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1/11-2/1: Nearly Naked Theatre Company: 'Take Me Out'



The cast of the Childsplay production 'Rock The Presidents.' From left: Yolanda London, Eric Boudreau and Colin Ross. Credit: Heather Hill.

Heather Hill

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By Kerry Lengel

The Republic | azcentral.com

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RELATED INFO

Nearly Naked Theatre Company: 'Take Me Out'

When: Friday, Jan. 11, through Saturday, Feb. 1.

Where: Phoenix Theatre, 100 E. McDowell Road.

Admission: \$24; \$19 for students and seniors (subject to demand pricing).

Details: 602-254-2151, nearlynakedtheatre.org.

Note: Mature content, including full nudity.

Some actors, such as your Daniel Day-Lewises, Christian Bales and Joaquin Phoenixes, are known for intensive preparation for their roles — losing weight, gaining weight, even staying in character for months at a time.

In contrast, Eric Boudreau's regimen leading up to Nearly Naked Theatre's revival of "Take Me Out" is somewhat less strenuous, mostly consisting of watching reruns of "The Big Bang Theory."

"It really has been a challenge for me to be that nerdy little introvert that I've never been all my life," he says. "I've always been that loud, bombastic individual. I've always been the class clown. To step back and not do that for a little bit is a challenge. So I've been watching 'Big Bang Theory' to get those nerdy little quirks."

The 2003 Tony Award winner for best play, "Take Me Out" takes on issues of sexuality, race and class in major-league sports. It's about a superstar baseball player (played in this production by Jaime Gaeta) who goes public with his identity as a gay man. Accustomed to the admiration of the press and the deference of his less-famous peers, he thinks this will be just another bullet point in his bio, much like his



mixed-race heritage, but his revelation turns his team's locker room into an emotional pressure cooker.

Boudreau plays Mason "Marz" Marzac, the player's business manager and a walking bundle of nerves who has felt like an outsider his whole life, not just in the sports world but within the gay community as well. At first the character seems to serve as comic relief, but, as a stand-in for writer Richard Greenberg, he delivers the play's centerpiece monologue, a heartfelt ode to America's pastime.

"It's a great, great speech, and I couldn't pass up the chance to go for it," Boudreau says.

A lanky 6-foot-4 with curly blond hair and a mischievous smile, the young actor is not the first to spring to mind for the part. When Nearly Naked first produced "Take Me Out" in 2006, Marz was portrayed by Stray Cat Theatre founder Ron May, whose angsty energy made him a natural fit and bona-fide scene-stealer.

In contrast, Boudreau has made a name playing more flamboyant roles in such alt-theater hits as "Reefer Madness" and "Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson." Over the past few years, he also has become a mainstay with Childsplay, Tempe's professional theater for young audiences, where he has performed in "The Neverending Story," "Robin Hood" and the world-premiere musical "Rock the Presidents," which also took him on his first national tour.

"When I was a kid, I wanted to be a Backstreet Boy, and being in 'Rock the Presidents' kind of felt like that to me," he says.

Boudreau grew up playing basketball and soccer in Port Angeles, Wash., and moved to the Valley to study musical theater at Mesa Community College, where he was mentored by music professor Sue Anne Lucius.

"I am a very proud alumnus of MCC. They put me in a good position to do what I'm doing now," Boudreau says.

"I am a firm believer that you get out of your education what you put into it, and with Sue Anne, she never stopped pushing me. She

expected me to do everything. Every single production, every single class. She is amazing. She knew how to push you without breaking you."

Reach the reporter at kerry.lengel@arizonarepublic.com or 602-444-4896.

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