

## Justin Ellington-Bio

Justin Ellington's career has encompassed the role of composer, arranger, producer, educator, and performer. His work in theater, film and the record industry have allowed him to traverse through jazz, classical, blues, world and contemporary musical styles. His work has been heard on the stage, screen and radio. Justin has record production credits that include Usher, Nicki Minaj, and Jamie Foxx. His work in the theater as a composer and his performance work as a pianist has taken him around the world. Justin's understanding of the difference in process for theater, film and radio have proven to benefit his career and have allowed him to traverse through the various industries with confidence.

Theater was not in Justin's plans but he had seen a performance by the Freddie Hendricks Youth Ensemble of Atlanta and was amazed at how serious the company was about the stories they were telling. All of the pieces were original and written by the cast of kids ranging from 8 years old to 20. All the years of making up songs in his parents living room were about to pay off.

At the Alliance Theater Justin worked with Kent Gash, Director of NYU New Studio and Rosemary Newcott Alliance Artistic Director of Theatre for Youth and Families. Kent gave Justin the chance to work on plays like *Top Dog Underdog*, *Shakespeare's R&J*, and August Wilson's *King Hedley*. Rosemary and Justin created theater for young audiences, *Class of 3000* and *Middle School the Musical* are just a couple of the titles the Newcott and Ellington collaborated on.

In 2004 Justin was introduced to playwright Will Power who at the time was working on a new musical. The musical titled *The Seven* was a contemporary take on the Greek play *The Seven Against Thebes*. The use of hip hop music and culture were employed in Will's adaptation. *The Seven* allowed Justin to apply both his understanding of theater and record production. The music needed a sonic quality that compared to what someone would hear in a dance club or on the radio. The creative team for the Seven which included director Jo Bonney (*By The Way Meet Vera Stark*), award winning choreographer Bill T Jones (*Fela*, *Spring Awakening*) and Tony Award winning sound designer Darron West (*Peter and the Star Catcher*).

*The Seven* went on to win multiple awards including an Obie Award for Best Musical and served as an introduction to the New York theater scene. *The Seven* was successful in its Off Broadway run and had continued success in California when it made its west coast premier at the La Jolla Playhouse.

Not long after *The Seven* Justin was requested by Des Mcanuff (*Jersey Boys*, *Tommy*) to compose music for a new show he was directing *Fetch Clay Make Man* written by Will Power. The play was not a musical but did have a large musical component to it. *Fetch Clay Make Man* opened at the McCarter Theater in Princeton, New Jersey and helped form a working relationship between Des and Justin that proved its strength with their Stratford Shakespeare Festival production of *As You Like It*. The play was set in the 1920s and Justin's original compositions fit the production perfectly.

*The Pride* directed by Joe Mantello (*Wicked*, *Assassins*) gave Justin yet another chance to explore another musical form with regards to story telling. The music for the play was at times minimalistic and other times very complex just like the play was. Ellington and Mantello collaborated again in 2011 on the Lincoln Center Theatre's production of *Other Desert Cities* by Jon Robin Baitz. The play had huge success and won the Outer Critics Circle award for Outstanding New Off-Broadway play. *Other Desert Cities* eventually transferred to Broadway where the production received very high praise and enjoyed a highly successful run including 5 Tony nominations including best play.

Other theaters of note that Justin's work has been heard are: the Cincinnati Playhouse, Dallas Theater Center, Hartford Stage, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Williamstown Theater Festival, Chautauqua Theater Company, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Center Theater Group and many others.

Ellington has always maintained a relationship with the music business and in 2004 was introduced to Bangladesh Productions a producer that was on the rise in the hip hop and r&b world and soon to carry over to the pop and R&B genres. As a writer, musician and producer with Bangladesh, Justin has contributed to over 10 million albums sold. He earned a Grammy for his work with Usher (*Raymond vs. Raymond*) and an ASACP award for his work with Nicki Minaj (*Pink Friday*).

Justin reconnected with Will Power to debut a new musical *Stagger Lee* at the Dallas Theater Centre, staged by Obie award winning director Patricia McGregor (*Hurt Village*). The play spans over a centuries worth of musical styles from 1895 to present day.

In 2014 Ellington was commissioned to compose for a piece titled Move Act Free in collaboration with multimedia design and production company Batwin + Robin under the direction of Chief Creative Officer George C. Wolfe (*Angels in America, Bring in 'da Noise/Bring in 'da Funk*) for The National Civil and Human Rights Museum (*Atlanta, Georgia*). Ellington and team at Batwin + Robin earned an International Cinema in Industry (CINDY) award for their work.

Justin's film work can be heard in the recently released short film What Was Lost directed by Don Swanson, Here You Go directed by Jill Durso and As You Like It directed by Des Mcanuff for BRAVO television network.

Ellington has served as guest professor at Princeton University, Southern Methodist University, and Clark Atlanta University. He has worked in countless schools and community organizations around the country as a lecturer and instructor. Justin was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company(London) to compose music for their myShakespeare programming which explored the way that Shakespeare is interpreted around the globe.

"When preparation meets opportunity there will be success" and in believing that Justin continues to prepare and develop his craft for all opportunities that may be presented.