



20+21 season

March 2021

# Epicene: A Queer Extravaganza

(sort of) by Ben Jonson  
directed by Jesse Marchese

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Adapted from Ben Jonson's **Epicoene, or The Silent Woman** by  
Emmalias, Jesse Marchese, and the company.

## CAST

Grossie Morosie  
Daphne  
Amir  
Truitt  
Stephen/Epicene  
J-Daw  
Lacoste  
Mr. Ambiguous  
Mrs. Ambiguous  
Haughty  
Bawdy  
Naughty  
Slash  
On Mute/Lucy

Ben Little  
Juliana Scheduling  
Amir-Ali Aftabi  
Alex Savage  
Stephen Loftesnes  
Sophia Donner  
McKenna  
Diego Gonzalez  
Alana Burgess  
Vrinda Moujan  
Hannah Clift  
Brianna Maloney  
Naomi Louie  
Linda Lucia

## CREATIVE TEAM

Assistant Directors  
Dramaturg  
Set & Props Designer  
Costume Designer  
Lighting Designer  
Sound Designer  
Production Stage Manager  
Assistant Stage Managers

Jaz Johnson and Rhett Salerno  
Emmalias  
Kaitlyn Dunn  
Grace Wong  
Stella Hill  
Caleb Foley  
Gillian Lelchuk  
Meghan Stern, Rickie Farah, Jonathan Fong

## THE PLAYWRIGHT

Ben Jonson was an English playwright and contemporary of Shakespeare whose artistry exerted a lasting impact upon English stage comedy. He popularized the “comedy of humours” and is best known for the satirical plays *Volpone, or The Fox* (1606), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) and for his lyric and epigrammatic poetry. If we went back in time and asked Jonson if he were queer, he would have no idea what we were talking about—but no matter—his play is decidedly queer in its celebration of deviant sexualities and nonbinary gender identities. Our production of the play has been freely adapted by the dramaturg, director and company of actors.

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

"Camp is the triumph of the epicene style. (The convertibility of 'man' and 'woman,' 'person' and 'thing'.) But all style, that is, artifice, is, ultimately, epicene."

-Susan Sontag, *Notes on "Camp"*

In many ways, the early modern era was as queer and avant-garde as our current moment. Ben Jonson's *Epicene, or The Silent Woman* is proof of that. One could argue that the play reinforces heteronormative ideals—as scholar Richmond Barbour writes, "many critics find the relevant Jonson in the finales, reimposing patriarchal strictures. But without unruliness, terminal rigor has nothing to clarify; wantonness must first be mobilized before it can be expelled."\* In our queer, irreverent, and contemporary adaptation, the "unruliness" and "wantonness"—or, rather, *queerness*—of Jonson's play is indeed mobilized, but never clarified or expelled. Instead, our *Epicene: A Queer Extravaganza* fully indulges in queerness—both celebrating and satirizing its gallery of queer deviants. Our production reimagines the play as a celebration of queerness—highlighting its ruminations on the joys of queer sex and its celebration of gender non-conformity. It also aims to decenter and problematize our very notion of queer identity, asking instead, "what does queer do?" We have adapted the play, playing fast and loose with Jonson's dialogue while applying a queer, twenty-first century lens to its characters and themes. We have also embraced queer theory, such as Jack Halberstam's concept of queer failure, and an interest in queer "camp" aesthetics through production. Throughout our process—and in the true spirit of "queering"—we have decentered the play's canonical, white, (presumably) hetero, cisgender, male author and embarked on an exercise in further queering the already-queer canon.

It is worth noting that Ben Jonson's play offended people. In fact, the original production was famously criticized by a noblewoman who declared libel, claiming the play had negatively referenced her private life! In the spirit of the original play, some of our jokes have brushed up against the limits of good taste. We hope you will see this in the spirit of queer play and subversion (in which it was intended) and also with the aim of eradicating feelings of shame, which might surround such topics as gender and sexuality. While we may not be able to hear your laughter on Zoom, we hope, above all, to make you chuckle! Enjoy the show!

\*Barbour, Richmond. "When I Acted Young Antinous": Boy Actors and the Erotics of Jonsonian Theater." *PMLA*, Vol. 110, No. 5, Oct. 1995, pp. 1006-1022.

## THE DIRECTOR

**Jesse Marchese** is a second-year PhD student in the Joint PhD Program of the Department of Theatre & Dance at UC San Diego and the Department of Drama at UC Irvine. He received his BA in Theatre Arts at Marymount Manhattan College and his MA in Theatre at CUNY Hunter College, where he was twice awarded with the Vera Mowry Roberts Foundation Fellowship for academic excellence. His research interests include twentieth century British and American theater, musical theater, and queer theater history. He is especially interested in plays from the early to mid twentieth century and in providing queer readings of ostensibly heterosexual or non-sexualized plays by gay authors. Jesse is also a theater director and practitioner. From 2017 to 2019, Jesse acted as Executive Director of Astoria Performing Arts Center in Queens, where he produced acclaimed productions of *Follies* and *Caroline, or Change*. Prior to his work at APAC, Jesse served as Associate Director of Off-Broadway's award-winning Mint Theater Company which produces "lost" or neglected plays. In his six seasons with the Mint, Jesse helped to produce nearly fifteen productions, two of which he also directed: *The Lucky One* by A.A. Milne and *The Fatal Weakness* by George Kelly, which was nominated for two 2015 Drama Desk Awards.

## THE CAST

**Amir Aftabi** (Amir) is a fourth-year undergraduate studying theatre and political science. He was born and raised in Orange County. Amir transferred from Irvine Valley College where he starred in *King Oedipus*, *Voice of The Prairie*, *West Side Story* and *Zombie Dearest*. Amir has also been in a variety of foreign and independent films including *Permission*, *Party Favors* and *Open Mic*.

**Alana Burgess** (Mrs. Ambiguous) is a third-year theatre major with a psychology minor. UC San Diego credit: *Sonnets for an Old Century*.

**Hannah Clift** (Bawdy) is a second-year Theatre major with an emphasis on performance. Previous credits: *Hamlet*, *The Laramie Project*, *All Shook Up*, and *The Little Mermaid* at Guajome Park Academy.

**Sophia Donner** (J-Daw) is a second-year theatre major and is currently trying to double major in literature/writing. UC San Diego credits: *Electra*, *Title of Show*, and *As You Like It*.

**Diego Gonzalez** (Mr. Ambiguous) is a first-year theatre major. UC San Diego credit: *As You Like It*. Other credits: *Legally Blonde*, *She Kills Monsters*, *In the Heights*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*.

**Ben Little** (Grossie Morosie) is a fourth-year undergraduate student at UC San Diego with a double major in theatre and communications. Ben was born and raised in San Diego County. UC San Diego credits: *The Gradient* (WNPF '19), *A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Other credits: *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Carlsbad High School).

## THE CAST cont.

**Stephen Loftesnes** (Stephen/Epicene) is a third-year transfer theatre major. UC San Diego credits: *As You Like It*. Other credits: *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *Heathers*, *She Kills Monsters* at Bismarck State College, *The Trojan Women* at the University of Kansas.

**Naomi Louie** (Slash) is a second-year theatre major. UCSD Theatre Credits: [title of show], *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play*, and *Exotic Deadly: Or The MSG Play*. Other credits: *Good Woman of Setzuan*, *The Individuality of Streetlamps*, *A Long Christmas Dinner*, *The Philadelphia*, *Rules of the Game*.

**Linda Lucia** (Lucy/On Mute) is a second-year theater major with a minor in dance at UCSD. UC San Diego Credits: *Orestes 2.0*, *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play*. Other Credits: *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Company 157).

**Brianna Maloney** (Naughty) is a third-year transfer student double majoring in theatre and dance from La Quinta, CA. She was a McCallum Theater Open Call two-time finalist. She was also awarded Best Actress from the Desert Theatre League. Previous credits: *Chess* (CV Repertory), *Legend of Georgia McBride* (Dezart Performs); *Les Miserables*, *In the Heights*, *A Chorus Line* (Musical Theatre University); *Sweet Charity* (Palm Canyon Theatre).

**McKenna** (Lacoste) is a fourth-year theatre Major at UC San Diego. Previous credits: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Heathers*, *Anatomy of Gray*, *The Rocky Horror Show*.

**Vrindavani Moujan** (Haughty) is finishing her last year of undergrad as a theatre major. She has trained at the Ruskin School of Acting and The Lee Strasberg Theater & Film Institute. UC San Diego credits: *Balm in Gilead*, *Separateland* part 1 & 2, and the first reading of Dave Harris' *Watch Me*. Other credits: Edinburgh Fringe Festival (2016); *The Sound of Music*, *The Crucible*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Beauty And the Beast*, *Fame* (KD Studios).

**Alex Savage** (Truitt) is a first-year theatre major. He was born and raised in Alexandria, VA. UC San Diego credits: *Balm in Gilead*.

**Juliana Scheduling** (Daphne) is a third-year theatre major with a literature and writing minor from Salt Lake City, Utah. UC San Diego credits: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Balm in Gilead*, *Sonnets for an Old Century* (Jessica Hecht), *Life is a Dream*, *Tartuffe*.

## THE CREATIVE TEAM

**Kaitlyn Dunn** (Scenic Designer) is a second-year theatre and clinical psychology double major. UC San Diego Credits: *The Fall of the City*

**Emmalias** (Dramaturg) is a first-year theatre major. UC San Diego Credits: *As You Like It*, *All News Radio* (Self Produced). Other Credits: *The Glorious William and Mary* (Educational Premiere), *The Young and Fair*, *Women in White*, *Mean Girls* (Adaptation).



## THE CREATIVE TEAM cont.

**Rickie Emilie Farah** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a California-born, Peruvian-raised, fourth-year majoring in theatre and minoring in psychology. UC San Diego Credits: *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles*, *Mr. Burns*, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Mendocino College Credits: *Wild Fire*, *Once Upon A Mattress*, *Museum*, *Julius Caesar*, *Sueño*, *American Idiot*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Grow* (by Dan Hoyle).

**Caleb Foley** (Sound Designer) is a second-year theatre major. Previous credits: *[title of show]*, *The Fall of the City*.

**Jonathan Fong** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a second-year theatre and communications major. UC San Diego credit: *Man in Love*. Other credits: *The Addams Family*, *Seussical*, *Into the Woods* (SON Arts).

**Natalie “Stella” Hill** (Lighting Designer) is a third-year theatre major and cognitive science minor. UC San Diego credits; *Mr. Burns* (LD), *The Nether* (LD), *Mojada* (LD), *An Object Screaming* (ALD). Muir Musical credits; *Songs for a New World* (LD), *Hairspray* (LD), *Tick...Tick...BOOM!* (LD).

**Jaz Johnson** (Asst. Director) is a third-year theatre major. UC San Diego Credits: *As You Like It* (Jaques). Select Credits: *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Asst. Director), *Peels & Beholders*, *The Calypso Play*, *To Who I Loved Before*, *Unnamed Statue of a Woman Sitting* (Director).

**Gillian Lechuk** (Stage Manager) is a first-year MFA stage management student from Los Alamitos, California. She earned her BA from Johns Hopkins University in Writing Seminars and Mathematics, and a minor in the Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality. After graduating, she interned with the production department of The Kennedy Center, and spent the next two years working as a freelance stage manager in and around Baltimore and Washington, DC. Selected credits include: *Perfect Arrangement* (Fells Point Corner Theatre); *Newsies* (Theatre Lab); *A People's History* (Capital Fringe Festival); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Fools and Madmen); *Daddy Long Legs* (Monumental Theatre Co.); *American Moor* (Anacostia Playhouse).

**Rhett Salerno** (Assistant Director) is a fourth-year theatre major. UC San Diego credits: *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles* (Sound Designer)

**Meghan Stern** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a fourth-year theatre major and human development minor from San Diego, California. UC San Diego credits include: *Insomnia* (Stage Manager), *The Nether* (ASM). Other credits include: *Whatever You Need/Give Me Something* (UCSD Studio Project, Assistant Director and Stage Manager).

**Grace Wong** (Costume Designer) is a second-year theatre major from Arcadia, California. UCSD credits: *Exotic Deadly*, *Mojada*, *Mr. Burns*, *The Underground*. Other credits: *Loves Labours Lost*, *Les Miserables*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Giver* (Arcadia Stage).



## SPECIAL THANKS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thanks to Rebecca Chaleff for recommending me for this opportunity; to Ian Munro for introducing me to the original play; to Jade Power-Sotomayor, Julie Burelle, and Emily Roxworthy for your wisdom and guidance; and to Jeremy Doroski and Michelle Huynh for always inspiring me.

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