Proud to help make our region a vibrant place to live through support of the performing arts.
A Message from the Performer

Dear Friends,

Thank you for joining us for “My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend!” This show was borne out of my real life experiences with a little old man I met in a New York grocery store. Nine years ago my collaborators and I sat down to create this piece, and I’m eternally grateful to them and all of our teams at Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Human Race Theatre Company, and now the University of Idaho for bringing this story to the stage.

During Covid I applied for and completed the MFA program through the University of Idaho’s distance program in theatre pedagogy. I met incredible humans, both in my cohort across the country and U of I’s fantastic department of teachers. It thrills me to no end to bring my show to the campus this summer as a celebration of everything this program has meant to me. Christian Duhamel, my best friend and one of my collaborators, is also originally from the Silver Valley and his parents are fellow Vandals, so this makes it even more joyful to bring our show here.

As I write this we are approaching the one year anniversary of my real life 80-year-old boyfriend’s passing at the age of 94, making it both bitter-sweet and also very meaningful to share him with an audience again. Performing a show about connection, love, and friendship is truly a gift, especially post-Covid. The greatest compliments I’ve received from this show have been when people tell me it moved them to reach out to someone or befriend a person from a different generation. I hope you’ll join me in honoring Milton’s life by sharing yourself with others. In my experience, the love you share always comes back to you tenfold.

Love, Charissa
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**My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend**

Directed by..............................................................ASHLEE WASMUND
Conceived & Performed by........................................CHARISSA BERTELS*
Book & Lyrics............................................................CHRISTIAN DUHAMEL*
Music & Lyrics...........................................................ED BELL
Accompanist & Music Director.....................................BRETT RYBACK*
Scenic Design & Projection Design................................BRIDLE BRUNDAGE
Lighting & Sound Design ...........................................DAVID HARLAN
Sound Engineer & Projection Design.........................DAVID HARLAN
Stage Manager..........................................................KATIE PRY

*Actors’ Equity Association Member

**BIOS** (IN ALPHA ORDER)

**CHARISSA BERTELS** is a Broadway actress and champion of new musicals. She has performed on Broadway and at Madison Square Garden in “A Christmas Story” and toured the country in the first national tour of “If/Then” starring Idina Menzel, La Chanze, and Anthony Rapp. As a member of the singing ensemble for New York City Center Encores’ productions of “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes” and “Lady Be Good,” her work can be heard on the subsequent cast recordings, featuring Megan Hilty and the legendary Tommy Tune.

Charissa conceived and performed in her original one-woman musical, “My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend” at Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, and the Human Race Theatre Company, receiving rave reviews and an IRNE award for Best Solo Performance.

In addition to her own writing and producing projects, she is currently a professor at New York Film Academy’s Professional Conservatory of Musical Theatre, an MFA graduate from the University of Idaho, and a proud member of Actors’ Equity and SAG-AFTRA. Special thanks to God, Robert, my beautiful collaborators, our fantastic team, my family and friends, and my amazing husband, James. www.charissa.nyc

**ED BELL** (Music and Lyrics) is a songwriter, author, music educator and entrepreneur. His creative work is mostly in theatre and film, where he co-wrote the 2018 Kleban Award-winning musical “My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend” which ran at the Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company and Human Race Theatre Company before coming to the University of Idaho. Ed was also previously an Artist in Residence at Pearl Studio (Abominable, Over the Moon) in Shanghai, China. As music director, Ed has worked on projects at the Signature Theatre, the Nate Holden Performing Arts Center, Leeds Playhouse and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Ed also created The Song Foundry, one of the Internet’s most popular songwriting resource sites, and is the author of seven popular books about songwriting, including the bestselling “The Art of Songwriting.” Ed is originally from Yorkshire in the UK. edbell.com

**CHRISTIAN DUHAMEL** (Book & Lyrics) is an internationally regarded multi-hyphenate artist and voice and expression expert. For his work as the librettist of “My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend,” he received the prestigious Kleban Award in Musical Theater, and he and his collaborators received an IRNE nomination for Best New Play. He is also a recipient of the BMI Jerry Harrington Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement in Songwriting and the Pearl Animation Studio Songwriting Artist Residency. His other works include “X-MAS: A Merry Mutant Musical,” “Worlds Apart,” “The Girl Who Turned into a Feather,” “Reeling,” “Miss Mayor” and “The Uncivil Ones.” He has presented concert works at The Duplex, 54 Below, The Metropolitan Room, The Neon, Martin’s Off Madison, New Voices, and The Battersea Barge and has received commissions from theaters across the country, such as Coeur d’Alene Summer Theatre and Seattle Shakespeare Company/Wooden-O. As an actor, he has been seen onstage at the 5th Avenue Theatre, Village Theatre, and the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, among others. Over his career he’s been honored to collaborate with such luminary artists as Martin Charnin, Kathie Lee Gifford, Jerry Dixon, Caitlin Kinnunen, Shelly Burch, and Carolee Carmello.

A native of Kellogg, Idaho, Christian is an alumnus of DePaul University and Wright State University. He currently resides in Seattle where he is an active member of the Dramatists Guild of America, the Off-Broadway Alliance, VASTA, NATS, and Actors’ Equity Association.

**BRETT RYBACK** (Accompanist and Music Director) is an actor, composer/lyricist, and writer. He is the recipient of the ASCAP Foundation’s Cole Porter Award. His musical podcast “In Strange Woods” hit #1 on Apple’s fiction chart and was an iHeartRadio Award nominee for “Best Fiction Podcast.” Works written for the stage include: “Arthur and Friends Make a Musical!” (First Stage); “Passing Through” (Goodspeed); “Nate the Great” (Licensed by TRW); “Free Speech Zone” (Austin Film Festival Semifinalist); “Joe Schmoe Saves the World” (NAMT, ASCAP/Dreamworks Workshop); and “Liberty Inn” (LA Ovation Award nomination, Best Music/Lyrics). His award-winning plays “Weird” and “A Roz By Any Other Name” are both published in “The Best American Short Plays 2007-2008.” As an actor he originated the role of Marcus Off-Broadway in “Muder for Two” and has performed on film, television, and at theatres across America. He lives in Los Angeles with his husband and their miniature schnauzer, Hilde. Please visit www.bretttryback.com.

**ASHLEE WASMUND** (Director, Choreographer) is a director, choreographer, producer, and writer based in North Carolina. Recent and upcoming: “Ride an Old Pain” (New Light Theatre Project at 59E59), “My 80 Year-Old Boyfriend” (Arizona Theatre Company and Human Race Theatre Co.), “H’tier’s Tasters” (Off Broadway, New Light Theater Project) (‘Best of Fringe’, The Stage UK), “A Ghost of Christmas Past” (original radio drama). She is the Founding Producing Artistic Director of Calliope Stage Company, a Resident Artist with New Light Theater Project (NYC), and serves as Program Director of Musical Theatre & Dance at Western Carolina University. Please visit ashleewasmund.com