# Billy Porter coming to London to direct gay play about love and activism



This Bitter Earth, written by Harrison David Rivers, is an intimate and poignant play exploring the relationship between a young black writer and his white activist lover. It poses the compelling question: “What is the real cost of standing on the sidelines?”

Set for a London production, the play will be directed by Grammy, Emmy, and two-time Tony Award-winning actor, singer, and directorBilly Porter with an industry-only reading scheduled for 1 November, with a cast featuring Emmanuel Imani (known for Geek Girl and The Wheel of Time) and Alexander Lincoln (noted for his roles in In From the Side and Everything I Know About Love).

The narrative unfolds against a backdrop of the 2012 Million Hoodie March, where Jesse, a young black man, encounters Neil, a young white man accidentally thrust into activism. Several weeks later, they start dating. As time progresses, Neil delves deeper into activism, while Jesse remains distant. Their relationship navigates various firsts amidst political demonstrations and civil discord, all while grappling with the reality that they cannot escape the social turbulence surrounding them.

Commenting on the play, Billy Porter shared, “Harrison David Rivers has written a searingly poignant and necessary play about love and loss through the lens of the fraying American Democratic experiment. Simple. Complex. Direct and filled with compassion all at once. I’m thrilled to be a part of bringing this very special piece to life.”

Billy Porter is no stranger to the theatre world, boasting an impressive resume that includes performances in Miss Saigon, Angels in America, and Grease. He won the Tony Award for Best Leading Actor in a Musical for Kinky Boots in 2013 and a Grammy for the musical’s official soundtrack the following year. His portrayal of Pray Tell in Pose garnered him an Emmy in 2019, making him the first openly gay man to win in that category.

Porter’s influence extends beyond the stage and screen. Time magazine recognised him as one of the 100 most influential people in 2020. He also published his memoir, Unprotected, in October 2021, and made his directorial film debut with Anything’s Possible in 2022.

Harrison David Rivers, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, is an award-winning playwright, librettist, and TV writer. His notable works include The Bandaged Place, This Bitter Earth, and the musicals Five Points, We Shall Someday, and I Put a Spell on You. Rivers’ TV credits include One of Us Is Lying, The Nevers, and Wytches.

This collaboration between Rivers and Porter promises a thought-provoking and tender narrative that resonates deeply, offering a lens into the complexities of love and activism.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)