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In her *Backstory*, Sarah Lunnie interviews Robert O'Hara about The King of Pop.

## FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

### DEAR FRIENDS,

Robert O'Hara is not widely known as a playwright in New York. He has worked more often as a director. He has had one notable production of a play at the Public and several productions regionally, particularly at the Woolly Mammoth in DC. But as I've tracked his work in its various incarnations, including several readings over the years at Playwrights Horizons, I've come to admire him as one of the most adventurous playwrights I know. His work explodes conventions of race, gender, and history via wildly careening, daredevil shifts of tone and style that can turn on a dime from the furthest reaches of satiric extremity to a kind of purple emotive intensity bordering on melodrama. As a man, I've always found Robert one of the most effortlessly hilarious people I know. But his dramaturgical impulses often feel anarchic, more interested in blowing our minds perhaps than provoking guffaws.

I first encountered *Bootycandy* in a reading we did while Robert was midway through the process he describes in his bulletin article of expanding several short pieces into a full-length play. I was delighted to see Robert plunge headfirst into all-out comedy, but it felt like a bit of a lark, more a loose collection of skits than a play with a throughline. Still I welcomed the full-throttle hilarity it voiced. So when I drove down to Philadelphia a few years later to see the Wilma Theater's production of *Bootycandy*, I expected to laugh, but I wasn't quite prepared for the cohesion it had attained. It had become quite clearly the coming-of-age story of his central character, Sutter, showing us what it feels like to grow up "Young, Gifted, Black" and Gay, in a world of a whole lotta crazy. It was just as funny, even more so than before, but now it went somewhere. The audience was deliriously happy.

Great comedies don't always get the respect they deserve. Sure there are plenty of breezy diverting comedies that don't aspire to much. But there are also great comedies that function on their deepest level as unmasking agents. The greatest comic voices, from *Lear's Fool* to Richard Pryor, are truth-tellers. The truth can be scary. We often take great pains to hide it from each other and from ourselves. Robert takes immense glee in stripping away illusions and delusions, and our laughter gives him license to keep stripping until we're left with just our own skinny, naked selves, and the laughter falls away. There are moments in *Bootycandy* that will make you gasp; "Did that just happen?" But Robert has become more adept at navigating his tone shifts, and the play actually finds its purpose and throughline through them. Each scene explores some aspect of a racial or gender taboo and excavates a wild paradox within it, then pick, pick, picks at it until it bursts in an explosion of laughter. Then Robert puts on the brakes and makes us look at what just happened.

I'm so grateful that in the aforementioned bulletin article, Robert calls out the personal source of much of the play's material. As the lone black face in a white world growing up, and being gay to boot, Robert developed a certain license to play the truth-teller jester. I couldn't say to what degree his outsider status affects the content of his lampoonery. His targets are clearly well-known black archetypes. But his audience is thoroughly integrated, and the play is not unaware of the inherent ironies of that fact. Think of those sublime moments in Richard Pryor's act when he would send up a white man. No one could outdo him, and no one laughed harder than the white people in his audience. Robert plays with similar ironies through the inclusion of a white male character in his cast, who embodies different facets of Mr. Status Quo throughout the play. The result is that it feels like nothing is off-limits in this play. There is an exhilarating no-holds-barred freedom to it. Its outrageousness and hilarity run neck and neck, superseded perhaps only by its courage, and its joy. It is a brilliant, flamboyant, wholly original work. I am so excited to launch our season with it.



**TIM SANFORD**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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## PLAYWRIGHT'S PERSPECTIVE

My grandmother, Lizzie Bee O'Hara, was known by various names to various people for as long as she was in my life: Bee, Aunt Bee, Lizzie, Lizzie Bee, Mrs. O'Hara, Granny, Sister, Grandmama, Mama. (And a whole host of other names whenever she and my Grandfather cussed each other out. On a daily basis.) They had thirteen children, twelve of whom lived. Granny once told me that she delivered her twins herself "Cause the fire truck didn't get here on time." My mother, Lillie Anne, was her third child and the first girl, and she had me when she was seventeen. Recently, she told me that I was a virgin birth. When I asked her what that meant, she said she didn't understand how I got here because it was her first time, she was a virgin when she got pregnant with me, and she and my father "really didn't do nothin'."

I was always called "special" – "gifted" by my teachers at school. And immediately after telling my mother this, my teacher would also mention "He talks too much." I was always put in advanced classes, and – most times – I was the only black person in class. I was the only black person in our high school musicals; I was the only black person in show choir and the vocal ensemble; I was once threatened by a student who said if I won any more awards during the school year he'd beat me up.

My uncles were teenagers when I was growing up, and by the time I was three years old, they pretty much started calling me "faggot" to my face (this was, of course, only during those times between their stints in "juvie"). My grandfather was a construction worker, and it was only recently that I found out that his name, "T.J.," was short for "Thomas Jefferson," though – to this day – I still don't understand why everyone in his life called him "Judge." I peed in the bed until I was probably twelve or thirteen. And I was obsessed with Michael Jackson.

The play *Bootycandy* started out as a ten-minute piece to begin an evening of short pieces that I'd written over the span of ten years – all disconnected and all fairly outrageous. This evening of short pieces was produced over a decade ago by Partial Comfort, the then-fledgling theater company. About five years later, I got a call from the folks at Woolly Mammoth Theater in D.C., asking if I'd consider taking some of the characters that populated the disparate short pieces and writing a full-length play with a throughline. I said I'd think about it, but I thought the idea was silly because the short

pieces were only connected by... my having written them all. Then, I looked at them again. There were some interesting characters. And a full-length play began to emerge. Four of the short pieces remain from the original evening, but none in their original form.

At first I was reluctant to directly acknowledge the autobiography of *Bootycandy*, but now, I own it completely. It is my life. Or close to it. All of the scenes in *Bootycandy* are based on facts. Some of the most outrageous lines were actually uttered. There are witnesses, and they *know* who they are. It is tough to describe exactly what this piece is other than to say it is the experience, through my eyes, of being black, gay, and gifted – with *what* I'm not quite sure. That's for you, the viewer, to tell.

I'm *crazy*. My entire extended family is a nut house – complete and utter fools. I think about my childhood and laugh out loud. *Constantly*. I won't tell you what "Bootycandy" means. That's explained in the first five minutes of my play. But I heard that word throughout my adolescence, mostly from Lizzie Bee and Lillie Ann.

All I know for sure is this: when I told my mother that a theater was putting on my play *Bootycandy*, her response was, "What?! *Bootycandy*? These white folks are going to let you put on a play called *Bootycandy*?!? Are they crazy???"

And my response was, "Yes. Yes indeed."

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**ROBERT O'HARA**  
JUNE 2014

He has been an Artist in Residence at ACT, New York Shakespeare Festival, and Theater/Emory as well as a Visiting Professor at DePaul University School of the Arts. His plays have been produced around the world and he has been awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship, TCG Extended Collaboration Grant, NEA/TCG Fellowship, a Van Lier Fellow at New Dramatists, the first Sherwood Award from the Mark Taper Forum, and the TANNE Award for Exceptional Body of Work.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR/DIRECTOR

**ROBERT O'HARA** received an Obie Award for his direction of *In the Continuum* (Primary Stages/Perry Street Theatre). Other directing credits include *Wild with Happy* (The Public), *The Mountaintop* (Alley Theatre, Arena Stage), *Tough Titty* (Magic Theatre), *The Brother/Sister Plays* (McCarter Theatre/NYSF co-production), *The Brothers Size* (City Theatre), and *Slavey* (Clubbed Thumb). His play *Antebellum* received a World Premiere production from Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and he rewrote *The Wiz* for its revival at the La Jolla Playhouse. He wrote and directed the World Premiere of *Insurrection: Holding History* (NYSF/Public Theater, Oppenheimer Award for Best New American Play, published by TCG and Dramatists Play Service). Mr. O'Hara has also directed for New York Shakespeare Festival, Primary Stages, Yale Rep, Woolly Mammoth, CTG, ACT, the Magic Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, The Market Theatre in Johannesburg, The Baxter Theatre in Cape Town, The Culture Project, The Flea, Athenaeum Theatre, Philadelphia Theatre Company, and The Goodman.



## CASTING UPDATE

AS OF JUNE 13



**MARSHA STEPHANIE BLAKE** BROADWAY: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Crucible*. OFF BROADWAY: *An Octoroon* and *Marie Antoinette* (Soho Rep), *The Luck of the Irish* and *What We Once Felt* (LCT3), *Bullet for Adolf* (New World Stages), *Hurt Village* and *Queens Boulevard* (Signature), *This Beautiful City* (The Civilians/Vineyard), *Living Room in Africa* (Edge Theatre), *Aunt Dan and Lemon* (The New Group). FILM & TV: *Django Unchained*, "Girls," "Elementary," "The Big C."

**PHILLIP JAMES BRANNON** OFF BROADWAY: *The City of Conversation* (LCT), *Love and Information* and *Belleville* (NYTW), *We Are Proud to Present...* (Soho Rep). OTHER THEATER: *Bootycandy* (Wilma and Woolly Mammoth), *The Brother/Sister Plays* (Steppenwolf). FILM & TV: *Contagion*, "Law & Order: SVU."

**JESSE PENNINGTON** PH: *Rodney's Wife* and *Franny's Way*. OFF BROADWAY: *Richard II* and *The False Servant* (CSC), *The General from America* (TFANA),

*A Place at the Table* (MCC). REGIONAL: *Maple and Vine* (ATL), *Vera Laughed* (NYS&F), *Major Barbara* (The Guthrie), *Goodnight Children Everywhere* (ACT), *James Joyce's The Dead* (Huntington, ACT).

**BENJA KAY THOMAS** THEATER: *Unspeakable* (The Apollo); *Bootycandy* (Wilma); *American Ma(ul)* (The Public); *Brave Brood* (Present Co.); *Insurrection: Holding History*; *God, The Crack House*, and *The Devil* (Circle Rep).

**LANCE COADIE WILLIAMS** THEATER: *The Convert* (Wilma), *Sucker Punch* (Studio Theatre), *Bootycandy* (Wilma and Woolly Mammoth), *The Oedipus Plays* (Shakespeare Theatre), *Fences* (Roundhouse), *The Children's Hour* (Everyman), *Jitney* (Ford's Theatre). FILM & TV: "The Wire."

## WELCOME LEIGH ANN BRIENZA



Playwrights Horizons is very happy to announce that Leigh Ann Brienza has joined the Development Department as the **Manager of Individual Giving**, in which capacity she will oversee the Patron and Individual Giving Program, and, with other Development Department staff, a wide range of campaigns to raise almost 40% of the organization's ten million dollar annual budget.

Leigh Ann graduated with a Master's Degree in Theater from Villanova University and is the Event Chair of The Actors Fund Young Professionals Advisory Committee. Her professional experience includes front-line solicitations and managing various individual giving initiatives and fundraising events. Past positions include the Director of Development at Saint Basil Academy in Pennsylvania, and most recently, Director of Development at Columbia University Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry.

She's very excited to work at Playwrights Horizons and become part of the New York City not-for-profit theater community. "I am thrilled to join the development team and return to my first passion, the theater. It is an honor to participate in ensuring the long-term sustenance and growth of Playwrights Horizons."

If you would like more information about Playwrights Horizons or the Patron Program – or want to welcome Leigh Ann on board – please do not hesitate to contact her at [LBrienza@PHnyc.org](mailto:LBrienza@PHnyc.org) or (212) 564-1235 x3145.

## SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

Playwrights Horizons has partnered with Amazon Smile – a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite Off-Broadway theater every time you shop, at no cost to you! You'll find the same prices, selection, and service you expect from Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. It's simple: visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), log into your existing Amazon.com account, and search for or select Playwrights Horizons from among the list of affiliated organizations – that's all there is to it. Whenever you need to make a purchase from Amazon.com, remember to go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) instead: **you'll be actively supporting the development and production of new American theater while you wait for your packages to arrive!**

Surrounding the premiere of *Bootycandy* at Woolly Mammoth, Robert O'Hara spoke to D.C.'s *MetroWeekly* about studying theater at Columbia: "At the end of my first semester, at my evaluation, the Chair looked at me and said, 'Your teachers think you're a little bit too focused on African-American and gay issues.' We're sitting in Harlem. I'm the only black student in the department. I'm the only gay student in the directing program. And you're going to tell me that I'm too focused on African-American issues and gay issues?"

In July 2012, R&B artist Frank Ocean released *Channel Orange*, pulling together modern and classic pop influences in a groundbreaking debut album. But it wasn't just an artistic game-changer: the album shook things up culturally, too, when just before its release Ocean announced in a gorgeous letter that his first true love was another man. Many key hip-hop figures rallied in support of Ocean, notably Jay-Z, Kanye West and Beyoncé. "Today is a big day for hip-hop," announced Russell Simmons, co-founder of Def Jam. "It is a day that will define who we really are." Later that very same month, Le1f, the openly gay rapper, released a jaunty video for his song "Wut" in which he sits on the lap of an oiled-up hunky guy wearing (tangentially) a Pokémon mask. In response, the websites Bossip and World Star jeered, "See What Frank Ocean Started?" and "This is what happens when rappers start admitting their [sic] gay."

Being black and gay is an intricate, tightly wound cultural knot. When CNN anchor Don Lemon came out, he said being gay is "about the worst thing you can be in black culture. You're taught you have to be a man; you have to be masculine." And when NBA pro Jason Collins came out, *Salon's* Rob Smith wrote that "the hyper-masculine ideals forced upon young black boys combine with the homophobia of the black church to create a perfect storm of shame and secrecy." Which is surprising, because there would seem to be sympathy between black and gay struggles for civil rights. In 1986, civil rights activist Bayard Rustin asserted that "blacks are in every segment of society and there are laws that help to protect them from racial discrimination. ...It is in this sense that gay people are the new barometer for social change." But in 2008 when California passed Proposition 8, a bill that rejected gay marriage, it was widely attributed to black voters who, as reported by the Washington Post, "declined to see the issue through a prism of equality," polling at 70% in favor of the ban.

Of course, there isn't one black or gay community that speaks in a unified voice. It would be as dumb to think that Don Lemon or World Star can speak for the black community as it would be to think that Queen Latifah or Barney Frank can speak for the gay community. You can only take stock by listening to as many individual voices as you can. And when you do, what's clear is – simply – that to be black and gay is a complex, fraught experience.

Ebro Darden of NYC's hip-hop station Hot97 responded to Frank Ocean's coming out: "I hope people judge him based on his music, not personal preferences." And when gay NFL player Michael Sam was drafted by St. Louis in May, Obama offered his congratulations: "From the playing field to the corporate boardroom, LGBT Americans prove every day that you should be judged by what you do and not who you are." These seem like terrific things to say – but only until you actually think about it. Are we being asked to not see that Frank Ocean and Michael Sam are gay? Why should who one is be separate from what one does? Frank Ocean is a gay artist; Michael Sam is a gay athlete. Hidden in the title track of Le1f's 2014 album *Hey* is the weighty line, "Ask a gay question/Here's a black answer" – a cutting, eloquent equation of two seemingly irreconcilable sides of his identity.

This equation seems to be the DNA of Robert O'Hara's work, and it strikes me as crucial to understanding his dangerous, time-hopping, gender-bending, brutally funny plays. The ink still wet on his diploma from Columbia, he premiered his brilliant play *Insurrection: Holding History* (1996) at the Public Theater. In this comic fantasia, the legacy of slavery and the acceptance of homosexuality collide when we see a Columbia student follow his 189-year-old great-great grandfather back through time to Nat Turner's infamous slave rebellion, where he falls in love with a male slave. He also connects the dots between racism and homophobia in *Antebellum* (2005), which travels between Nazi Germany and the American South when a black, gay transsexual prisoner escapes Germany only to stumble into racially-charged Atlanta on the eve of *Gone With the Wind's* premiere in 1939. And in *The Living Room* (2008), the last two white people left on earth, a male and a female, are held captive on a stage by a gay black playwright who struggles with his feelings of disillusionment.

Robert's plays are outlandish and bold; they're broadly comedic, but sharp as a tack. Each of the three plays nut-shelled above (just a sampling of his rangy work) is shocking and incredible, but he pulls it off with innate, fearsome intelligence and theatrical finesse. As if courting horror, he steps out on a limb with each play, asking scary what-ifs that consistently take him into new territory. "I never write a play until there are at least 88 ideas bumping up against each other," he told *MetroWeekly*. "Every play is an experiment." And as he experiments, O'Hara compulsively takes stock of his plays along the way, often writing this self-analysis into the work itself, calling our attention to the act of writing, to the essence of the theatrical event: a question itches in a writer's mind and is communicated, through the production, to our minds.

It's hard to look at *Bootycandy* without seeing the influence of Robert's early mentor, George C. Wolfe – particularly Wolfe's seminal play *The Colored Museum* (1986). A fierce satire constructed of eleven vignettes, Wolfe's play escorts us through a museum exhibit of black history, each scene a diorama that confronts an aspect of black America's mythology. One sketch, "The Last Mama-on-the-Couch Play," parodies the well-worn tradition of domestic dramas modeled after *A Raisin in the Sun*. Another one, "Git On Board," welcomes us to a "celebrity slaveship" bound for Savannah, whose passengers are warned they'll have to "suffer for a few hundred years" in exchange for receiving a "complex culture." Toggling between past and present, Wolfe's exhibit – an attempt to reclaim cultural silhouettes – is an ecstatic, angry, take-no-prisoners grenade of a play that reaches out and back, finding fodder in history and the legacy of suffering.

Inspired by the structure of *The Colored Museum*, Robert O'Hara has also crafted a play through a series of fiery vignettes. But, written almost thirty years later, *Bootycandy* is more an evolution of Wolfe's play than a tribute. Where Wolfe's play explodes outwardly onto the culture at large, O'Hara's is a more inwardly focused explosion, mining his own history and experience to parody not just the culture, but – rather poignantly – his personal role within it. We follow Sutter from childhood into the present in a dangerously funny kaleidoscope of scenes that confront head-on the complications of growing up as a gay, black playwright. It's as much an intimate, uncompromisingly honest self-portrait as it is a timely snapshot of an American landscape that's changing, perhaps able to reconcile – finally – notions of sexuality and race into one fabulous whole.

## ADAM GREENFIELD DIRECTOR OF NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT

TimeWarner  
FOUNDATION

Leadership support for the New Works Lab is generously provided by the Time Warner Foundation.

# WELCOME, NEW PATRONS!

Playwrights Horizons would like to welcome the donors who joined the Patron Program this past season, and thank our growing base of Patrons for their generous support of our mission to develop and produce new plays and musicals by American writers, composers, and lyricists.

Members of the Patron Program are our leading advocates and ambassadors. It's a rich relationship – for us and for you. At Playwrights Horizons, our Patrons are part of a true family of donors. When you support us with a contribution of \$1,500 or more, you join this group of dedicated partners that engage with the organization, get an insider's view of how we develop and produce new work, and understand the need for and the impact of their philanthropy.

Patrons receive two full subscriptions plus invitations to special events throughout the season. You'll have the opportunity to see your gift at work in rehearsals, at private play readings, and at intimate dinners and cocktail parties with artists, staff, and members of the Playwrights Horizons' Board of Trustees. Our Patrons also enjoy a dedicated ticket concierge for reservations and rescheduling, an extra week of priority booking before other audience members, use of the pre-show Patron Lounge at select performances, and more exclusive benefits.

If you would like more information about the Playwrights Horizons Patron Program, please contact our Manager of Individual Giving, Leigh Ann Brienza at (212) 564-1235 x3145 or LBrienza@PHnyc.org. You can also find details about benefits on our website at [www.PHnyc.org/patron-program](http://www.PHnyc.org/patron-program).



Patrons Jody Falco and Jeffrey Steinman with actress Quincy Tyler Bernstine and PH Artistic Director Tim Sanford.

## PERFORMANCE CALENDAR

## BOOTYCANDY

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					AUGUST 22 8:00 PM	23 8:00 PM
24 2:30 PM 7:30 PM	25	26 7:00 PM	27 7:00 PM ☞	28 8:00 PM	29 8:00 PM	30 2:30 PM 8:00 PM
31 2:30 PM ☞ 7:30 PM	SEPTEMBER 1	2 7:00 PM	3 7:00 PM ☞	4 8:00 PM	5 8:00 PM	6 2:30 PM 8:00 PM
7 2:30 PM 7:30 PM	8 7:00 PM	9 7:00 PM	10	11	12 8:00 PM	13 2:30 PM ● 8:00 PM
14 2:30 PM 7:30 PM	15	16 7:00 PM	17 7:00 PM	18 7:00 PM	19 8:00 PM	20 2:30 PM 8:00 PM
21 2:30 PM 7:30 PM	22	23 7:00 PM	24 7:00 PM	25 8:00 PM	26 8:00 PM	27 2:30 PM 8:00 PM
28 2:30 PM 7:30 PM	29	30 7:00 PM	OCTOBER 1 7:00 PM	2 8:00 PM	3 8:00 PM	4 2:30 PM 8:00 PM
5 2:30 PM 7:30 PM	6	7 7:00 PM	8 7:00 PM	9 8:00 PM	10 8:00 PM	11 2:30 PM 8:00 PM
12 2:30 PM 7:30 PM						

## POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS

PPDs with the creative team have been scheduled for the following dates:

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27**

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 31**

Following the matinee

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3**

We hope you can take part in this important aspect of our play development process.

● Open Captioned for theatergoers who are deaf or hard of hearing

☞ Indicates post-performance discussion

Available to Student and 30&Under Members only

We recommend *Bootycandy* for audiences aged 17+.

# HELPFUL INFORMATION

## TICKET CENTRAL

(212) 279-4200, Noon-8pm daily  
416 West 42nd St. (9th/10th Aves)

## PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS

(212) 564-1235, 10am-6pm (Mon-Fri)

## PATRONS & Gen PH MEMBERS

Contact the Development Administrator for all inquiries at extension 3144.

## GETTING TO THE THEATER

A, C, E, and 7 trains at 8th Ave; 1, 2, 3, N, R, W, Q, or S trains to Times Square; B, D, V and F to 42nd/6th Ave.

The M42 Crosstown & M104 buses are also available for your convenience.

## HOW TO RESERVE YOUR SEATS

► **ONLINE:** visit [www.ticketcentral.com](http://www.ticketcentral.com) and click on MY ACCOUNT to log-in and order your seats via our automated system.

► **BY PHONE:** call Ticket Central.

► **IN PERSON:** visit Ticket Central.

## MEMBERS

Your ticket to **BOOTYCANDY** (reg. \$75) is \$30 for performances Aug. 22-31 and Sunday eves thru Oct. 12; \$35 for performances Sept. 2-Oct. 12 except Sunday eves.

## YOUNG MEMBERS

A 30&Under Member ticket is \$20; a Student Member ticket is \$10. Young members may order online, by phone, or in person.

## PATRONS & GenPH MEMBERS

Reserve your house seats by calling the Development Administrator (contact info in first column).

## GUEST TICKETS

SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY

► **SUBSCRIBERS:** You may order one guest ticket for \$50 each (reg. \$75) per package.

► **FLEXPASS HOLDERS:** You may use tickets in your account to bring guests. Add tickets to your account by calling Ticket Central, while supplies last.

► **MEMBERS:** Order one guest ticket per package per production for \$50 (reg. \$75) when you reserve your own.

► **YOUNG MEMBERS:** Guest tickets are \$35.

► **PATRONS:** You may order up to two tickets for \$50 each (reg. \$70).

► **GenPH MEMBERS:** A maximum of six membership tickets may be used

per production. Two guest tickets per production may be purchased at the guest rate of \$50 each. Additional tickets are full price.

## TICKET PICK-UP AND RELEASE POLICIES

We would prefer to hold tickets for pick-up at the box office to expedite ticket exchanges. If you request that your tickets be mailed, they will be sent out immediately, **UNLESS** your performance date takes place in fewer than 10 days, in which case they will be held at the box office. If you are unable to attend a performance for which you have a reservation, **please call Ticket Central at least 24 hours prior to your performance.**

## EXCHANGES

**SUBSCRIBERS, PATRONS & GenPH MEMBERS** have unlimited exchange privileges. **MEMBERS AND FLEXPASS HOLDERS** may exchange once per production.

## TAX DONATIONS

**SUBSCRIBERS AND PATRONS:** If you are unable to exchange for another performance, PH will issue a receipt for a tax-deductible contribution at the conclusion of the run upon your request.

If you do not release your tickets **24 hours in advance of your performance**, we will be unable to provide seats for another performance or a tax receipt.

## BENEFITS

### SECOND LOOK REPEAT-VIEW POLICY

If you've already seen a show as part of your package and would like to see it again during its regular run, \$20 reserved-seating tickets are available. Season ID required. Limit one per Subscription, FlexPass, or Membership. Subject to availability.

### BRING THE KIDS DISCOUNT

Bring children aged 22 and under to productions during the regular run for \$15 per ticket. Children must accompany package holder to production. Call Ticket Central to reserve. One ticket per package. Subject to availability.

# NEIGHBORHOOD DISCOUNTS

## 44 & X

622 10th Avenue  
New American  
(212) 977-1170  
Mention PH and receive a complimentary fallen chocolate soufflé with dinner.

## ABOVE

At The Hilton Times Square  
234 West 42nd Street  
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(212) 642-2626  
10% discount on lunch or dinner.

## BANGKOK HOUSE

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Thai  
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10% discount on purchase.

## BROADWAY JOE STEAKHOUSE

315 West 46th Street  
American Steaks & Seafood  
(212) 246-6513  
20% discount on lunch or dinner.

## \*CHEZ JOSEPHINE

414 West 42nd Street  
French  
(212) 594-1925  
Complimentary glass of house wine with dinner.  
Reservations suggested.

## EMPIRE COFFEE & TEA

568 9th Avenue  
Coffee and Treats  
(212) 268-1220  
15% discount on all products excluding cups of coffee.

## ETCETERA ETCETERA

352 West 44th Street  
Italian/Mediterranean  
(212) 399-4141  
10% discount on purchase.

## HK CAFÉ

523 9th Avenue  
American  
(212) 947-4208  
20% discount, or free drink with dinner, or free dessert with dinner.

## IL PUNTO RISTORANTE

507 9th Avenue  
Italian  
(212) 244-0088  
Complimentary dessert with purchase of an entree.

## KAVA CAFÉ

470 West 42nd Street  
Cafe  
(212) 239-4442  
10% discount on purchase.

## L'ALLEGRIA

623 9th Avenue  
Italian  
(212) 265-6777  
10% discount on entire check when paying in cash. Unavailable on Friday & Saturday.

## LANDMARK TAVERN

626 11th Avenue  
Contemporary American  
(212) 247-2562  
10% discount on purchase.

## LITTLE TOWN NYC

366 West 46th Street  
Contemporary Brewpub  
(212) 677-6300  
15% discount on entire check.

## THE MEAT FACTORY STEAKHOUSE

"Brazil Brazil"  
330 West 46th Street  
Brazilian Steakhouse  
(212) 957-4300  
10% discount on entire check when paying in cash. Discount unavailable on Friday & Saturday.

## SARDI'S

234 West 44th Street  
American Traditional  
(212) 221-8440  
Complimentary glass of house wine with entrée. Reservations suggested.

## THEATRE ROW DINER

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# PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS

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## BOOTYCANDY

Written and Directed by  
**ROBERT O'HARA**

**AUGUST 22–OCTOBER 12, 2014**  
Playwrights Horizons Mainstage Theater

This is the first of six productions in  
the 2014/15 Season.

## #Bootycandy



## BACKSTORY

## DANCE!!! DANCE!!! DANCE!!!

As Robert O'Hara's outrageous episodic odyssey follows its young gay protagonist, Michael Jackson receives more than one passing but reverent shout-out. I spoke with the playwright about his relationship to the King of Pop, and why his presence suffuses O'Hara's delightfully subversive *Bootycandy*.

**SARAH LUNNIE:** Do you remember the first time you heard Michael Jackson sing? What did he and his music mean to you, growing up?

**ROBERT O'HARA:** I don't remember the first time I heard Michael Jackson sing. I do remember the first time I saw him sing *live*... my mother took me to a Jackson 5 concert when I was a little kid because she knew even then that I was a huge fan. I was constantly being asked by my family members to dance like Michael Jackson, which I did with abandon. He was a god to me even when he was still singing with his brothers, but *Off The Wall* was the first cassette that I bought on my own. I was nine years old. It was transformational. MJ was special. Like me. He didn't act like all the other boys. Like I didn't. He was a man-child and so I could relate to him being "different." And throughout my life, when he danced, my soul shifted. It was the closest thing I can imagine to getting the Holy Ghost. I followed everything about him and felt, because we were both aliens from another planet, we would eventually find one another and work on something together. I honestly felt this way until the very moment that I heard he died, and at that moment a 39-year-old man whose idol had passed away, wept.

**SL:** When in the process of writing did Jackson weave his way into the fabric of the play? Was that part of how you imagined the piece from its conception, or did he find his way in more gradually, as you wrote?

**RO:** Once I decided that *Bootycandy* would have a throughline that took its main character from childhood into adulthood, I knew that Michael Jackson would figure into that. If I was going to satirize moments of my life, then I knew part of that satire would be my obsession with the King of Pop. I was an oddity

as a child; *Bootycandy* is an oddity of a play; and I wanted it to be a tribute to the greatest oddity of them all, giving thanks to his spirit for helping me get through a life that has been at times incredibly lonely and dangerous as a gay black man. And I've always thought of MJ as a gay black man, and maybe if he wasn't a "King" he could have lived an open life... at least, that's the narrative I choose to believe.

**SL:** I realize this question begs a million answers, but what's so great about MJ? And what would you say is his legacy?

**RO:** Watch "Thriller." Watch "Billie Jean" or "Beat It" or "Smooth Criminal" or "Bad," and the question of what is so special about him will instantly be rendered rhetorical. He is a wonder of the world. I can't name another person who has existed that could do what he could do and did it the way he did it. He was a genius. Play the opening of "Billie Jean" right now. Seriously: turn it on right now. Better yet, don't turn it on – it's already on in your brain: "*Do do... do do... do do... do do... she was more like a beauty queen of a movie scene, I said don't mind but what do you mean, I am the one, who will dance, on the floor, in the round...*" Now hum Beethoven's Fifth. Exactly. They're both in there already. THAT is his legacy. And the last person in the last spaceship that leaves this planet, they will know MJ and his music.

**SARAH LUNNIE**  
ASSOCIATE LITERARY MANAGER

