

**THE REVIVAL CAST**  
 ZACHARY QUINTO,  
 JIM PARSONS,  
 MATT BOMER,  
 CHARLIE CARVER,  
 ROBIN DE JESUS,  
 ANDREW RANNELLS,  
 TUC WATKINS,  
 MICHAEL BENJAMIN  
 WASHINGTON AND  
 BRIAN HUTCHISON.

# HELLO BOYS!

New York audiences are about to rediscover Mart Crowley's *The Boys In The Band* with an all-gay, all-star revival. Matt Myers previews this landmark production.

**LATELY**, perhaps more than ever, the LGBTIQ world is embracing its heritage. With the continuing success of gay marriage laws around the world, and with significant milestones such as the 50th anniversary of Stonewall next year and the recent 40th anniversary of the Sydney Mardi Gras, we seem to be re-discovering our past and acknowledging those who helped create it.

Case in point, there's been enthusiastic interest in the revival of the classic gay play, *The Boys In The Band*. Producer Ryan Murphy (the creator of television's *Glee* and *Feud*) is collaborating with Tony Award-winning director Joe Mantello (from the original cast of *Angels In America*) on the play's 50th anniversary make-over.

Given the high-level gay team at the helm, the production has attracted an all-gay, all-star cast. With nine strong and diverse gay characters at the centre of the play, the cream of Broadway and Hollywood are busily rehearsing what most would consider the role of a lifetime.

Zachary Quinto (*Star Trek*) is Harold, whose birthday party provides the story's setting. While Harold is concerned about aging and the loss of his youth, his alcoholic best frenemy Michael (Jim Parsons from *Big Bang Theory*), himself plagued with insecurities, prepares the party at his tiny New York apartment. Matt Bomer (*White Collar* and *Magic Mike*) is Donald, Michael's flirty friend and ex-boyfriend, who is currently

undergoing psychoanalysis.

Adding to the star power are Robin De Jesus (*Camp*) as Emory the so-called "flamer" of the group, Andrew Rannells (*The New Normal*) is the bed-hopping Larry, and Tuc Watkins (*Parks And Recreation*) is his straight-laced boyfriend, Hank.

Michael Benjamin Washington (*30 Rock*) plays African-American Bernard and Brian Hutchison (*Vinyl*) is Alan, the straight, gatecrasher friend with a secret.

Thrown mercilessly into the mix is Charlie Carver (*Teen Wolf*) as Cowboy, a ditzzy gym boy/rent boy "present" for Harold.

Over its 50-year lifespan, the play has received much critical acclaim but, of course, it goes deeper than mere Broadway entertainment. It has always been seen as a cultural turning point because it revealed an insider's view of gay male lives to the general public – warts and all. An open and honest look at a posse of friends, with all their frailties, dramatics and humour, file alongside Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?* Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party* and David Williamson's *Don's Party*.

Holding a mirror to our lives can be as awkward as it is compelling for an audience and, in this case, the play being a theatrical time capsule, part of the fascination will be in experiencing a bygone era. The characters live pre-Stonewall, before Gay Liberation, before the liberating effects of Pride,

disco and de-criminalisation. But these characters are not unlike gay men of today. Zachary Quinto believes their voices are still relevant.

"We've come so far in the last five years, just legislatively," he says. "And yet there's been this explosion of backward, harmful thinking and political ideology that's swept our country.

"We are responsible for standing up and... celebrating ourselves and celebrating our community in a way that shows these people, who are trying to undo the progress, that we are not going anywhere."

Jim Parsons agrees. "What I like so much about *The Boys In The Band* is how the play, right now, reads as, 'Look at how things have changed and look at how they haven't,'" he says.

The play's writer, Mart Crowley has a unique perspective on what *The Boys In The Band* means in 2018. "We just have to be reminded of how our freedom didn't exist. We can't lose it. We can't go back," he says.

It is right to reclaim *The Boys In The Band* as an important part of our cultural history alongside *The Normal Heart*, *Angels In America* and *Torch Song Trilogy*.

**MORE:** *The Boys In The Band* runs April 30 to August 12 at the Booth Theatre, New York.