



# The Kid Who Would Be Pope

**La Vie Productions at the Theatre at St. Clement's as part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival**

Reviewed by Suzy Evans  
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*Photo by Peter James Zielinski*

"The Kid Who Would Be Pope" might seem controversial at the outset. A young boy falls in love with his teacher and goes on a quest to marry her. However, in reality it's an endearing portrait of boyhood fantasies. With an upbeat score and generally witty lyrics by Tom and Jack Megan, the far-fetched tale is an amusing new musical that appeals to the inner child in all of us.

The show follows Billy McPherson (Kyle Brenn) as he navigates his new Catholic school in Boston. After facing the intimidating Sister Rudy (Eric Anderson), Billy runs into Sister Katherine (Jillian Louis), the school's drama teacher, on her morning jog and is immediately smitten in the way that all prepubescent boys fall for their teachers. However, his first day gets a whole lot harder when his classmates record his first confession, during which he joyfully sings to the priest, "I'm in love with a nun!" This pure obsession overcomes Billy, and he is determined to wed Sister Katherine, despite the age difference and the fact that, well, she pledged herself to God. The only way Billy believes he can win her heart, aside from sending her gifts, is to become the pope and change the rules himself. With the aid of his new friend Allie (Rachel Resheff), whose duet with Billy "Most Boys Are Slobs" is adorable, the boy seeks his dream, only to learn that you can't make someone love you.

Sister Katherine is so nice and beautiful that it's irritating, but you can't help but love her, and Louis fits the bill perfectly. She "sings like Julie Andrews," Billy says, one of the many insider references to famous scenes from well-known musicals. Others include a how-to-become-the-pope guidebook à la "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" and an Emerald City-like guard at the Vatican City gates. Director Gabriel Barre keeps everything moving in perfect time, with hardly a slow moment all evening, and Jeffrey Lodin's musical direction really makes the score pop.

The triumphant cast of kids, more than half of whom already have significant Broadway credits under their belts, makes the show. Each one is completely professional, and they actually make you wish there were more roles for children in the theater today. Matthew Gumley delivers a hilarious performance as Kenny McBride, while Ben and Noah Radcliffe are charming pranksters as the McJohnson twins. The adults aren't so bad either. Tina Stafford is riotous as Cardinal Louis, James Judy's pope lovingly jabs at the clergy, and Anderson's Sister Rudy is a hoot.

"The Kid Who Would Be Pope" is a fun-filled 90 minutes that will remind you of your school days—when everything was simple and magic made anything possible.

*Presented by La Vie Productions as part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival at the Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St., NYC. Sept. 29–Oct. 8. Remaining performances: Sat., Oct. 1, 5 and 9 p.m.; Mon., Oct. 3, 5 p.m.; Tue., Oct. 4, 5 p.m.; Fri., Oct. 7, 9 p.m. (212) 352-3101, (866) 811-4111, [www.theatermania.com](http://www.theatermania.com), or [www.nymf.org](http://www.nymf.org). Casting by Michael Cassara Casting.*

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