mafune (she/her), UJ Mangune (he/they), Aaron M. Davis Norman (they/them), Tyler Rogers (he/they), and Porscha Shaw (she/they).

## ABOUT RADIO PLAYS



A radio play is a dramatized, acoustic performance that relies on music and sound to convey a story. The first plays written specifically for radio began in the 1920s. Radio was considered the “major popular entertainment” in the 1940s and 1950s, providing people with access to news, music, novels, radio plays, and more. Although the consumption of media and stories evolved with the invention of the television set, radio and acoustic storytelling continues to appeal to audiences through music, podcasts, audio books, radio plays, and more!

(Pereira, Carina. “Radio Drama: Then and Now.” Book Riot, 23 Aug. 2020. <https://bookriot.com/history-of-the-radio-drama/> Accessed 11 Jul. 2022.)

Interested in more radio plays?  
Visit [Old Radio World](#)





# WHY A RADIO PLAY AT THE 5TH?

The 5th Avenue Theatre began producing radio plays in the digital 2020/21 Season. *Wonder Boy* is the fourth radio play at The 5th following *Half the Sky*, *Afterwords*, and *The Lamplighter*.



“

Musical radio plays are special in countless ways. Not only are they unique opportunities for audiences to immerse themselves in a different approach to musical theater storytelling, but they are pathways for writers, composers, and lyricists to develop and dig deeper into their works. Like the radio plays we produced in our digital season, we are honored to create space for this amazing new musical as it continues along on its creative journey.

- Bill Berry (he/him),  
The 5th Avenue Theatre's Producing Artistic Director

”

“

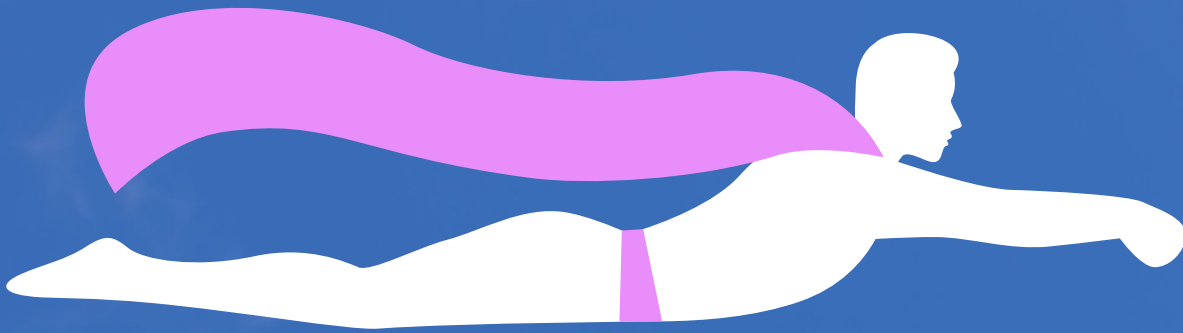
## PRODUCING WONDER BOY AS A RADIO PLAY

One of the many reasons why I reached out to Jaime about producing *Wonder Boy* is because I believe so strongly in the story and can already see the incredible things it can do for our community. This show is a love letter to the trans and queer community in a time where every aspect of our lives as trans people, and especially trans people of color, [is] policed. *Wonder Boy* is a rare piece of musical theater that not only uplifts these voices in a fun, sci-fi superhero universe, but also explores the complexities of our relationships to our bodies and queerness. Making joyful queer and trans art is necessary for the community and the future of musical theater.

- Nina Williams-Teramachi (they/them), The 5th  
Avenue Theatre's New Musical Producing Associate

”





## **SYNOPSIS**

---

Jackson is recovering from a break up, growing apart from his twin sister, and attempting to find a new normal in his identity as a transgender man. During this tumultuous time, he craves some kind of protection for his heart. After he ingests an experimental drug, he is transformed into Wonder Boy: a superhero who has the ability to create impenetrable forcefields. He uses his power to protect his college campus, but learns that protecting others (and himself) is more complicated than he thought. Jackson must face his masculinity, his vulnerability, what it means to be a superhero, and what it means to care for others.

*Note: The story of Wonder Boy explores themes including the following: trans, non-binary, and gender-expansive experiences, depression and mental health, and people navigating identity shifts. See pages 11 and 12 for a glossary and additional resources.*

# CHARACTER BREAKDOWN



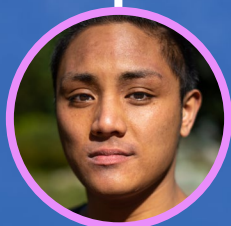
## **JACKSON/WONDER BOY (HE/HIM) - VOICED BY RHYS DALY (HE/HIM)**

A 20-year-old transgender man who's learning to navigate his identity as a transgender man and his identity as a superhero. He's intelligent, stubborn, and sometimes reckless, and he wants to be strong and independent.



## **PEYTON (SHE/HER) - VOICED BY RACHEL GUYER-MAFUNE (SHE/HER)**

A 20-year-old cisgender queer woman and Jackson's sister. She's incredibly gifted in science and top of her class. She's just as smart as Jackson and twice as hardworking. She would rather think through her problems instead of actually processing them and believes there's a solution to everything.



## **ELLIS (THEY/THEM) - VOICED BY UJ MANGUNE (HE/THEY)**

A 20-year-old queer non-binary person and Jackson's superhero-obsessed roommate. They are a free-spirited, optimistic dork who's honest and charming. While they don't get along with Jackson in the beginning, the two grow close throughout the story.



## **NAYA (SHE/HER) - VOICED BY RHEANNA ATENDIDO (SHE/HER)**

A 20-year-old cisgender lesbian/queer woman of color and Jackson's ex-girlfriend who's attempting to find a new normal with Jackson. She's well-intentioned and emotionally intelligent. She came out as a lesbian at 12 years old and is currently struggling with an identity shift.



## **ENSEMBLE**

voiced by Gloria Alcalá (they/them), Aaron M. Davis Norman (they/them), Tyler Rogers (he/they), and Porscha Shaw (she/they).

A variety of roles throughout the story including lab students, party-goers, Berkeley, Kyle, Wonder Boy Fans, students, and additional vocalists. They switch between playing concrete characters, manifestations of other characters' emotional lives, and narrators.





# EMBRACING VOCAL EXPANSIVENESS

By Jaime Jarrett (he/they)

PHOTOS BY KAT GRIFFIN

I started writing musical theater for transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive performers because I wanted to write music that felt good to sing. I almost flunked out of my undergraduate music theory class, and referencing the classical vocal training I received when I was younger bordered on painful. With few conscious technical skills to rely on, I chose to focus on writing music that intrigued my ears, vibrated strongly in my chest, and left me feeling full. At the time, I wasn't thinking of "writing for trans voices." I was writing for me, who happened to be trans. It took me several years to realize my trans-ness and my vocal life are intertwined.

As a trans artist, and someone who works with trans artists, I approach each step of new musical development with the goal of embracing vocal expansiveness. Theaters often ask for descriptions of characters which include a "vocal range," but this doesn't serve the casting process for my work. I could find a long list of individuals who have the right vocal range for a character, but I would rather find someone with an exciting vocal texture that suits the role, even if it means transposing a few songs to different keys or futzing with the melody a bit. In particular, the role of Jackson (aka Wonder Boy) could be played by a baritone, tenor, alto, soprano, or someone whose range doesn't fit categorization. Jackson is a transgender man who can be played by any trans person who identifies with the role, and I specifically do not include any reference in *Wonder Boy* to his physical transition. If I did my job well as a writer, the story will be meaningful regardless of an actor's relationship, or lack thereof, to hormone therapy. This way, the vocal type and range of Jackson will remain flexible for as long as this piece is being performed.

“

**As a trans artist, and someone who works with trans artists, I approach each step of new musical development with the goal of embracing vocal expansiveness.**

”





At The 5th Avenue Theatre, we entered rehearsal with actors whose vocal ranges differed from those who have played the roles in the past. This happens every time there's a new cast, so I have a method of studying the actors' voices to the best of my ability (often through clips on the internet), and I use some educated guesses to transpose songs in the score in preparation for rehearsals. While I always intend to continue transposing songs throughout rehearsals, this helps give our music team a head start. I was lucky enough to work with our Music Director, Michael Nutting, who could transpose songs on the spot to allow vocalists to sing them in several different keys before we made a final decision. In some instances, we chose not to transpose the keys of songs and instead made different choices. For example, when most of the song was in a perfect range for the performer and there were only a few notes too uncomfortable to reach, or a duet that had a range which worked for one performer and didn't work for the other performer. In those instances, I would usually duck away for five or ten minutes and return with a rewritten melody line. When I write a song, I'm answering the question, "How can this character best articulate how they're feeling?" When a melody is not written in a comfortable place for a vocalist, that is an invitation to reevaluate that question, and to find an answer that does justice for this version of the song.

I hope that one day *Wonder Boy* is licensed out to so many regional theaters, colleges, and high schools that it's literally impossible for me to be involved in each rehearsal process. However, it means I have to rethink the materials so future creative teams can puzzle together a version of the score that works for the vocal diversity within their cast. I've begun implementing alternative melodies directly into the score, alongside the original melodies. This isn't completely uncommon—most musical theater scores will have a song or two with alternative melody options. However, most of these options are a choice to sing a bigger and higher note at the end of a song. To support the vocal needs of present and future casts, my options are small phrases of melody that include adjustments. Right now, there are alternate melodies in about a third of the score of *Wonder Boy*, but I hope to include more with each rendition of the show. With optional melodies and alternate keys, I'm creating a puzzle that can be assembled and feel whole no matter how you move the pieces around. It's a puzzle that will always look (or sound) different—but that's part of what I like about being in the transgender community. There's no singular "correct" or "right" way of doing things. I think that musical theater has a lot to learn from transgender, nonbinary, and gender expansive folks, and I believe re-examining the rules of vocal arranging will be part of the future of new musical theater.





# WONDER BOY'S COSTUME

Design Wonder Boy's superhero costume! In the musical, Jackson discovers that he is a superhero who has the ability to create impenetrable forcefields. Use this space below to draw your own unique creation of Wonder Boy's costume and what it looks like when Jackson is using his forcefield.



# TRANSFORMATIONS: SHAPING WHO WE ARE

By Jéhan Òsanyìn (they/them)

*Wonder Boy* deals with difficult topics. In the story, Jackson takes a dangerous risk when he ingests a potentially poisonous, unknown substance that eventually gives him superpowers. The goal of the following activities is to more deeply understand some of those topics while also increasing our self-awareness about ways we'd like to make different choices in our own lives.

## STEP 1

On a piece of paper, on your phone, or in any way you'd like to, respond to the following questions:

- What does it cost Jackson and Peyton to use their superpowers?
- What are some of the environmental pressures that lead to Jackson making the choices he does?
- What are some of the ways Jackson transforms in the play? Physically? Emotionally?
- What do those transformations look and sound like?
- What are some of the behavioral changes Jackson goes through during the musical? Before it starts? After it's over?
- Someone who loves Jackson, his twin sister Peyton, is concerned with the ways they see him changing. What are some of the ways Peyton shows her love for Jackson?
- What are some boundaries Jackson tries to set with the people he cares about?
- Are we always responsible for explaining the ways we're changing to the people in our community?

## STEP 2

Read over your responses to the questions above. Reflect on at least one way you'd like to be different in the future.

## STEP 3

Set a timer for 10 minutes. Using found materials (things that you find in your space) or a paper and pencil, reflect on at least one way you'd like to be different than you are now. Consider the following questions:

- In the play, Naya speaks up for her friend Berkeley after Jackson saves her from Kyle. Berkeley comments that while she can take care of herself, it was nice to have someone care for her for a change. Are there ways members of your community would like to care for you that you've been resisting?
- What does your transformation look like?
- What could your transformation sound like?



# RESOURCES



[Alphabet Alliance of Color](#)



[Black Trans Advocacy Coalition](#)



[Human Rights Campaign](#)



[Ingersoll Gender Center Trans Peer Support Group](#)



[Lambert House](#)



[Mazzoni Center](#)



[Queer Art](#)



[Trans Theater Lab](#)



[Trans Women of Color Solidarity Network](#)



[The Trevor Project](#)

# GLOSSARY

Provided by [Trans Lifeline](#)

**Bisexual** – A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to two or more genders (not necessarily men and women). More recently, the term has been used to describe a level of sexual fluidity in which a person's attractions may move in one or more directions along a spectrum of sexuality.

**Cisgender** – An individual whose gender identity matches their birth assignment. Cisgender is often abbreviated as “cis.”

**Cishet** – A slang term used mostly within the queer and transgender community to describe cisgender heterosexual individuals.

**Coming Out** – The act of accepting and/or disclosing one's true gender identity or sexual orientation to others, which can occur during any phase of life. Social, legal, and/or physical transition may accompany coming out.

**Gender Affirming Surgery** – Any one of a number of surgical procedures intended to alleviate the dissonance between a person's body and their gender identity. Colloquially in the trans community, gender-affirming surgery may be referred to as “bottom” or “top” surgery, with bottom surgery pertaining to removal and/or reconstruction of a person's primary sex characteristics and/or external genitalia, and “top surgery” consisting of removal, reconstruction, or augmentation of the breast tissue. Not all transgender people elect to have surgery as part of their medical transition; some transgender people choose not to medically transition at all. It's important to note that many cisgender people also participate in Gender Affirming Surgery or procedures including, but not limited to, breast implants, hormone replacement therapy for menopausal cis women, hair transplants, Viagra, laser hair removal, etc.

**Gender Expression** – The external manifestation of a person's gender identity, which may or may not conform to gender stereotypes and may be expressed through clothing, appearance, behavior, and/or prosthetics.

**Genderfluid** – A state of fluctuating, or shifting, between various genders, depending on a person's internal state. Genderfluid individuals may or may not change their gender expression, pronouns, and/or name due to shifts in their gender identity. Genderfluid individuals' expression of their identities may be context-sensitive and/or based on preferences/feelings.

**Gender Identity** – An individual's innate, internal conception of being man, woman, both, neither, or any combination thereof, which may or may not correspond to the person's external anatomy or assigned sex at birth (LGBT Health Education Center, 2019). Transgender people have a gender identity that is different than the one assigned to them at birth.

**Gender-Neutral** – A term used to denote all-gender-inclusive spaces, language, concepts, items, and more (for instance, gender-neutral clothing, gender-neutral language, gender-neutral bathrooms).

**Non-Binary** – An umbrella term used to describe someone whose gender identity falls outside of the traditional Western binary; a gender identity that cannot be classified as exclusively “man” or “woman.”

**Pansexual** – An individual who is sexually attracted to people of all genders and/or gender presentations.

**Pronouns** – Grammatical terms used to reference a person in place of a proper noun, often connected to gender. “He,” “she,” “they,” “ze,” etc. are all examples of pronouns.

**Transition** – The process of undergoing social, legal, and/or medical transition from one's birth-assigned gender to another. For instance, a person assigned male at birth might possess a gender identity of woman, and therefore change her name and pronouns, as well as the gender marker on her government-issued documents. Transitioning is a personal process unique to the individual—a journey in which one makes decisions to become more like their true selves. See “Gender Affirming Surgery” definition for additional information.

**Transgender** – An umbrella term describing individuals whose gender identity differs from the biological sex assigned to them at birth. The transgender population is comprised of diverse people and is found in numerous nations throughout the world. Since gender identity and sexual orientation are separate concepts, transgender people can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, sexually fluid, or various other orientations.