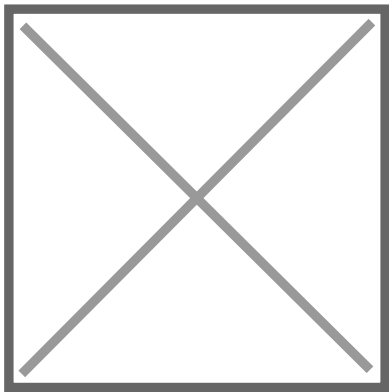




Something Rotten! at Ziegfeld Theater: Broadway Love Letter, Shakespeare Roast, and Pure Theatrical Chaos

Description

Ogden, UT—Now playing at the **Ziegfeld Theater** in Utah from May 15–30, 2026, this regional production directed by **Jennifer Westfall** offers local audiences the chance to experience one of Broadway’s most energetic and self-referential modern comedies. Advertised as an “uncensored” version of *Something Rotten!*, the production includes flashing lights, loud noises, fog effects, and material that may not be suitable for younger children. For audiences familiar with Broadway references—or simply anyone who enjoys rapid-fire comedy and theatrical chaos—Ziegfeld’s version proves especially worthwhile. The humor moves quickly, the musical references arrive relentlessly, and the show rewards audiences willing to lean into its delightfully ridiculous premise.

Its musical absurdity is definitely one of the show’s greatest strengths, though audiences who actively dislike musicals may find themselves resisting its intentionally heightened theatrical logic. *Something Rotten!* never asks audiences to suspend disbelief so much as surrender to theatrical chaos. It understands that musicals operate according to their own rules, where characters sing at emotional extremes, dance numbers emerge unexpectedly, and theatrical excess often triumphs over realism. Rather than resisting that logic, the show gleefully leans into it.

Promotional poster for the musical 'Something Rotten!' featuring a man in a theatrical costume holding a sword.

Context: Shakespeare, Broadway, and the Birth of the Musical

Originally premiering on Broadway in 2015, *Something Rotten!* features a book by **John O’Farrell** and **Karey Kirkpatrick**, music and lyrics by **Wayne Kirkpatrick** and **Karey Kirkpatrick**, and was conceived by the Kirkpatrick brothers. Set in Renaissance England, the musical imagines an alternate theatrical history in which struggling playwright brothers **Nick Bottom** and **Nigel Bottom** attempt to survive in a world where **William Shakespeare** is less literary icon and more celebrity superstar.

The premise itself begins with a wonderfully ridiculous question: what if Shakespeare's rivals accidentally invented the modern musical centuries before Broadway existed? Desperate to compete with the Bard, **Nick Bottom** turns to a soothsayer who predicts the future of theatre and introduces him to the concept of musicals: productions where characters suddenly burst into song, dance numbers appear without warning, and theatrical excess reigns supreme.

Set during the Renaissance, a period literally associated with rebirth, the show quietly asks larger questions about creativity and originality. Ironically, its answer often points backward. New ideas emerge less from abandoning the past than from reshaping and reimagining it. For a musical obsessed with invention, *Something Rotten!* repeatedly circles back to the idea that creativity often comes from revisiting old stories and seeing them differently.

That idea feels especially meaningful here because the Renaissance itself was never simply about creating something entirely new. It was a return: a rediscovery and reworking of older ideas, art, and ways of thinking. In that sense, the musical becomes unexpectedly layered. While its characters desperately chase the "next big thing," the show repeatedly suggests that innovation may come less from novelty and more from returning to creativity itself. The best art often operates this way, layering old stories with new meaning rather than discarding the past altogether.

What Makes Ziegfeld's Production Distinct

Ziegfeld Theater's production does not simply recreate *Something Rotten!* It plays with it. That distinction matters because *Something Rotten!* has become one of those shows where audiences often arrive already anticipating favorite moments, punchlines, and references. The script itself is packed with jokes theatre fans know are coming. There can be a temptation to simply deliver the material as expected and allow audience recognition to do the work. Instead, this production feels willing to take chances.

One of the most noticeable strengths of this iteration is that the humor rarely feels recycled. Familiar jokes land with renewed spontaneity, and several moments feel energized by choices that make the material feel less rehearsed and more playful. The production rarely feels interested in delivering a museum version of the material. Instead, it injects its own rhythm and personality into the show.

It is also worth noting that this production presents the fully uncensored version of the musical. Although officially rated PG and featuring flashing lights, loud noises, and fog effects, audiences bringing younger children should know that the show leans heavily into innuendo and adult humor. Yet even the show's dirtier jokes often arrive through metaphor, wordplay, and theatrical misunderstanding rather than outright vulgarity.

A man in historical costume gives a piggyback ride to a woman in a colorful dress, both smiling, in front of a backdrop of a city skyline.

Analysis: Theatre Laughing at Itself

Part of *Something Rotten!*'s enduring appeal comes from its ability to function simultaneously as parody and celebration. The show pokes fun at Shakespeare, Broadway, and theatrical conventions, but it never feels cynical. Instead, its humor operates more like affectionate teasing. The jokes work because they emerge from obvious admiration rather than distance.

The endless barrage of references becomes part of that experience. Shakespeare quotations, literary jokes, Broadway nods, visual callbacks, and theatrical in-jokes arrive constantly, but they rarely become overwhelming. Spotting them begins to feel like a game audiences play alongside performers. References become less about proving audience knowledge and more about participation.

That balance becomes especially apparent during "A Musical," perhaps the evening's strongest sequence. What begins as an explanation of the future invention of musical theatre quickly erupts into an explosion of self-aware comedy, as references to *Les Misérables*, *Annie*, *Rent*, and later *Hair*, *Newsies*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and countless others pile gleefully on top of one another.

The show recognizes something audiences already understand but rarely say aloud: musicals are absurd. People suddenly sing instead of speak. Entire ensembles emerge from nowhere. Emotional moments become choreography. Rivalries become tap-dancing competitions. Yet audiences willingly embrace these conventions because theatrical joy often follows its own logic. Even lines like "My religion is the theater" reveal how deeply the musical loves the very thing it satirizes. Rather than dismantling theatre, *Something Rotten!* celebrates it by inviting audiences into the joke.

Two actors in period costume looking at each other with smiles, holding a book. The background features

Performance Highlights

The success of *Something Rotten!* ultimately depends on complete buy-in. The show moves quickly, jokes arrive relentlessly, and nearly every scene asks performers to embrace absurdity without hesitation. Fortunately, the Ziegfeld cast commits fully.

That energy begins with **Caleb Parry** as Nick Bottom. Parry emerges as one of the production's standout performers, bringing heightened physical comedy and comic instincts that make Nick's spiraling panic consistently entertaining. Nick exists in a perpetual state of frustration, jealousy, and desperation, but Parry never allows him to become one-note. Beneath the chaos is genuine vulnerability.

Much of the production's success comes from **Caleb Parry's** chemistry with **Colton Ward's** Shakespeare. Their rivalry becomes one of the evening's greatest pleasures. Having seen *Something Rotten!* several times, I have seen Shakespeare played in wildly different ways: exaggerated, oversexualized, and occasionally reduced to caricature. **Christian Borle** left large shoes to fill in the original Broadway production, but Ward never feels like he is simply recreating that performance. Instead, he finds a balance between oversized celebrity swagger and genuine humanity.

This Shakespeare is less untouchable literary genius and more rock star, celebrity, and theatrical heartthrob. Ward's vocal belt brings tremendous energy to the role, while live electric guitar performed by **Terran Lowe** transforms Shakespeare into something closer to a Renaissance concert headliner than literary icon.

Opposite the larger personalities, **Jonas Stone** brings warmth and sincerity to Nigel Bottom. Stone and **Riley Plott** share an endearing chemistry in their duet, "I Love the Way." What makes Nigel and Portia especially charming is that their attraction seems rooted less in physicality and more in poetry itself. Their language transforms sonnets and verse into flirtation, creating some of the musical's funniest moments because the characters remain blissfully unaware of how suggestive they sound.

Meanwhile, **Joan Dunn** as Bea Bottom provides emotional grounding amid the production's escalating chaos. Bea's practicality serves as an effective counterweight to Nick's spiraling panic, and Dunn approaches the role with sincerity and vocal strength. Numbers like "Right Hand Man" showcase both power and warmth. Bea's commentary on gender and equality remains funny and endearing, but there is also something bittersweet beneath it. Viewed alongside Renaissance realities and works such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, Bea's desire for independence carries additional emotional weight.

Austin Payne proves equally memorable as Nostradamus, whose increasingly chaotic visions lead Nick astray. Payne embraces the role's unpredictability, and his comic timing becomes one of the evening's recurring highlights. As references collide and visions spiral out of control, Nostradamus becomes less prophet and more theatrical chaos agent.

The ensemble similarly serves as a driving force behind the production's momentum. **Mejai Perry**, who also served as Dance Captain alongside **Andee Walden**, repeatedly finds ways to steal focus, while **Terran Lowe** brings sharp physical comedy and infectious energy throughout. **David Storm**, as Brother Jeremiah, and **Arie Allred**, in the multi-role turn of Shylock/Judge/Clapham, also deliver standout supporting performances that leave a lasting impression.

Production Design

While the principal performances provide the emotional center, *Something Rotten!* is also built on movement, timing, and theatrical momentum. Under **Jennifer Westfall's** direction, the production understands that theatricality itself becomes part of the joke. Rather than treating the musical's absurdity cautiously, the creative team fully commits to its oversized energy and theatrical chaos.

Keely Parry's choreography proves especially effective during the show's tap-heavy moments, including the increasingly ridiculous rivalry between Shakespeare and Nick Bottom. The movement contributes as much to the comedy as the dialogue itself.

Music direction by **Alexandra Kalaher** deserves recognition as well. In a musical built around fast-moving lyrics, layered harmonies, and constant tonal shifts, vocal clarity becomes essential. The production's musicality consistently supports both the comedy and emotional sincerity of the material.

Shakespeare's entrances feel less like ordinary scene transitions and more like miniature concert events. Smoke effects, sparklers, elevated staging, and live guitar create arena-level energy. Sound and projection work by **Troy Martell**, alongside technical elements throughout the production, help transform Shakespeare into something closer to a Renaissance rock star than a literary icon. The effect feels intentionally excessive in exactly the right ways.

One especially effective visual choice is the recurring use of **Erica Choffel's** set design and **Globe Theatre** imagery. Because the musical constantly shifts between backstage comedy, Shakespearean satire, and theatrical fantasy, the design repeatedly pulls audiences back into the world the show is simultaneously celebrating and parodying. Choffel's work helps ground a production that otherwise thrives on theatrical chaos.

During "Hard to Be the Bard," Shakespeare is surrounded by Bard Babes dressed in black corsets and dramatic purple ruffled skirts, creating one of the evening's most memorable visual sequences. Costume design by **Karly Van Komen** contributes substantially to the production's larger-than-life aesthetic, while **Kyle Esposito's** lighting design heightens the musical's concert atmosphere.

The sound design similarly deserves recognition. In a musical built around layered references and rapid-fire lyrics, clarity matters. Martell's sound work allows much of the writing to land cleanly, ensuring audiences can actually catch the jokes as they arrive.

Visual details such as a book titled *One Shade of Gray* replacing a Bible, the absurd visual reveal of *Omelette: The Musical*, and the Bard Babes appearing in black corsets and purple ruffles during "Hard to Be the Bard" reward audiences paying close attention. These small moments of theatrical excess become part of the production's larger comic rhythm. Because *Something Rotten!* succeeds through total commitment, the cast and creative team's willingness to fully embrace its absurdity ultimately becomes one of the production's greatest strengths.

Conclusion

By the end, Ziegfeld's *Something Rotten!* understands exactly what makes the musical work. It is chaotic, self-aware, a little ridiculous, and entirely comfortable being all of those things at once. Rather than treating the show like a museum piece or relying solely on audience familiarity, this production finds ways to inject new energy into material many theatre fans already know.

More importantly, it understands that *Something Rotten!* works best when its performers commit fully to the joke. The production embraces Shakespeare as celebrity, treats Broadway conventions with equal parts affection and satire, and trusts audiences to enjoy the wonderfully strange logic of musical theatre itself.

Appropriately, a musical beginning with "Renaissance" and ending with "America" ultimately becomes a story about reinvention itself. The show repeatedly suggests that progress may emerge not from abandoning the past, but from rediscovering creativity in unexpected places. Like the Renaissance it references, *Something Rotten!* argues that innovation often comes not from discarding old ideas, but from returning to them and seeing them differently.

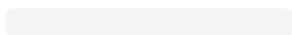
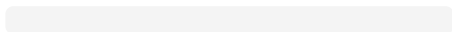
Somewhere between **Caleb Parry**’s spiraling panic, **Colton Ward**’s rock-star Shakespeare, electric guitar riffs, and the ongoing chaos of *Omelette: The Musical*, audiences may discover they are having far more fun than expected.

If *Something Rotten!* asks whether the future of theatre belongs to musicals, Ziegfeld’s answer seems clear: absurdity, enthusiasm, and complete commitment still make for a remarkably entertaining night at the theatre.



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Cast

Caleb Parry ??? Nick Bottom
Jonas Stone ??? Nigel Bottom
Colton Ward ??? Shakespeare
Joan Dunn ??? Bea Bottom
Austin Payne ??? Nostradamus
Riley Plott ??? Portia
David Storm ??? Brother Jeremiah
Arie Allred ??? Shylock, Judge, Clapham

Terran Lowe ??? Robin, Ensemble
Josiah Johnson ??? Peter Quince, Minstrel, Ensemble
Mylie Burns ??? Tom Snout, Ensemble
Mejai Perry ??? Francis Flute, Bard Boy, Ensemble
Bob Stevens ??? Snug, Ensemble
Jack Mergens ??? Bard Boy, Ensemble
Rachel Poulton ??? Bard Babe, Ensemble
Makayla Livengood ??? Bard Babe, Ensemble
Jenna Francis ??? Bard Babe, Ensemble
Andee Walden ??? Bard Babe, Ensemble

Creative Team

Directed by **Jennifer Westfall**
Music Direction by **Alexandra Kalaher**
Choreography by **Keely Parry**
Stage Management by **Kaylee Nelson**
Assistant Stage Management by **An Wellisch**
Intimacy Direction by **Marinda Maxfield**

Scenic Design by **Erica Choffel**
Costume Design by **Karly Van Komen**
Lighting Design (Ogden) by **Kyle Esposito**
Sound Design by **Troy Martell**
Projection Design by **Troy Martell**
Props Design by **Jennifer Westfall** and **Holly Reid**

Shop Foreman ??? **Juliette Zorn**
Set Build ??? **Juliette Zorn** and **Noa Miller**
Set Dressing and Painting ??? **Erica Choffel**
Set Change Coordination ??? **Alma Lambson**

Board Operation ??? **Kaylee Nelson**
Microphone Operation ??? **Ben Menlove**
House Manager (Ogden) ??? **Hilder Espinosa**

Show Information

Something Rotten!

Book by **John Oâ??Farrell** and **Karey Kirkpatrick**

Music and Lyrics by **Wayne Kirkpatrick** and **Karey Kirkpatrick**

Conceived by **Wayne Kirkpatrick** and **Karey Kirkpatrick**

Presented by Ziegfeld Theater

Directed by **Jennifer Westfall**

May 15â??30, 2026

Rated PG â?? Parental Guidance Suggested

This production contains flashing lights, loud noises, fog effects, adult humor, innuendo, and material that may not be suitable for younger audiences.

Tickets and information available through Ziegfeld Theater.

[Tickets](#)

Venue

Presented at The Ziegfeld Theater

3934 Washington Blvd

Ogden, UT 84403

Box Office: (855) 944-2787

May 15â??30, 2026

Evening performances: 7:30 PM

Matinees: 2:00 PM

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