

# Actor Brian Hutchison '93 talks show business, queer representation during residency

By Isabella Gaglione, Assistant Arts & Culture Editor

Brian Hutchison '93, the stage and screen actor in the 2020 film "The Boys in the Band," found a community of artists and a source of creative fulfillment during his time at Lafayette. Now, he's back on campus for a residency to offer his perspective to students looking to break into the acting world.

"I felt really creatively sustained and in a flow state that I still seek today, where you feel like all pistons are firing, and that you have this great creative energy and creative people around you," Hutchison said of his Lafayette experience. "I think I made the most of my time creatively while I was here."

Since his time studying English on campus, Hutchison has starred in six Broadway shows, as well as several films and television shows including "Bridge of Spies" and Marvel's "Jessica Jones." This week, in collaboration with the women's, gender and sexuality studies and theater departments, Hutchison returned to campus to share his expertise.

"I think I'm a good resource for the theater department," he said. "I'm one of a handful of alumni that are actually doing this for a living. I've been in New York for 25 years or so and I definitely have a good sense after this amount of time what it's like to be an actor in the business of acting," he said. "I think it's hopefully useful, hopefully beneficial to them ... I [remember] when I was a student, wishing maybe there was someone who would come back and share experiences."

On Oct. 17, Hutchison led an introductory acting class, held a discussion about navigating show business and participated in a screening of his film "The Boys in the Band" which was followed by a Q&A.

The 2020 film, based on the 1968 play of the same name and featuring the entire original 2018 Broadway revival cast, follows several gay men at a birthday party as they navigate feelings, truth, internalized homophobia and the reality of being gay in America.



"The Boys in the Band" won the 2019 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. (Photo courtesy of IMDb)

During the Q&A, Hutchison discussed the decision to feature an entirely openly gay cast for the first time in Broadway history.

“Being friends with Peter White, who played my role originally, I heard a lot of stories about [the original cast] from him. [White] couldn’t keep it on his resume. He was told he had to take it off,” Hutchison said. “I think fifty years later, it was important to the producers to turn it all on its head and say ‘look how far we’ve come.’”

Hutchison discussed how he was able to understand and portray his character, Alan, who is in a heterosexual relationship and struggles with internalized homophobia throughout the story.

“To play [Alan] wasn’t so hard in that I lived through some of that. I mean, my journey was maybe less outwardly tortured as Alan, but I was drawing on things that I completely understood,” Hutchison explained. “What am I? How do I define myself? How do I let people know about this? How do I come to terms with this? That was very much part of my experience, too.”

On Oct. 18, Hutchison held a “voice and the actor” workshop and shared more of his expertise with students over lunch. He believes that when giving advice or guidance, it is necessary to be honest about the hardship that comes with a career in acting.

“It’s important to be inspiring, but also not sugarcoat it too much. I think it’s important to discuss the realities of the business and the fact that there can be a lot of disappointment. There can be a lot of downtime,” he said.

Hutchison believes that students looking to pursue acting should not base their entire sense of achievement on booking roles.

“If you’re just looking for validation and positive reinforcement in getting cast, like doing a TV show or doing a play, you’ll be let down,” he said. “It can all add to your fulfillment as a human being, but you want to find different things in life that are going to sustain you and fulfill you, especially in the downtime.”

Hutchison hopes to return to Lafayette and continue sharing his experiences with students.

“I love Lafayette. I had a great time here. I’m still in touch with so many of my Lafayette friends and I love coming back to campus,” he said. “I would come back anytime.”