

Rabbit Hole

November 3 - December 3, 2006
at the Boston University Theatre

From Southie to Broadway

Rabbit Hole playwright David Lindsay-Abaire, who also wrote the hits *Fuddy Meers* and *Kimberly Akimbo*, was born and raised in South Boston. He recently spoke with the Huntington's Literary Manager Ilana M. Brownstein and revealed the secret behind his humor, the truth about big budget musicals, and some words of wisdom to the next generation of playwrights who want to follow his journey down I-95 to the Great White Way.

Where do you get your signature sense of humor? Even *Rabbit Hole*, which has a very serious subject matter, has a great deal of your trademark wit. Is it all you?

I take no credit at all for my humor. It is my mother's entirely — the woman is hilarious. People often ask me, "Wow, as a male writer, why do you have these strong women as your central protagonists in every one of your plays?" And that's because of my mother, I'm sure. She's an amazing storyteller, she's very funny, she's a very big personality, and she's the center of every family event. She loves to take center stage and people love to watch her do it.

Your mom should be proud then, as your trademark style has garnered acclaim and has put you in demand for theatre and film alike. Not only are you writing your own original plays and screenplays, but you're adapting other people's books and films for the theatre, and translating some of your plays into the medium of film. How do you keep all those balls in the air?

It's all so different, and all the same. Anything that isn't a straightforward play for me, so far, has essentially been an adaptation. Writing on contract for Hollywood, in particular — I do it, and I like it, and I think some great movies can be made, but I always keep a part of myself away from those projects. I have to protect myself a little bit and not be as invested as I would be in something like *Rabbit Hole*, for example, something that is entirely my own. In adapting my plays *Kimberly Akimbo* or *Fuddy Meers* for the screen, I find it exciting and liberating because I already know the stories, and I know the characters, so really, it's an opportunity for me to crack the story open and explore things in new ways — things I was unable to explore in the plays themselves.

You're turning *Shrek* and *High Fidelity* into big budget musicals — how's that going?

Both of them are great — I love them a lot and I love working on them. The process for each is very different, actually, because for *High Fidelity* I'm only writing the musical's book, but for *Shrek*, I am the lyricist as well as the book writer. So on *Shrek*, I write through the scenes and get to the meat of



David Lindsay-Abaire

the events, just as I would as a playwright, because I get to write the best part — the songs. But for each project the trick is making it your own. You can't just sing the movie; you have to find where the story wants to sing. For *High Fidelity* and *Shrek*, we're cracking both open and finding the places where people will be surprised. Because if you just want to go see the movie, go see the movie. You don't need to pay a hundred bucks to sit in a Broadway theatre and just see the movie with a couple songs thrown in.

What's Got Everyone Talking?

David Lindsay-Abaire and His Broadway Debut

"In his deeply felt play about the aftermath of a child's accidental death, Mr. Lindsay-Abaire observes with a clear but compassionate eye the struggles of a middle-class family to knit itself back together in the wake of catastrophe." — *The New York Times*

"The playwright has crafted a drama that's not just a departure but a revelation — an intensely emotional examination of grief, laced with wit, insightfulness, compassion, and searing honesty." — *Variety*

"The dialogue is most impressive for capturing the awkwardness and pain of thinking people faced with an unthinkable situation — and eventually, their capacity for survival, and even hope. I don't frequently advise people to pay good money to have their hearts broken, but trust me on this one." — *USA Today*

"An uncommonly affecting and absorbing play — and a significant breakthrough for Lindsay-Abaire." — *Daily Variety*