

A Message from the Director of SFA's Production of Kinky Boots:

SFA's production of Kinky Boots is still in need of a few actors, especially men willing to dress in drag. I've also heard from more people than expected that many of you don't know what Kinky Boots is about. Is it some musical version of 50 Shades of Grey? Is it like a modern day Cabaret? Is it safe for my family?

I can assure you, the answers to the above are No, No, and Yes! Despite its risque name, Kinky Boots is really a story about hope, finding your own path, parental expectations, and changing your mind to change the world. This musical is actually based on a true story.

In 1993 in Northamptonshire England, Steve Pateman had recently inherited the WJ Brooks shoe factor; a multi-generation family-owned shoe factory. Most of the dozens of shoe factories in town had already closed due to cheaper outsourcing of labor in eastern and southern Asia, and Steve, newly a father, needed to figure out how to save his factory. Serendipitously, he was contacted by a performer asking if his company could make sturdy, high-quality, high heeled boots. The heels they were importing were cheap and plastic, and would last weeks instead of years. This inspiration grew to hit a huge number of underserved communities around the world, and the "Kinky Boot" was born. They reconstructed the idea of a high-heeled boot, strong enough to hold a full-grown man's weight, and made them out of high quality leathers and steel.

Steve managed to extend the life of his factory by a number of years, but unfortunately, the market caught up with him eventually and the factory closed in 2000. In 2005, based loosely off the real life story, the feature film "Kinky Boots" hit theaters. Starring Joel Edgerton (Charlie Price - the standin for Steve Pateman) and Chiwetel Ejiofor (Lola/Simon), the film crafted a tighter, and more uplifting story for audiences around the world. The film also created the Lola character, a professional Drag Queen based loosely on dozens of real men and women Steve Pateman encountered in his journey, in order to give the story an exciting and dynamic center.

A few years later, Harvey Fierstein (Book) and Cindy Lauper (Score) brought the Kinky Boots story to life in a fantastic new way. In 2013, "Kinky Boots" the Musical opened in April 2013 and shortly thereafter won 7 Tony Awards (out of 13 nominations) including Best Musical, Best Original Score (Cindy Lauper), and Best Actor in a Musical (Billy Porter as Lola). Kinky Boots ran on Broadway (and many other cities including London and Seoul) for years, thrilling audiences with its exuberant spirit and uplifting message.

Even with a name like "Kinky Boots", there's no stripping, nudity, sexual violence, or prostitution. There's a little bit of adult language, including the mention of sex and sexiness, and very small amounts of violence (a mugging and some boxing). I am in no way worried about bringing my own family, including my 2nd grader, to this show when it premieres. This is really just a story about expectations: from your father, from your friends and family, from your biases, and

from yourself. It's a journey about two men trying to be the best version of themselves they can be; sometimes stumbling along the way.

It's also important to note that Drag as an artform is under attack. Cross Dressing has been around for as long as gender-specific clothing has existed. There is copious evidence of cross dressing in Aztec, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and hundreds of other cultures. Drag as we know it today has been around since the Drag Balls of the 1860s. None of this is new, strange, evil, or wrong. We're putting on this show for many reasons, not least of which is how important it is to preserve this artform and its message. It's ok to be who you are. It's ok to be different. It's ok to find your own path.

We need your help! Please tell your friends who have ever thought about doing theater to give this a try. The Sherwood Foundation for the Arts is an incredibly welcoming and supportive community. Join us in bringing this incredible and poignant show to life. We are actively seeking additional talent to fill the roles of Lola and her angels, as well as young Simon and Simon's dad. To that end, we have decided to keep the video audition submissions open. If you know of anyone who may be interested in these roles, please help us spread the word and have them contact us at sfa.kinky.boots@gmail.com.

I can't wait for you to see what we have in store!
-Daniel Halle