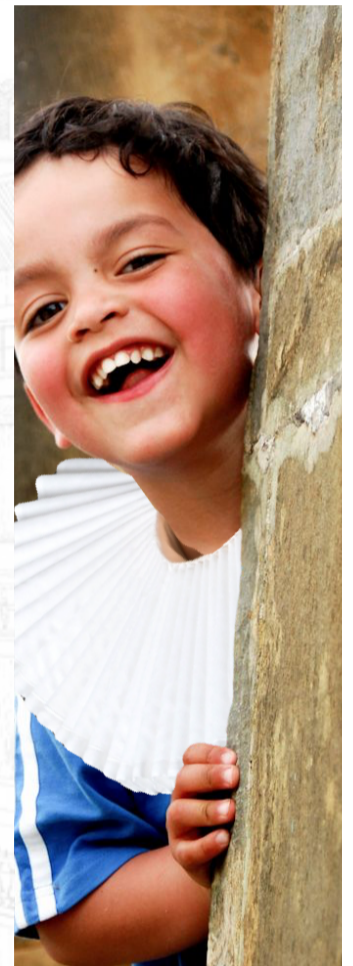


**WHEN WE ARE LISTENED TO  
BY SOMEONE**

**THEN THEIR HEART BEATS  
JUST LIKE OURS**

**WE ALL LIVE ON TOGETHER**

**WE'RE WHATS JOINING UP  
THE DOTS BETWEEN  
THE STARS**



# THE ESSENCE

London. 1603. The Playhouses are packed, Queen Elizabeth awaits the latest theatrical blockbuster and across the Thames thirteen-year-old Bobby Hobbs keeps singing the wrong words in choir practise.

DEODAMNATUS!!

But when he is kidnapped and forced to join The Blackfriars Boys - a troupe of brilliant Elizabethan child actors - with a draconian Director and a fast-approaching Royal performance, can Bobby find his voice without losing his head?

## WHAT IS IT?

THE BLACKFRIARS BOYS is the brand new British musical you've been waiting for. This epic Elizabethan adventure will have you laughing out loud, weeping into your kerchief and cheering with the Town Crier.

Based on a real event and actual people, THE BLACKFRIARS BOYS serves a delicious slice of history, seen for the first time through the eyes of a young protagonist. With plays within plays, death by plague and plenty of pies, this production stands on the shoulders of kid-driven theatrical blockbusters—and you're one of the gang.

Packing in 16 original songs, a rag tag troupe of actor musicians unlock a musical world of Elizabethan plainchant meets Rocky IV meets rugby-haka-chart-topping-smash-hit.

It's soaring, surprising, rowdy and undeniable.

This is a story about a shy kid's struggle with what we now recognise as Dyslexia. And how finding our place and speaking with our own voice can change the course of history forever.



# SYNOPSIS

London. 1603. 13-year-old Bobby is walking to school. He used to do this with his mum. And he'd give anything to bring her back. He lifts his spirits by reliving her fantastical stories about the world around them: the flower seller whose steals his wares from the Queen's garden; the keeper of the largest leech on dry land; and the bare-knuckle-boxer-baker, Mrs Lovage, whose pies are harder than the diamonds in the Crown Jewels.

Lurking in the shadows are Nathaniel Giles and Master Evans. They are short of one child actor for the Blackfriars Theatre, and a legal loophole permits the 'impressing' of child choristers into theatrical companies. As they scour the streets of London searching for an abductee, their beady little eyes fall on Bobby.

Bobby - oblivious to the impending danger - makes it to school. He throws everything into preparing for the Cambridge entrance exam, but reading is just impossible for him. He must get in - he'll finally make his father proud, and his mum will be able to rest in peace. But how can a child whose grades have "sunk deeper than the Armada" possibly be granted access to the worlds most revered academic establishment?

When Bobby's attempt to secure a choral scholarship goes disastrously wrong, his furious choirmaster pens a damning letter to his father, detailing how Bobby will NEVER amount to ANYTHING. Bobby heads home quaking in his boots, when he is dramatically kidnapped by Master Evans! The letter lies abandoned on the cobbled street.

Mrs Lovage discovers the letter, and delivers it to Bobby's cerebral father, Mr Hobbs. He suspects foul play and vows to find his son.

Bobby emerges at the Blackfriars Theatre, finding himself in the company of young actors from all walks of life - The Blackfriars Boys, led by a pasty-looking teen, Solomon Pavey. They share with him their dream of becoming The Greatest Acting Company London has ever seen.

Rehearsals begin! Bobby plans a Hail Mary attempt to escape, sit his exam, and finally follow the path that his parents have laid out for him. Nothing can stop him! He's pelting through the backstage area. He ducks out of sight of Nathaniel Giles. He spies the Director fantasising about clawing back his flaccid acting career. Bobby's nearly free!

But disaster strikes: he's caught by the bloodthirsty Master Evans, who's gagging to punish Bobby - he prepares to sever a finger, when Solomon appears and saves him. He'd just sent Bobby to fetch his medicine. And with this tall tale, the two boys become firm friends.

The next morning Nathaniel Giles reveals Bobby's comeuppance; a spell in the stocks. A jeering mob gathers. Mrs Lovage rolls up with her mouldy pie barrow. Mr Hobbs grabs a pie, eager to hurl it at the sucker in the stocks. And he recognises him. Its Bobby.

Act II. Queen Elizabeth I dies, leaving the country in political turmoil. The boys will now be performing at the court of the new monarch; King James I. An enormous - if potentially fatal - honour, and there's **ONLY TWO DAYS TO GO**. Mrs Lovage and Mr Hobbs narrowly escape the pandaeonium and together hatch a plan to bring Bobby home. And it turns out Bobby's mum was right - Mrs Lovage really IS a legendary bare-knuckle boxer!

Solomon is terrified that his illness is terminal, and begs Bobby to take his place in the show's leading role. Bobby objects - the play doesn't matter - he has to sit his exam. But Solomon knows that the world needs stories, and Bobby can tell them. This is Bobby's revelation - he can honour his mum's memory - by telling stories, as she did, perhaps even on the stage.

Solomon's condition worsens and he passes away. It'll take a miracle for the boys to survive without him. Can Bobby step up and lead The Blackfriars Boys in the performance of their lives? Will Mr Hobbs find his son before its too late? Will Mrs Lovage *K.O.* the system? Will King James sentence them all to a gruesome, untimely death?! In this world of plays, pies and plague, can a boy like Bobby ever truly find his place?



## CHARACTERS

Our unlikely hero is **BOBBY HOBBS** - We follow Bobby's journey from downtrodden chorister to child orator extraordinaire. He finds his own voice under impossible circumstances with the help of:

**SOLOMON PAVEY** - Leader of The Blackfriars Boys and a fantastically gifted and charismatic actor. Takes Bobby under his wing, introducing him to the magic of storytelling and ultimately inspiring him to forge his own path. Based on a real Elizabethan child player, who died aged 13 and was eulogised by Ben Jonson.

As well as Solomon, we meet **WALTER FIELD, HUGH CLARK, THEOPHOLUS BIRD, LITTLE WILF, EDMOND, HUMPHREY,** and **OSWYN** - The Blackfriars Boys. Characterful, hilarious, cheeky and ingenious with a flair for sword fighting and verse-speaking. These kidnapped kids are chock-full of the chutzpah needed to survive under the regime of...



**NATHANIEL GILES** - The worst actor in London turned megalomaniacal Director of The Blackfriars Boys. Forced off stage by the rising popularity of child acting companies, he harbours a vaulting ambition to return... at any cost.

**MASTER EVANS** - Nathaniel Giles' right-hand man. Carries out the manual work, from kidnapping choristers to performing impossibly fast tap dances. Tiny but terrifying, the proud owner of an enormous collection of antique theatrical weaponry.

**MRS LOVAGE (HESTIA)** - Local baker and seller of pies. Bish-bash-bosh and with no time for the whimsicalities of stories. She unexpectedly discovers a maternal love for Bobby which leads her to shatter every rule society dictates women live by in order to rescue him. ENTER the born again bare-knuckle fighter 'Heavy Set Hestia'.

**MR HOBBS** - Bobby's father. Utterly and uncompromisingly obsessed with his profession as a Lawyer. A completely cerebral man, mortified at the idea of going South of the river, let alone visiting a theatre. He's head to head with any parents' worst nightmare - a missing child. But how do you summon the courage to rescue your missing child when you can't even say 'I love you'?

**MASTER HALL / KING JAMES I** - Master Hall is the dusty, crusty choir leader at Bobby's school. King James is the new Scottish monarch, opinionated and severe.



## TONE

THE BLACKFRIARS BOYS is a musical comedy that will lift your spirits and expand your heart. This is contemporary Musical Theatre in a historical setting - but with no room for dust. The dialogue is timeless and accessible, and the characters drive the story at millennial-friendly pace. There's *Monty Python* madness, *Horrible Histories* gore and a quest story with roots in *Dickens*, *J.K. Rowling* and *Pokémon*.

And the score is just as arresting. A delicate Elizabethan plainchant transforms into a sword fighting battle-cry, complete with melismatic counterpoint and a chorus of thunderous drums. Later, in a private moment of introspection, a single lost voice blooms into a heart-breaking arrangement of strings, brass, and thirty young voices singing in angelic harmony.

This is British Musical Theatre - with all its eccentricities, adventure and yearning.



# WHY TELL *THIS* STORY? AND WHY TELL IT *NOW*?

Being thirteen is hard, let alone in a pressure-cooker of academia, dyslexia and disease. But one day, somehow, your hard work will pay off, your father will be proud of you, you'll survive into adulthood and you'll finally fit in...right?

THE BLACKFRIARS BOYS explores the universal theme of belonging. Its a story about families - the one we're given and the ones we choose. Its about young people having the courage to speak up in a world that doesn't want to listen, about challenging the opinions we've inherited and, above all, how storytelling can change the world.

This story needs to be told with music. As a teenager with dyslexia, Josh's life was split between music and academia; in one world he felt free, and in the other, the words were 'Dancing On The Page'. Music was the most eloquent way to escape that isolation; to harness life's frustrations and fantasies in a way that he could never have read, but so needed to fully feel.

This is the first time there has been a dyslexic protagonist in the musical theatre canon - we've searched high and low because this seemed unbelievable, but its true! 20% of the population has a language-based learning disability - and an even higher proportion within The Arts, so its time we address this narrative. We want to tell a story about finding your voice in 2019 - where young people - if given the opportunity - can change our world for the better.



AND THERE'S SWORD-FIGHTING!





# HEAR YE! HEAR YE!



## 'Infinity'

([Click Here](http://bit.ly/BFBinfinity) to listen or download here: <http://bit.ly/BFBinfinity>)

Sung by Solomon - Bobby has lost his faith in storytelling. Solomon rekindles his spark with this song; a great intro into one of the show's big themes: the transformative power of stories.



## 'Proper Job'

([Click Here](http://bit.ly/BFBproperjob) to listen or download here: <http://bit.ly/BFBproperjob>)

Sung by Bobby and the Blackfriars Boys gang - a joyous, boisterous initiation into the gang. Complete with sword fighting drills and a ukulele breakdown.



## 'Dancing On The Page' ([Click Here](http://bit.ly/BFBdancing) to listen or download here: <http://bit.ly/BFBdancing>)

Sung by Bobby - A song that will resonate with anyone who's ever struggled or feels they haven't found their place.



# FIRST FOLIO

A snippet from Act I. Bobby finds himself at the Blackfriars Theatre, surrounded by a bunch of rambunctious youths; The Blackfriars Boys. ([Click Here](http://bit.ly/BFBscene7) to read or download here: <http://bit.ly/BFBscene7>)







# CREATED BY

## **Sarah Middleton** (Book and Lyrics)

Writer and Actor. Theatre credits include plays at the National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company and Royal Exchange Manchester, alongside work on television and film. Extensive work in the world of new writing includes development of numerous new British musicals. Finalist of the inaugural BYMT New Writing Award. Currently developing her first novel *The Script*. Plays include *This Dangerous Woman*, *Josh & Miriam*, and *Pub*. Sarah attends the BML (Book, Music, Lyrics) Course and along with Josh Sneesby has contributed to *BEAM* and *Signal: The New Music Theatre Concert Series*.

## **Josh Sneesby** (Music and Lyrics)

Composer, Musician, Actor. Won *The Royal Shakespeare Company's* Inaugural International Songwriters Competition, and at 21, was the *National Theatre's* youngest Musical Director, working and performing in house and on the West End. Toured his first solo show across China by the age of 19. Since then, Josh signed to *Sony ATV* as a songwriter and music producer and scored music for *The BBC*, made *Radio One Record Of The Week*, and became an Associate Artist with *The National Youth Theatre* and *Periscope*. Currently, Josh is performing and composing several projects of scale for stage both Nationally and Internationally, including the musical adaptation of the five-time Oscar nominated film *Amélie*. Josh has performed with the most respected theatre's in the UK including *The RSC*, *The National Theatre*, *The Old Vic*, and *Theatr Clwyd* among others.

*"These two makers know how to construct a tight, clever, funny and robust piece of theatre - this is a stunningly original musical story"*

- Bryony Lavery

*"Middleton's lyrics will burst your heart wide open. Sheer joy!"*

- Signal

*"Josh Sneesby has composed blisteringly beautiful music for the production - expect to hear it sung by excited young theatre-goers on their way out"*

- NWN

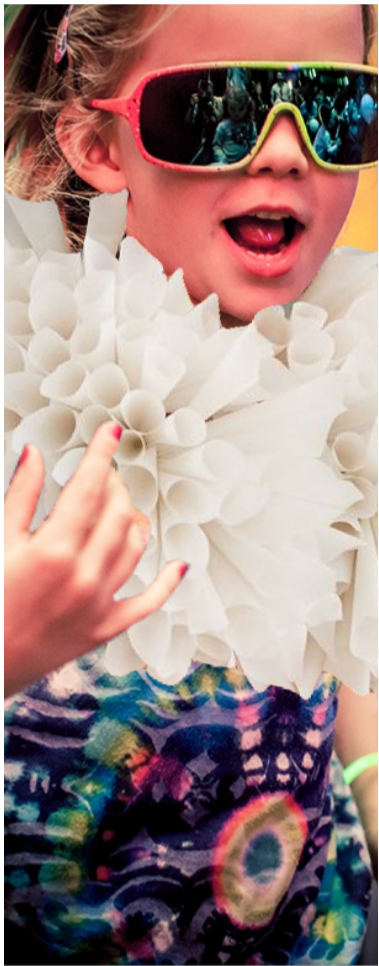
To watch, read or hear more from **The Blackfriars Boys**, contact:

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**HE'S A MAGGOT PIE!  
HE'S A PLAGUE ON THIS HOUSE!  
HE'S A WHEY-FACED MALT-WORM CARRION-LOUSE!**

**WE MUST FIND A WAY TO SEIZE THE DAY  
WHEN PLAYING FOR THE CROWN**

**HE'S A CANCKER-BLOSSOM CODPIECE  
AND WE'RE TAKING HIM DOWN**

