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BWW Interview: Many Related Talents FOUND in Renaissance Man Jonah Platt

by Gil Kaan Feb. 13, 2020



Jonah Platt Courtesy of IAMA

IAMA Theatre Company's latest production **FOUND** will be opening Thursday February 20, 2020 at the Los Angeles Theatre Center. Helmed by **Moritz von Stuelpnagel**, this new musical based on **Davy Rothbart's** popular **Found Magazine**, features an array of familiar Los Angeles stage talents including: **Jordan Kai Burnett**, **Sheila Carrasco**, **Parvesh Cheena**, **Desi Dennis-Dylan**, **Tom Detrinis**, **Zehra Fazal**, **Ryan W. Garcia**, **Mike Millan**, **Karla Mosley** and **Jonah Platt**.

I had the opportunity to toss a few questions to Jonah, an actor/singer/writer/musician/director, blessed with a multi-talented family - Broadway/television/film producer father **Marc Platt** and Tony Award-winner brother **Ben Platt**.

Thank you for taking the time for this interview,

Jonah!

So what initially piqued your interest in getting involved with **FOUND**?

I've kept an eye on all the cool things IAMA has been doing for quite some time now. I directed their holiday cabaret, seen a few of the great plays they've produced (go see **CANYON!**), gotten to know a bunch of the folks involved. When I heard from Stefanie Black that IAMA was doing its first ever fully produced musical, and that Moritz would be directing it, I was SUPER excited and leapt at the chance to audition.

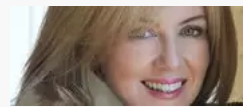
Have you worked with any of the **FOUND** cast or creatives before?

I did a reading of a song cycle called **EVERGREEN** by Matthew Puckett with IAMA as part of their New Works Series (I was actually a last minute replacement due to illness!), so there I got the chance to work again with Stef Black, who directed the piece, as well as Bailey, with whom I sang a duet and had previously directed in the cabaret, and Karla was in the reading as well. I'd also directed Parvesh in the cabaret, too. But everybody else involved is new to me! Jordan and I have known each other a number of years through the L.A. theater scene, but have never gotten to work together, and I've known Kathryn Burns a while too

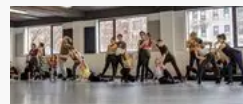
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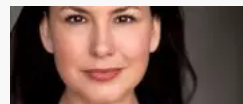
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without having worked with her - so I'm just so excited and happy to have the opportunity to play with this truly incredible cast and creative team now!



If you were to submit your character Davy on an online dating app, what qualities of his would you tout?

I would say Davy is charming, extremely creative, ambitious, big-hearted and has a great sense of humor. He enjoys cold pizza from the box, Miller Lite, being present, and the mysteries of the human condition.

What character flaws would you finesse?

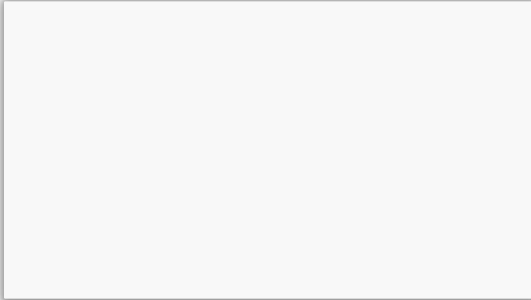
If I had to ding Davy for any flaws, it would be that when the stakes get high, he gets a bit lost in his own ambition and desire, and doesn't handle himself in the most mature and magnanimous way. But I think that's a trap a lot of us fall into very easily, so it's hard to be too mad at him.

In an alternate universe, where and under what circumstances would Davy, WICKED's Fiyero and HAIR's Woof interact? (hanging out at a Starbucks? rocking out at a concert? In a DMV line?)

This is a zany question! Fiyero, Woof and Davy would definitely all hang out at a kickass party - all three dudes love to throw down and get wild, love to feed off the energy of a group and help others around them have a good time. I think they'd actually get along quite well! Fiyero would be throwing the party obviously. Davy would provide some laughs and live entertainment. And Woof would have everyone howling at the moon and streaking by the end. It'd be an awesome party.

You're a Renaissance Man. You act, sing, write, arrange, direct, produce. Any particular order of preference to your artistic outputs? Do you prefer the bright lights on stage or the solitude of creating new pieces of music or scripts?

Ever since I was a kid, I've always done all the things at once - at play dates or for school projects or with my siblings, it was always "let's put on a show!" And so I'd write the show and direct it and act in it and write lyrics and make up the harmonies, etc., etc. So it's



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kind of always been a package deal in my heart. Right now, I'm most focused on my performing and my writing - though I LOVE being part of a cast, and then getting on stage and connecting with an audience, and LOATHE sitting alone at a computer typing. But I do love the satisfaction from FINISHING writing something, and the emotions that well up in me as I'm writing something if it's really powerful and true. I'd love to be directing more - I think it may be what I'm best at of all the things I do - but I honestly just don't have the time for it at the moment.

I love checking out special skills on performer's resume. You list seven accents you can deliver - Israeli, Irish, British, Czech, New York, Spanish, Appalachian. How did you develop your ear for differentiating accents?

Those accents all have very specific stories behind them! Several are show specific - I had to learn Irish and Czech a few years back when I went through many rounds of auditions for *ONCE*, which never ended up happening for me. I learned New York for *A WALK ON THE MOON*, which I starred in at ACT in 2017 (more on that later), Appalachian for *FLOYD COLLINS* in 2014. Everyone's got some forms of British, I studied Spanish in school, and I've been to Israel quite a few times and find it a wonderful fun accent to do. So there is a method to the madness.

What's the very first play your producer father took you to experience?

I have absolutely no idea what the first show I ever saw was. My parents took us to MANY shows growing up - every kind of performing arts you could think of. Kids' theater, community theater, every big national tour at the Pantages, local productions, trips to New York to see Broadway shows, opera - I remember seeing *THE MAGIC FLUTE* at the [Dorothy Chandler](#) when I was very young, and almost instantly going to sleep in my Dad's lap because I thought it was so boring - I've been fortunate to see a lot of theater from a very young age!

When did you realize you wanted to be in the performing arts?

All I've ever really done is the performing arts, so there was never a question in my mind that I'd pursue something within the field of entertainment. Out of college, I was more focused on writing for television, because, truth be told, I didn't have the confidence in myself that I could make it as a performer. But within a few years, my path led me back organically to performing in a big way and it became apparent to me that this might be something I could seriously pursue as a career. And I've been very fortunate to do a little bit of everything along the way.

How many times had you seen *WICKED* before being cast in it?

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Oh, gosh! I'd probably seen **WICKED** 20 times before I joined the company. It's hard to remember that there was ever a time before since I performed it 350 times- but I'd seen it on Broadway a dozen times, in Chicago, in L.A. a few times, in London, in Australia. All these times later, I still love it, I've never gotten sick of it. It's one of the great musical theater gifts to our art form - it's something that, as a writer of shows, I go back to all the time as a model of so many different things it does well, narratively, musically, structurally. It really is a golden example of just a fantastic musical.

How proud were you of your younger brother Ben when his name was announced as Best Actor in a Musical for his titular role in *DEAR EVAN HANSEN*?

I was crazy proud! As any big brother would be seeing his brother achieve his life's dream. It was a wonderful gift for my whole family to be able to be there to witness that dream come true for him.

What's next on the full plate of [Jonah Platt](#)?

Next up for me, I'll be heading to New York City (literally the morning after we close **FOUND**) to jump into rehearsals for the East Coast premiere of **A WALK ON THE MOON**, reprising the role of Marty I originated in our San Francisco production in 2017. We're closing out the season at the **George Street** Playhouse in New Brunswick, previews in April, official opening May 1st, and hopefully, Broadway in the not too distant future (fingers crossed!) I'm also half a lyric away

from wrapping up the newest workshop draft of **THE GIVER** (based on Lois Lowry's best-selling novel,) the musical I and my collaborators have been working on for a few years. We'll be doing a workshop in New York sometime later this year.

What song from *FOUND* would you love the Los Angeles Theatre Center audiences to leave humming or singing?

This score is so dang catchy and hummable. It's really dealer's choice - each song is so unique and specific, and Eli (Bolin) has filled the score with so many different styles, all of them melodic and hooky. So I really want the audience to walk away humming whichever song they love the most because I'm sure they'll each have their own favorites. It's really that kind of show. There's no "skip track," (the term I like to use for the song on a musical cast recording that everyone is like "Eh.. skip, let's get to the good song:"), so I think people are really gonna enjoy this score!

Thank you again, Jonah! I look forward to hearing your melodic *FOUND* notes.

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