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Billy Porter (entertainer)

Billy Porter (born September 21, 1969) is an American <u>Broadway theater</u> performer, singer, and actor. He attended the <u>Musical Theater</u> program at <u>Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts School</u>'s School of Drama, graduated from <u>Carnegie Mellon University</u> School of Drama, and achieved fame performing on Broadway before starting a solo career as a singer and actor.^[1]

Porter won the 2013 Best Actor in a Musical for his role as Lola in *Kinky Boots* at the <u>67th Tony Awards</u>. For the role, Porter also won the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Actor in a Musical and <u>Outer Critics Circle Award</u> for Outstanding Actor in a Musical. In 2014 Porter won the <u>Grammy Award for Best</u> Musical Theater Album for *Kinky Boots*. He currently stars in the television series *Pose* for which he was nominated for a <u>Golden Globe Award</u> and won the 2019 <u>Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series</u>, becoming the first openly gay black man to be nominated and win in any lead acting category at the Primetime Emmys.

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Early life



Porter in 2017

Born	September 21, 1969 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.
Education	Carnegie Mellon University (BFA) University of California, Los Angeles (GrDip)
Occupation	Pop singer, actor, performer, vocal coach
Spouse(s)	Adam Smith (<u>m.</u> 2017)
Awards	2013 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Actor in a Musical 2013 Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical 2019 Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead

Porter was born in <u>Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</u>, to William E. Porter and Cloerinda Jean Johnson Porter Ford.^{[2][3]} His sister is MaryMartha Ford-Dieng.^{[4][5][6]} After attending Reizenstein Middle School, Porter attended Taylor Allderdice

High School and then the Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts School, where he graduated in 1987.^[7] He graduated from the <u>College of Fine Arts</u> at <u>Carnegie Mellon University</u> with a B.F.A. in Drama and earned a certification from the graduate-level Professional Program In Screenwriting^[8] at UCLA.

During the summers of 1985–1987, Porter was a member of an entertainment group called "Flash" which performed daily at Kennywood Park in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania.^[9]

Career

Porter played Teen Angel in the 1994 Broadway revival of *Grease!*. Other shows he has been in include *Topdog/Underdog* at <u>City</u> <u>Theatre</u> (2004),^[10] *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Dreamgirls* at <u>Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera</u> (2004),^[11] and the song cycles <u>Myths</u> *and Hymns* and <u>Songs for a New World</u> (Off-Broadway, 1995).^[12]

Porter wrote and performed in his one-man autobiographical show, *Ghetto Superstar (The Man That I Am)* at Joe's Pub in New York City in February and March 2005.^{[12][13][14]} He was nominated for "Outstanding New York Theater: Broadway & Off Broadway Award" at the 17th GLAAD Media Awards.^[15]

In September 2010, Porter appeared as Belize in <u>Signature Theatre Company</u>'s 20th Anniversary production of <u>Tony Kushner</u>'s *Angels in America*.^{[12][16]}

Porter originated the role of "Lola" in <u>Kinky Boots</u> on Broadway in 2013, with songs by <u>Cyndi Lauper</u>, book by <u>Harvey Fierstein</u> and directed/choreographed by <u>Jerry Mitchell</u>. Porter won both the 2013 <u>Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Actor in a Musical</u> and <u>Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical</u> for this role.^{[17][18]}

Porter has also appeared in a number of films. He played a major role as Shiniqua, a <u>drag queen</u> who befriends Angel (<u>David</u> <u>Norona</u>) and Lee (Keivyn McNeill Graves) in <u>Seth Michael Donsky</u>'s <u>*Twisted*</u> (1997), an adaptation of <u>*Oliver Twist*</u>.^[19] He has also appeared on <u>*The RuPaul Show*</u>.

He has had a musical career with three solo albums released, *Billy Porter* on DV8/<u>A&M Records</u> in 1997, *At the Corner of Broadway* + *Soul* in 2005 on <u>Sh-K-Boom Records</u> and *Billy's Back on Broadway* (Concord Music Group) in 2014. He featured in a number of songs in the tribute album <u>It's Only Life: The Songs of John Bucchino</u> in 2006 released on PS Classics.^[20] He sings on Adam Guettel's 1999 album *Myths and Hymns* studio cast album on Nonesuch Records.^[21] He also covered "Only One Road" that was included on the Human Rights Campaign compilation album *Love Rocks*.

Porter wrote the play *While I Yet Live*, which premiered Off-Broadway at <u>Primary Stages</u> in September, 2014 in previews, officially on October 12. In addition to Porter, the cast included Lillias White and S. Epatha Merkerson.^{[12][22]}

Porter released *Billy Porter Presents the Soul of Richard Rodgers* in April, 2017. The album, which features new, soulful takes on classic <u>Richard Rodgers</u> songs, includes solos and duets from the following artists (in addition to Porter himself): Tony and Grammy Award winners <u>Cynthia Erivo</u> (*The Color Purple*), <u>Renée Elise Goldsberry</u> (*Hamilton*) and Leslie Odom Jr. (*Hamilton*), Tony Award-winner <u>Patina Miller</u> (*Pippin*), Grammy Award winners <u>Pentatonix</u> and <u>India Arie</u>, Tony Award nominees <u>Brandon</u> <u>Victor Dixon</u> (*Shuffle Along*), Joshua Henry (*Violet*), and <u>Christopher Jackson</u> (*Hamilton*), alongside YouTube and <u>Kinky Boots</u> star Todrick Hall and multiple Grammy Award nominees Deborah Cox and Ledisi.^[23]

Porter reprised the role of Lola in *Kinky Boots* in September 2017 on Broadway, where he did a 15-week run.^[24]

In 2018, Porter starred in the FX show, <u>Pose</u> in the role of Pray Tell. In 2019, <u>Pose</u> earned its renewal for a third season after airing just one episode from the second season. In August 2018, Porter confirmed via <u>Instagram</u> that he was joining the cast of <u>American Horror Story</u> for its eighth season, subtitled <u>Apocalypse</u>.^{[25][26]} Porter duetted with <u>Pose</u> co-star <u>Dyllón Burnside</u> and sang from his album in a benefit concert <u>emceed</u> by Burnside on July 23, 2018, to celebrate the season 1 finale and raising money for <u>GLSEN</u>.^{[27][28][29]} In June 2019, to mark the <u>50th anniversary</u> of the <u>Stonewall Riots</u>, sparking the start of the modern <u>LGBTQ</u> rights movement, <u>Queerty</u> named him one of the Pride50 "trailblazing individuals who actively ensure society remains moving towards <u>equality</u>, acceptance and dignity for all <u>queer</u> people".^[30] Also in June 2019 he presented the Excellence in Theatre Education Award at the <u>73rd Tonys</u> at <u>Radio City Music Hall</u>, but he earned media coverage for his <u>haute couture</u> red and pink gown, <u>upcycled</u> from <u>Kinky Boots</u>' stage curtains, in a <u>uterine</u> shape,^[31] and his impromptu performance of "<u>Everything</u>'s <u>Coming Up Roses</u>" from <u>Gypsy</u>, for host <u>James Corden</u>'s "Broadway karaoke".^[32] In September 2019, he was nominated for a <u>Golden Globe Award</u> and won the <u>Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series</u> for <u>Pose</u>, becoming the first openly gay black man to be nominated and win in any lead acting category at the Primetime Emmys.

Also in 2019, Porter had a <u>cameo appearance</u> in <u>Taylor Swift's</u> "<u>You Need to Calm Down</u>" music video that featured twenty LGBTQ icons.^[33]

Fashion

At the 2019 Golden Globes, Porter gained attention for wearing an embroidered suit and pink cape designed by <u>Randi Rahm</u>.^[34] He continued to make fashion waves that year when he wore a fitted tuxedo jacket and a velvet gown by <u>Christian Siriano</u> with 6" <u>Rick Owens</u> boots to the 91st <u>Academy Awards</u>.^[35] In February 2019, he was an Official CFDA [[1] (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Fashion_Designers_of_America)] Ambassador for NYFW: Mens [[2] (https://cfda.com/news/now-hold-that-pose-for-me)]. Porter attended the 2019 Met Gala, and embraced the <u>Camp: Notes on Fashion</u> theme by being carried on a litter by six shirtless men while sporting a "Sun God" ensemble. The outfit was designed by The Blonds, and it included a bejeweled catsuit outfitted with 10-foot wings, a 24-karat gold headpiece, as well as custom gold-leaf <u>Giuseppe Zanotti</u> shoes and fine jewels by Andreoli, John Hardy, and Oscar Heyman.^[36]

Personal life

Porter is openly gay. Porter and Adam Smith were married on January 14, 2017.^[37]

Discography

Albums

- 1997: Billy Porter (DV8/A&M Records)^[38]
- 2005: At the Corner of Broadway + Soul (Sh-K-Boom Records)^{[38][39]}
- 2014: Billy's Back on Broadway (Concord Music Group)^[38]
- 2017: Billy Porter Presents the Soul of Richard Rodgers^[23]

Singles

- 1997: "Show Me"/"What Iz Time"
- 2005: "Awaiting You"/"Time" (Live) (Sh-K-Boom Records)
- 2017: "Edelweiss"
- 2019: "Love Yourself"

Other songs

- "Only One Road" on Love Rocks compilation album
- "Love Is on the Way" on <u>The First Wives Club</u> album
- "Destiny" with Jordan Hill on Jim Brickman's Greatest Hits album
- "Where Is Love?" with Liz Callaway

Appears in

- Featured on a number of songs on tribute album It's Only Life: The Songs of John Bucchino^[20]
- Adam Guettel's album *Myths and Hymns* in 1999^[40]
- He is featured with Alan Cumming, David Raleigh and Ari Gold in a cover of "That's What Friends Are For", of 'The Friends Project' in support of the Ali Forney Center, a NYC shelter for homeless LGBT youth. The song was arranged and produced by Nathan Leigh Jones and directed by Michael Akers.^[41]

Concerts

Porter has performed at various venues in New York City, including <u>Lincoln Center</u>, which was broadcast on PBS in 2015 ^[42] and Joe's Pub in New York City.^[43]

Filmography

Film

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1996	Twisted	Siniqua	[44]
1996	The First Wives Club	Singer	
1997	Anastasia	Ensemble and character voices	Voice role
2000	Intern	Sebastian Niederfarb	[45]
2000	The Broken Hearts Club: A Romantic Comedy	Taylor	[46]
2004	Noel	Randy	[47]
2014	The Humbling	Prince	[48]
2020	Like a Boss	N/A	Post-production

Television

Year	Title	Role	Notes	
1998	Another World	Billy Rush	Unknown episodes	
1999	Shake, Rattle and Roll: An American Love Story	Little Richard	Television movie	
2004	Law & Order	Greg Ellison	Episode: "Cry Wolf"	
2007– 12	So You Think You Can Dance	Performer	4 episodes	
2012	The Big C	Eric	Episode: "Thin Ice"	
2013	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Jackie Walker	Episode: "Dissonant Voices"	
2013	Land of Lola: Backstage at Kinky Boots	Host	8 episodes	
2014	Christmas at Rockefeller Plaza	Performer	Television special	
2015	Billy Porter: Broad & Soul	Performer	Television special	
2016	The Get Down	DJ Malibu	Episode: "Where There Is Ruin, There Is Hope for a Treasure"	
2018– present	<u>Pose</u>	Pray Tell	17 episodes Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series Winner-Critics' Choice Television Award for Best Actor in a Drama Series Nominated—Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Television Series Drama Nominated—Television Critics Association Award for Individual Achievement in Drama	
2018	American Horror Story: Apocalypse	Behold Chablis	5 episodes	

Theatre

Sources: Playbill Vault; [49] Off-Broadway Database [50]

- Miss Saigon, Ensemble/John (u/s), Broadway (1991)
- Grease, Teen Angel, Broadway (1994)
- <u>The Merchant of Venice</u>, Solanio, Off-Broadway (1995)
- Songs for a New World, Performer, Off-Broadway (1995)
- Smokey Joe's Cafe, Performer, Broadway (1995–97)
- Miss Saigon, John (replacement), Broadway (1998–99)
- Jesus Christ Superstar, Jesus of Nazareth, Helen Hayes Performing Arts Center, Nyack, NY (1998)^[51]
- Dreamgirls, James Thunder Early, New York Actors Fund concert (September 2001)^[52]
- Radiant Baby, Various, Off-Broadway (2003)
- Topdog/Underdog, City Theatre, Pittsburgh, PA (2004)^[53]
- Little Shop of Horrors, Audrey II (replacement), Broadway (2004)
- Chef's Theater: A Musical Feast, Performer, Off-Broadway (2004)
- Ghetto Superstar, Performer, Off-Broadway (2005) also playwright
- Birdie Blue, Bam/Little Pimp/Sook/Minerva, Off-Broadway (2005)
- Putting It Together, Performer, New York (2009)
- Angels in America, Belize, Off-Broadway (2010)
- Kinky Boots, Lola, Broadway (2013-2015)

- Kinky Boots, Lola (replacement), Tour (2014)
- HAM: A Musical Memoir, Off-Broadway (2015) director
- Shuffle Along, or the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed, Aubrey Lyles, Broadway (2016)
- White Rabbit Red Rabbit, Off-Broadway (2016)^[54]
- Kinky Boots, Lola (replacement), Broadway (2017)

Awards and nominations

Award	Year	Category	Recipient(s) and nominee(s)	Result
Broadway.com Audience Awards	2013	Favorite Actor in a Musical	Kinky Boots	Won
Critics' Choice Television Awards	<u>2019</u>	Best Actor in a Drama Series	Dece	Nominated
Dorian Awards	2010	TV Performance of the Year – Actor	- <u>Pose</u>	Won
	<u>2019</u>	TV Musical Performance of the Year	"Home" (with Mj Rodriguez and Our Lady J)	Won
Drama League Award		Distinguished Performance	Kinky Boots	Nominated
Drama Desk Award	2013	Outstanding Actor in a Musical		Won
Fred and Adele Astaire Awards		Outstanding Male Dancer in a Broadway Show		Nominated
GLAAD Media Awards	2017	Vito Russo Award	Billy Porter	Won
Gold Derby Awards	2019	Best Drama Actor		Won
Golden Globe Awards	<u>2019</u>	Best Actor – Television Series Drama	Pose	Nominated
Grammy Awards	2014	Best Musical Theater Album	Kinky Boots	Won
Outer Critics Circle <u>2013</u>		Outstanding Actor in a Musical	Kinky Boots	Won
Primetime Emmy Award	2019	Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series	Dece	Won
Television Critics Association	2019	Individual Achievement in Drama	- <u>Pose</u>	Nominated
Tony Awards	2013	Best Actor in a Musical	Kinky Boots	Won

See also

LGBT culture in New York City

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External links

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- Billy Porter (https://www.allmusic.com/artist/mn0000091081) at AllMusic
- Billy Porter (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0692039/) on IMDb
- Billy Porter on LastFM (http://www.last.fm/music/Billy+Porter)

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