You've Got Yourself A Musical At LAHS's "Something Rotten!"
written by Isabella Dym, a senior at University High School

Desperate for a hit in a fierce competition against Shakespeare, struggling playwright brothers Nick and Nigel Bottom consult a soothsayer who impels them to write the world's first musical, and "nothing's as amazing as a musical!"

Through a vulnerably open poise, dynamic vocal choices, and facial expressions of starstruck wonder, AJ Buechler brilliantly depicts Nigel's youth, love, and creative anguish. When he meets Portia, his demeanor becomes authentically flustered, stumbling convincingly over his words as his composed poise surrenders to jumpy movements. Meanwhile, in moments testing his artistry, he anxiously white-knuckles his bag and darts around the stage in terrified indecision to persuasively demonstrate his inner turmoil.

Through grandiose, theatrical gestures and frantic speech, Ethan Junge expertly captures Nick's desperate, fervent ambition for success and the money and fame it brings. During his heated confrontation with Nigel, his voice rises in pitch and speed as his movements become increasingly frenzied to emphasize his desperation.

Flouncing about with a self-assured smirk, haughtily raised chin, and proud shimmying, Adam FrenchCampbell captivatingly embodies Shakespeare's imperious, pretentious diva. During "Hard to be the Bard", his nonchalant swaying and narcissistic drawl communicate his egotistical, ostentatious character. However, when investigating the Bottoms' new idea, his movements become jittery and his voice more high-pitched and strained, grippingly conveying his underlying anxiety about being dethroned as the leading playwright.

Ella Cox as Bea masterfully characterizes the headstrong, loyal woman who defies gender norms. In "Right Hand Man," she magnetically commands the stage with strong, assertive vocals, an authoritative wide stance, and compellingly lively expressions. These traits subvert Renaissance expectations of female beauty to establish Bea as an independent and pragmatic heroine.

The lighting team powerfully elevates the storytelling through deeply symbolic choices. The overall lighting design combines surreal, concert-inspired Broadway lights with Renaissance-era London realism, highlighting the show's message about authenticity. When Nigel and Portia (Olivia Nordstrom) meet, the lighting suddenly shifts to soft pink, virtuously timed with a musical cue by stage management, cleverly foreshadowing their innocent, sweet romance.

The costuming team delivers an exquisite creative vision of historical accuracy, functionality, and symbolism. Shakespeare's frilly collar represents his wealth and status, his plunging neckline captures his sensual, scandalous nature, and his purple pants thoughtfully reinforce his financial and social status.

"To Thine Own Self" be true; You know you want to see LAHS's egg-cellent production of "Something Rotten!"