



**For Immediate Release: Theatre**

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Cast & director available for interviews, high-res pics available for download at

<http://therhino.org/press-room>

Theatre Rhinoceros Presents

*The Pride of Lions*

An Electrifying World Premiere about the Birth of American Drag and Gender Consciousness

Arrives at The Rhino this Spring

Mar 28 - Apr 21, 2024

February 20, 2024, San Francisco - In the most ambitious production yet at 4229 18th St, in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood, the GLAAD Media Award Winning Theatre Rhinoceros presents the world premiere of non-binary playwright Roger Q. Mason's boundary-breaking play *The Pride of Lions*.

Based on true events surrounding Mae West's 1928 Broadway premiere of *Pleasure Man*, after which the entire cast was charged in a mass arrest for "indecentcy," *The Pride of Lions* transforms the 700 square feet of Theatre Rhinoceros's Castro venue into a Prohibition-era tinderbox. Immersed in the action, audiences will bear immediate witness to these performers, among them drag queens and trans women, in a fight for dignity as they weave a new gender consciousness and bend the realities of desire from a shared jail cell. Mason's imagining of these recorded events, decades before Stonewall, and even before Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco, brings light and life to what we know: trans and gender-nonconforming people have always existed, no matter the historical efforts to erase their lives, and despite persecution in all its forms, they will continue to exist. It is up to the rest of us - the audience, witnesses, bystanders - if they will have to keep facing this cycle of violence.

*The Pride of Lions* is directed by Ely Sonny Orquiza, stars seven Bay Area actors, and is supported by a mighty creative team of both local and Southern California design talent.

This production is made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts, Grants for the Arts, The Horizons Foundation, The Geller-Sullivan Trust, The Bob Ross Foundation Tom Horn, Ira Kurlander and Andy Guest, and the donor and supporters of Theatre Rhinoceros.

## Calendar Editors

- What: **The Pride of Lions**
- When: Mar 28 - 29, 2024 (preview performances)  
Mar 30, 2024 (opening/press night)  
Mar 31 - Apr 21, 2024 (Thursdays, Fridays, & Saturdays at 8 PM;  
Sundays at 3 PM)
- Where: Theatre Rhinoceros, 4229 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94114  
Castro Street MUNI Station; F Market, 33 Stanyan, 24 Divisadero  
Streetcar and Bus Lines
- Tickets: \$35 regular/ \$17.50 for students, seniors, & veterans
- Info / Res: [https://therhino.audience1st.com/store/8?show\\_id=103](https://therhino.audience1st.com/store/8?show_id=103)

In the most ambitious production yet at their new Castro venue, Theatre Rhinoceros presents the world premiere of non-binary playwright Roger Q. Mason's boundary-breaking play *The Pride of Lions*. In 1928, five female impersonators were imprisoned for indecency after performing in Mae West's *The Pleasure Man*. This is what happened on their first night in jail. The cast features Bay Area actors **Kim Larsen, Nic Moore, Michael DeMartini, Brendan Looney, Patrick Chico, Frances Domingos, and Sean Prescott**. The creative team includes Lighting Design by **Andrew Schmedake**, Sound Design by **Lana Palmer**, Set Design by **Hector Zavala**, and Costume Design by **Wendell Carmichael** with Dramaturg **Gaven Trinidad**, Fight Choreographer **Noah Luce**, Movement Choreographer **Chris Steele**, and Intimacy Director **Maya Herbsman**. The Production Stage Manager is **Rachel Mogan**.

Hi-res Digital Images Available for Download at: <http://therhino.org/press-room>

## The Artists

**Roger Q. Mason** (Playwright) (they/them) is a writer and performer who uses the lens of history to disrupt the biases that divide rather than unite us. Their playwriting has been seen on Broadway (Circle in the Square Reading Series); Off and Off-Off-Broadway; and regionally. Mason's World Premiere of *Lavender Men* was lauded by the Los Angeles Times as "evoking the mingled visions of Suzan-Lori Parks, Jeremy O. Harris and Michael R. Jackson." As a filmmaker, Mason has been recognized by the British Film Institute, Lonely Wolf International Film Festival, SCAD Film Festival, AT&T Film Award and Atlanta International Film Festival. Their films have screened in the US, UK, Poland, Brazil, and Asia. Mason holds degrees from Princeton University, Middlebury College, and Northwestern University. They are a member of the Dramatists Guild of America and Ma-Yi's Writing Lab, as well as an alum of Page 73's Interstate 73 Writers Group and Primary Stages Writing Cohort. Mason has co-hosted the podcast Sister Roger's Gayborhood and hosted This Way Out Radio's Queerly Yours: Portraits in Courage. They are a lead mentor of The Marsha P. Johnson Institute's Starship Fellowship, the New Visions Fellowship and the Shay Foundation Fellowship. Instagram: @rogerq.mason

**Ely Sonny Orquiza** (Director) is a co-Founder and co-Artistic Director of The Chikahan Company. He serves as the Director of Education and Community at Magic Theatre, is a faculty member at the

American Conservatory Theatre, and works as a teaching artist for Word for Word and StageBridge in the Bay Area. Orquiza was a fellow and mentor at the New York Foundation for the Arts in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Additionally, he is a Theatre Bay Area Cash Grant recipient for three-consecutive years with The Chikahan Company and a CALI Catalyst Award recipient in 2021. He has been in various work at the American Conservatory Theatre, Magic Theatre, Crowded Fire, Playwrights Foundation, The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), Leviathan Lab (New York, New York), East West Players (Los Angeles), Studio 52nd (Amsterdam, Netherlands), and others. To keep in touch and learn more about his works: [www.elysonnyorquiza.org](http://www.elysonnyorquiza.org)

**Theatre Rhinoceros** (John Fisher, Executive Artistic Director; Crystal Liu, Company Manager/ Development Director) was founded in San Francisco in 1977, and is the longest running LGBTQ+ theatre in the nation. We develop and produce works of theatre that enlighten, enrich, and explore both the ordinary and the extraordinary aspects of our queer community. Our emphasis is on new works, works about under-represented members of the larger queer community, and revivals of lesser known queer classics. Over the years Theatre Rhinoceros has received many awards of recognition including: Theatre Rhinoceros Day in the City Proclamation from Mayor Gavin Newsom, State Assembly Certificate of Recognition from Senator Mark Leno, recognitions from Congressperson Nancy Pelosi and Assembly Persons Tom Ammiano and Carole Migden, numerous Cable Car, BATCC and TBA Awards and Nominations, and the GLAAD Media Award for Best LGBT Theatre.