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***The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* at Square One, Stratford**

[Ed Katz](#) May 8, 2018 [Connecticut](#) / [Live Theater](#) / [Off Broadway](#) / [Performing Arts](#) / [Plays](#) / [Theater Reviews](#)



“For years I had heard great things about a play called ‘The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey’- but I never got to see it. And this was from seasoned theater pros- they’d know what they are talking about.

This past weekend I **finally** had the opportunity to see it. It’s running now at Square One Theatre Company in Stratford. This was my first time to Square One so I had no idea what to expect. The packed house I saw the show with, though, seemed to be “in the know.”

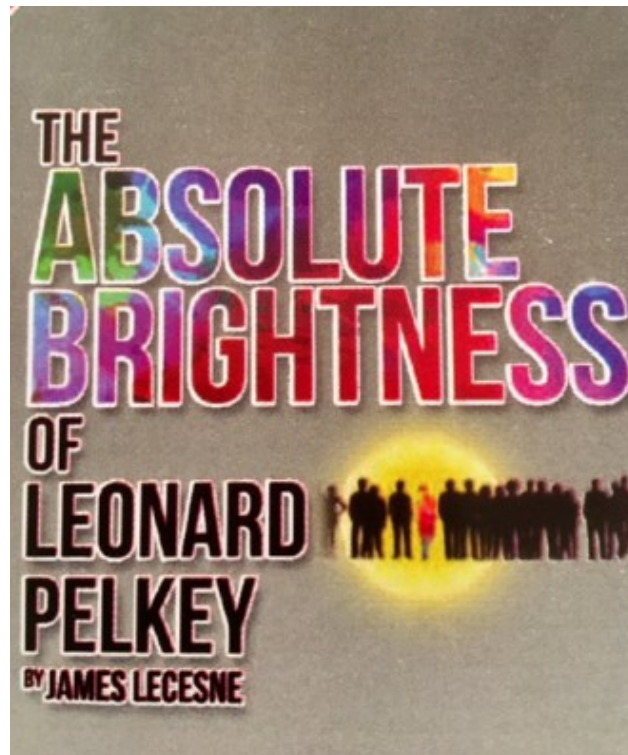
I should tell you this is a one-man show- but don’t let that deter you. Alexander Kulcsar, a 9-time award-winner of the Square One Subscriber Awards, plays Detective Chuck DeSantis- and all the other 8 parts in this show about an investigation into the disappearance of an unusual boy- the title character, 14-year old Leonard Pelkey, in a small New Jersey shore town.

The only part Kulcsar doesn’t play is that of Leonard Pelkey, who doesn’t appear in the show- but we hear a lot about him- from all the other characters. And that is a key to the show- what we learn of the *other characters* by what they tell us about Leonard...and what made him so unusual and affecting.

Detective DeSantis starts out recounting how the case began - 10 years ago. Leonard had been in the care of his aunt (sort of- but not really- his aunt) and we learn he was, as the characters say,.... different. Flamboyant. Overly dramatic. Weird. He wore rainbow platform sneakers- which he made himself. And he was probably gay - which, as his (sort of) aunt tells us, combined with his other peculiarities, made him a target of bullying.

If this story sounds to you like it is somewhat similar to ‘Dear Evan Hansen’ well I thought the same thing. And, though this is a much smaller production in every way, it is just as timely and almost as affecting. Which is saying a lot as I have told you before that ‘Dear Evan Hansen’ is the best show on Broadway - yes, better than ‘Hamilton.’

This play is based on a book from 2008 by James Lescane, who turned his book into a script for a one man play- and he then won accolades when he began performing it Off-Broadway in 2015.



Here, Kulcsar, playing all the roles, does a powerfully effective job conveying the story while changing characters without any costume changes. But he pulls it off well - aided marvelously by the truly terrific, smart script by Lecesne, which facilitates the actor being able to navigate the multiple characters' roles. But I can see now why he has won so many awards performing at Square One. He is certainly talented! And the tech team did a nice job with the lighting and timing the cues with the sound system.

Because this is regional theater - which, by definition means there is a low budget for sets, costumes, props, lights and the sound system, you can't expect too much in those departments. But the script doesn't call for much and I didn't find anything major lacking in how director Tom Holehan was able to tell the story.

It's moving - and, at times, it's also funny - and I give 'The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey' 4 stars out of 5. It runs at Square One Theatre Company in Stratford through May 20th. Catch it while you can. For more info click on Square One Theatre dot com.

Catch my reviews right here this time each week and on my Facebook page and website, Katz Reviews dot com, where you will find **all** my WICC 600 reviews. This is Ed Katz talking theater for WICC 600!"

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Ed Katz is Managing Principal at Katnip Marketing, LLC, a marketing and media consultancy he founded in 2008 which works within the arts, B2B, B2C, entertainment, government, healthcare,

media, non-profit and professional services sectors. At Katnip, Ed's award-winning work has boosted sales and enhanced the reputation and brand awareness for his clients, including many in the arts. Ed has boosted the online presence and obtained interviews and feature articles for his clients in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Vanity Fair as well as numerous television, radio and print plus digital and social media nationally, regionally and locally. In 2014, Katnip Marketing won the Best Marketing Consultants Award from Best of Westport. Prior to starting Katnip, Mr. Katz was a founding principal at one of the Hartford & New Haven, CT market's largest full-service advertising and public relations agencies. During his 15+ years there Ed and his creative, PR and media teams won over 100 industry awards. He has been interviewed on various media, business and advertising issues by The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, USA Today, MSNBC, Adweek, Mediaweek, PR News, The Hartford Courant, The New Haven Register, WFSB-TV 3 (CBS), WVIT-TV 30 (NBC), WTNH-TV 8 (ABC) and several newspapers and radio stations. On the arts side, Mr. Katz's reviews appear on WICC 600 AM radio, in Bridgeport, CT as well as the Applause Theatre and Ticket Service site, in New York City and the KatzReviews Facebook page. He has written a musical play that is in discussions with a popular rock group in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He is also on the producing team for "The King's Speech"- the play- which is planning a run on Broadway. And he is producer of an award-winning sci-fi rock musical comedy, "Save the Robots," which is looking at a theatrical run in Greenwich Village this summer. For the past four-and-a-half years he was on the Board of the Klein Memorial Auditorium in Bridgeport, a 1450-seat, Broadway-style theater which also operates After School at the Klein, a tuition-free arts programs for Bridgeport's inner-city students. Mr. Katz graduated from Syracuse University with a dual major in Marketing from the Whitman School of Management and Film from the Newhouse School of Communications. Ed resides with his wife, son, daughter and their dog, Max, in Westport, Connecticut.