



Alejandro Rodríguez from Weston, FL

Song: "Days From Long Ago"

Mentor: Shakina Nayfack

Musical Director: Anna Ebbesen



Alejandro Rodríguez is a Colombian composer/performer. He recently graduated from Cypress Bay High School and is pursuing a degree in music composition at Florida State University. Rodríguez has been involved in musical theatre and music since he was in elementary school, participating in musical productions in and out of school, and taking voice, piano, acting, and dance lessons. He is currently writing a musical called *My Elijah* that tells a gay love story during World War II. Some of his music for *My Elijah* can be heard on streaming platforms in his EP "Songs From My Elijah."

Song Description: In 1940s Germany, Elijah Metzinger has been forced to leave home when his homosexuality is revealed to his family and later, to the authorities. He goes into hiding with three Jewish fugitives, one of whom is Rosalyn Freyda. Rosalyn fled Spain during the Spanish Civil War, leaving behind her mother, to live with her father in Berlin. In "Days From Long Ago," Rosalyn sings with a younger version of herself about being forced to adapt to a new life, let go of her past, and lose everything that she loves. Throughout the song she realizes the importance of the memories, which are the only thing keeping her hope alive.

Rodríguez's mentor Shakina Nayfack enjoys an eclectic career as a performer, director, writer, producer, and social activist. Most recently, Shakina played a guest starring role in the series finale of Amazon's *Transparent*, a *Musical Finale* on which Shakina was also a writer and producer. Her fans know for her work as Lola in Hulu's cult-comedy series "Difficult People." Shakina can also be seen on

Marvel's *Jessica Jones* (Netflix) and *The Detour* (TBS)., and heard as the voice of Hana in the *Gkids* remaster and English dub of the Satoshi Kon anime cult classic *Tokyo Godfathers*.

Shakina's autobiographical rock musicals *One Woman Show* (2013), *Post-Op* (2015), and *Manifest Pussy* (2016) all premiered to sold-out houses at Joe's Pub at the Public Theater in New York City. She has performed on Broadway in *24-Hour Plays* and *Gypsy Of The Year*, as well as Off-Broadway in M.J. Kauffman's *Masculinity Max* at The Public Theater, and in Manuel Versus *The Statue Of Liberty* (As Lady Liberty).

Shakina received international attention for crowdfunding her gender confirmation with her 2014 KickStartHer campaign as well as her 2016 "Rebel Tour" of North Carolina, where she performed in protest of the anti-trans law HB2 ("The Bathroom Bill"). Shakina is also the founding artistic director of Musical Theatre Factory (MTF), a non-profit artist service organization dedicated to developing new work. Through MTF, Shakina has supported the development of numerous new musicals by the next generation of Broadway composers. Before starting Musical Theatre Factory, Shakina served as associate producer for Barrington Stage Company.

In 2015 Shakina received a Lilly Award recognizing the remarkable contributions to the American Theatre made by women. She is also a two-time Drama League fellow, having been selected for the New Musical Directing Fellowship (2011) and the Beatrice Terry Fellowship for women playwright/directors (2017), supporting the development of her new play, *Chonburi International Hotel and Butterfly Club*.

Shakina roots herself as a Butoh-inspired artist trained beneath Diego Piñón, founder of Body Ritual Movement. With an MFA in Experimental Choreography and a PhD in Critical Dance Studies (both from the University of California at Riverside), Shakina has pioneered her own Butoh for the Actor method, developed through master classes at the University of California at Santa Cruz, the Chicago Cultural Center, Casa del Teatro in Mexico City, Barrington Stage Company, The Drama League, the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, and most recently as adjunct faculty at New York University Tisch School of the Arts Drama. Shakina has written about her work with Diego Piñón in the anthology *Dancing Across Borders* (University of Illinois Press, 2009) and is a featured artist in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance* (2018). She holds a Bachelors of Arts in Community Studies and Graduate Certificate in Theatre from UC Santa Cruz.

Rodríguez's musical director Anna Ebbesen has made a career commitment to fostering new voices in the industry. Her orchestrations can be heard on over 20 original movie musicals currently on the film festival circuit, including scores by Zoe Sarnak (2018 Jonathan Larson Award), Anna K. Jacobs (2020 Jonathan Larson Award) and Avi Amon (2019 Jonathan Larson Award). Music Director for the New York Youth Symphony Musical Theatre Composition Program and the Songwriting Challenge in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Recent premieres: *Mary & Max* (Bobby Cronin) at Theatre Calgary and *We Were Everywhere* (Avi Amon) at Princeton.