
Danny Kornfeld



Danny Kornfeld | bio



Danny Kornfeld is a nuanced rising star currently based out of New York City. As a **dual citizen** of both the United States (born in Philadelphia) and Austria, he has the ability to work both in the U.S.A and anywhere in the **European Union** effortlessly.

Kornfeld made his mark in what has been deemed a “break out performance” in the Broadway show *Harmony* during the '23/'24 season establishing himself as one of NYC's most exciting up and coming actors.

Prior to Broadway, Kornfeld made his television debut recurring on season 11 of *American Horror Story* working along side Zachary Quinto and Russell Tovey. Kornfeld then went on to shoot *Tripped Up* (Universal Pictures) as the comedic villain of the movie, playing across from Leah Lewis, Vanessa Williams and Ariel Winter. Kornfeld is also best known for starring as Mark Cohen in the 20th Anniversary production of *Rent*.

Kornfeld's innate talent and commitment to complex, authentic characters, singles him out as a rising force in the entertainment industry.

Danny Kornfeld Makes His Broadway Debut in 'Harmony'

by Kristen Tauer November 14, 2023

photography | Drew Elhamalawy





In the week leading up to opening night for the new musical production “Harmony” on Broadway, star **Danny Kornfeld** was doing his best to avoid the old theater parable: “break a leg.”

“I’m just immensely proud and relieved that the moment is finally here,” Kornfeld says from his apartment in New York, several hours before his call time at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. “I keep having these moments when I’m walking down the stairs of the subway or crossing the street, being extra cautious of my footing, to make sure that nothing gets in the way of me making my Broadway bow on Nov. 13 when we open,” he says. “I keep saying over and over to myself: ‘I can’t believe it’s finally happening.’ This is the thing that I have worked toward since I was a little kid. Going to theater camp at the JCC, doing community theater – what I set out to do in life is actually happening, and it’s one of the best feelings in the world.”

The actor signed onto “Harmony” three years ago, but the show’s journey to the stage has been significantly longer. Penned by Barry Manilow and Bruce Sussman, the musical has been in the works, trapped in production limbo, since the ’90s.

Directed by Warren Carlyle, “Harmony” unfolds the true story of the Comedian Harmonists, a musical performance ensemble from Germany in the late 1920s. The internationally popular six-man group was forced to disband in the mid-1930s due to the rise of the Nazi regime. Kornfeld stars as “Young Rabbi,” embodying one of the group’s members and serving as the youthful counterpart to the show’s narrator, portrayed by Broadway veteran Chip Zien.

“I love that it’s a true story, but it’s one that no one’s ever heard about,” says Kornfeld, noting that the musical has been swimming upstream amongst familiar shows and adaptations of popular stories. “What’s really drawn me to this particular story is, I mean, I’m a Jew, getting to tell an inherently Jewish story,” he says. “Especially right now, it’s unfortunate how this show continues to remain so timely. It’s one of the most artful shows on Broadway in a very long time, which I have such respect for Bruce and Barry and Warren for creating, because it’s completely original.”



The “timeliness” of the show has been a constant description since the beginning of its off-Broadway run, which coincided with the start of the war in Ukraine.

“Einstein comes [onstage] at one point and says his famous quote of, ‘The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil. It will be destroyed by those who stand by and do nothing.’ And it got applause then, and it’s getting applause now as well,” says Kornfeld, noting that that line has been part of the show since its earliest iterations in the ‘90s. “It’s a brilliant quote because it’s applicable to so many things but I think audiences now are, of course, interpreting that in our new current climate.”

The actor calls out a particularly tense moment in the musical, which places the audience directly within the depicted on-stage action. “There’s a moment of a true antisemitic hate crime, and I’ve had people say to me, ‘We were really unsettled by this because we weren’t sure if this was part of the show or not at first,’” Kornfeld says. “So I think everyone’s shoulders are just a little bit more raised right now in life, especially when it comes to Jewish stories.”

Kornfeld also stars in the coming-of-age comedy film “Tripped Up,” which premiered at the end of October. The actor’s part was upgraded from a day role to that of the film’s villain, after the original actor who was booked tested positive for COVID-19.

“What was supposed to be just one day ended up being my entire summer,” Kornfeld says. “You go through your career hearing stories like that from people being like, ‘Oh, this person got sick and then I had to step in.’ And then I actually became the person,” he adds. “And now it’s given me this propensity for believing that as I continue throughout my career, it’s true that anything is possible and anything can happen.”



Soon after wrapping "Tripped Up," he booked a recurring role in "American Horror Story." "I really have such a sense of peace with the trajectory of my career so far and with my life in general," Kornfeld says. "When you look back and see all the ways in which different moments have led you to where you are, that is where I find my sense of spirituality."

While he hopes to do more screen projects after "Harmony," Kornfeld is savoring the present moment: delivering his big solo onstage, which he describes as "one of the greatest love ballad anthems written in the longest time for musical theater."

"And I hope, I have a feeling, many kids from colleges in musical theater programs are going to be singing it after this," he says.

"And that's where I get choked up thinking about younger versions of myself and even me now being like: you are on a Broadway stage, center stage, getting to sing out a glorious high note. It's the best, most powerful, connected feeling in the world."



American Horror Story NYC (Season 11) | Recurring

dir. John Gray

dir. Our Lady J





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SIG

7. "NYC" – What Happened to Billy

The ambitious 11th season of *American Horror Story* went to New York City in the 1980s to tell intertwined stories of murder and the emergence of the AIDS crisis. It was an inconsistent season, but it also featured some of the most conceptually risky ideas in the history of the show, including how trauma can impact people differently. In the sixth episode, we discover that Patrick (Harry Treadaway), Sam (Zachary Quinto), and Whitely (Jeff Hiller) have a shared secret that binds and traumatizes them. In a flashback, we see the death of a young man named Billy (Danny Kornfeld). When, during a night of drug-induced sex, Sam and Patrick realize that Billy is dead, they call in the fixer Henry (Denis O'Hare) to cover it up. He brings Whitely, who begins the process of literally turning Billy into parts — the chopping sounds in this one are unforgettable. It's made all the more painful when one realizes that Whitely being asked to grotesquely cover up Billy's passing is what led to so much violence in his role as the Mai Tai Killer, hammering home a theme of the season, that everyone's life matters and death can't be ignored.

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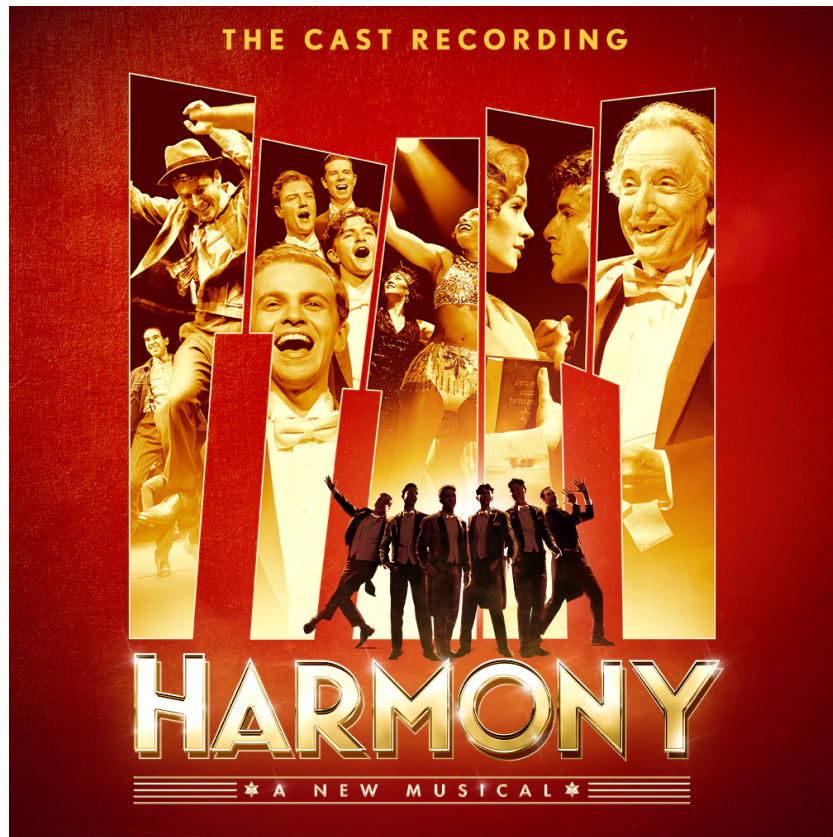
TRIPPED UP | Supporting
dir. Shruti Ganguly

alongside Ariel Winter, Vanessa Williams, Leah Lewis



decal

RECORDINGS



Interview: Danny Kornfeld Makes the Big Move to Broadway in HARMONY

How does it feel to have made the journey with this show from Off- Broadway to Broadway?

The thing that I keep saying to myself is, 'I can't believe that it's happening.' We kept on saying throughout the rehearsal process, "When we move uptown..." and in my mind, I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'll believe it when I see it,' and the fact that it actually happened... It continues to blow my mind, the way that stars truly need to align to make any show happen, and make any show come to Broadway, but the fact that I get to make my Broadway debut with this incredibly special, artful, poignant, timely piece, it continues to blow my mind.

What stands out to you most from opening night?

I think the true celebration as a company, marking that achievement together, and getting to have my dream come true along with Bruce and Barry's dream coming true. I think there were 16 Broadway debuts that night. To have us all be experiencing that together I think is one of the most remarkable feelings from it. And getting to arrive on the red carpet in 1920 cars was really cool too [laughs]. I think we should resort back to that time, let's add a few seatbelts and actual windows in the cars, but other than that, yeah I think we should do it.



courtesy of Julieta Cervantes



courtesy of Chloe Rabinowitz

And when it comes to Barry and Bruce, these men have been working on this show for 30 years now, and their ear is just so incredible. Especially Barry, he is a master musician, but that even transfers into scene work as well. He knows how jokes are supposed to land, he knows how the feeling of a scene, what it's supposed to evoke. I'm continually amazed by the three of them on a daily basis, just the way that their individual artistries have so perfectly come together as a trio to make this show happen now. There is a reason that this show is finally happening on Broadway with the three of their minds combined together along with the six of us men. I really think it's bashert in some ways, fate.

What has been your favorite part about the character you play, and how has it been creating a bond with the other Harmonists?

Young Rabbi has this inherent sense of optimism to him that I think has really rubbed off on me in a lovely way. I think I'm inherently an optimistic person, but I think I'm a pragmatic person. And his general appetite and hunger for life is something that continues to inspire me on the daily. The way that he has an appetite for life in the show is through his relationships with his friends, and with the love of his life, Mary, played by Sierra Boggess, and that's really what I strive for in my life in New York City. My chosen family is what makes my life so full. I also love that Rabbi has a true appetite for snacks and food, so I get to eat salami sandwiches during the show, which is an added bonus [laughs].

But back to what you said about what it's like forming this relationship with five other guys, what's so cool is that five of the six of us have all made our Broadway debuts together. And so, to kind of be getting to experience this meta version of what the Comedian Harmonists actually experienced together, their rise onto the scene of the public eye, to get to be doing that with five other guys who are kind of experiencing that same thing together, I think we'll continue to look back through our careers and be so grateful to have one another, to be the keeper of the memories of this time.

How does it feel to bring a piece of history to the stage every night?

8 shows a week can be tiring, and when I have those moments I think on these men, and I think of their story, and I think of how important it is for the world to know who they are, and for our audiences to bear witness to their story, to make sure that something like the way their story ends never happens again. People at the stage door ask, "How do you do this every night?" And it's really for them. We have a duty, and a privilege to continue to tell their story time and time again.



TEAM



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