



Voodoo Theatre's *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey*: a Heart-warming yet Heart-breaking Illumination of the Importance of Individualism and Tolerance

Description

SALT LAKE CITY's Voodoo Theatre's *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey*, written by [Celeste Lecesne](#), is a heart-warming yet heart-breaking illumination of the importance of individualism and tolerance. This show dives into the depths of human resilience and the power of embracing one's true self.

In a world often dimmed by cynicism and indifference, this play offers audiences a unique and illuminating theatrical experience: the chance to see the world through the eyes of Leonard and the nine characters that will forever be changed because of his influence. This one-man show, masterfully portrayed by **Alvaro Cortez**, takes audiences on an emotional journey through the life and legacy of Leonard Pelkey, a vibrant and resilient young queer boy whose light shines brightly even in the darkest circumstances.

default watermark

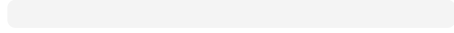
Set in a small New Jersey town, the play unfolds as a detective story, with Cortez embodying various individuals from the community who are touched by Leonard's presence. Through a series of interviews and flashbacks, we learn about Leonard's infectious zest for life, his unwavering authenticity, and his unwavering commitment to being true to himself despite facing adversity and prejudice. As the audience pieces Leonard's story together, they celebrate his unique qualities while confronting the prejudice and ignorance that led to his disappearance.

Lecesne's script masterfully weaves humor and heartache, shedding light on issues of identity, acceptance, and the resilience of the human spirit. Moments of levity provide much-needed relief amidst the darker themes, showcasing the playwright's skill in balancing tone and emotion. The brilliance of this script and this cast is that just as it gets to the deeply depressing moments, it will smack you with humor. Lecesne centers the story on levity and Leonard's light more than the darkness that leads to his disappearance. In comparison to *The Laramie Project*, which is important and powerful, *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* is a play that I would watch again and again.

The brilliance of this script and this cast is that just as it gets to the deeply depressing moments it will smack you with humor.
~Rhetorical Review~



[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Voodoo Theatre Company (@voodootheatrecompany)

At the heart of the production is the captivating performance by Cortez, who seamlessly transitions between nine characters, each with their quirks, struggles, and revelations. From the gruff detective to the eccentric hairdresser, every role is imbued with authenticity and depth, drawing the audience deeper into the fabric of the narrative. The character work that Cortez and the production team engaged in to produce such individualized characters is impressive. It is incredibly difficult for one actor to engage an audience for 75 minutes with such a minimal set—one bench—but Cortez and his storytelling ability completely blew me away.

It is incredibly difficult for one actor to engage an audience for 75 minutes with such a minimal set—one bench—but Cortez and his storytelling ability completely blew me away.

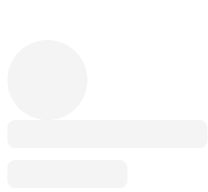
~Rhetorical Review~

I am a big fan of Director **Patrick C. Kibbie** and his work. He and Assistant Director **Jack Cobabe** have articulated this story with the utmost respect. The timing choices were masterful; by the time we are ten minutes into the show, the audience understands that Cortez will shift into a new character whenever a light changes. The choices about when and how much music and lighting to incorporate were inspiring. The production's minimalist set design allows the story and characters to take center stage, with subtle lighting changes effectively capturing the shifting moods and characters of the narrative.

default watermark

Lighting Designer **Emilios Casillas** brings this production so much warmth and depth to certain scenes. Sound Designer **Melanie Kamauu** is instrumental to the impact and flow of the play, as several sound effects help the audience visualize Leonard's world. This is a play where less is more, and Kibbie and his team find the perfect balance; the production's simplicity enhances the intimacy, inviting the audience to immerse themselves in the play.

The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey is more than just a theatrical performance; it's a powerful call for compassion and understanding in a world too often defined by judgment and prejudice. [Now more than ever, in the wake of Nex Benedict's death \(a non-binary teen from Oklahoma\)](#), this play serves as a needed reminder of the importance of embracing those who are "different." As one of the characters in the play says, "I would turn back every clock in my shop to say to him [Leonard], 'Don't go so quick, stay a little longer.'" Despite its tragic ending, *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* is a celebration of the change that one individual can make and the transformative power of love and acceptance. Through powerful storytelling, it serves as a reminder that even in the face of darkness, there is always light to be found.



default watermark

[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Voodoo Theatre Company (@voodootheatrecompany)

Matinees & Evening Shows at [Alliance Theatre](#) (Trolley Square)

602 E 500 S, Suite 101
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

Voodoo Theatre Company presents *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* by Celeste Lecesne.

Trolley Square, Alliance Theater ([@alliancetheaterslc](#))

602 E 500 S Suite E101, Salt Lake City, UT 84102
March 1, 2, 3 and 8, 9, 10, 2024 (matinees and evening shows)

[Tickets: \\$20](#)

<https://www.voodootheatrecompany.com/absolute-brightness>

[Become a Sustaining Member Today for an Exclusive Opening Night Experience!](#)

- [Share using Native tools](#)ShareCopied to clipboard
- [Share on Facebook](#) (Opens in new window)Facebook
- [Share on X](#) (Opens in new window)X
- [Share on LinkedIn](#) (Opens in new window)LinkedIn
- [Share on Pinterest](#) (Opens in new window)Pinterest
- [Share on Threads](#) (Opens in new window)Threads
- [Share on WhatsApp](#) (Opens in new window)WhatsApp
- [Share on Reddit](#) (Opens in new window)Reddit
- [Share on Mail](#) (Opens in new window)Mail
- [Share on Bluesky](#) (Opens in new window)Bluesky
- [Share on Mastodon](#) (Opens in new window)Mastodon
- [Share on Tumblr](#) (Opens in new window)Tumblr
- [Share on Telegram](#) (Opens in new window)Telegram
- [Share on Nextdoor](#) (Opens in new window)Nextdoor
- [Share on Print](#) (Opens in new window)Print

Category

1. Reviews
2. LGBTQ+
3. Theatre

Tags

1. Alvaro Cortez
2. Celeste Lecesne

3. Emilios Casillas
4. Jack Cobabe
5. Keola Kinghorn
6. Melanie Kamaau
7. Patrick C. Kibbie
8. Patrick Kibbie
9. Review
10. Rhetorical Review
11. rhetoricalreview
12. Salt Lake City
13. The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey
14. The Laramie Project
15. Theatre
16. Theatre Review
17. Voodoo Theatre
18. Voodoo Theatre Company
19. voodootheatrecompany

Date

2026/09/19

Date Created

2024/03/02

Author

keola06