

February 26, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

Our musical, *Kingdom*, was part of NAMT's 2007 Festival of New Musicals. Before NAMT, theatre producers had either not seen the show, or had seen a version that, due to budgeting and time constraints, was under-rehearsed and often inaudible (unfortunate sound equipment). Since *Kingdom* also seemed a dangerous and difficult show to produce – a violent, tragic hip hop musical about a real gang – we couldn't find any theatres willing to take a chance on *Kingdom*.

Then we got into NAMT. The 45-minute format helped us hone the show to its essence; many of the cuts and discoveries we made then have found their way into the full show. For the first time, we had enough rehearsal for the actors to fully learn the material. Because of *Kingdom*'s complicated songs and fast-paced raps, the newfound intelligibility (helped by an excellent sound system and engineer) made a huge difference in the audience's understanding. Even if no production leads occurred as a result of the reading, it would have been very valuable.

But many other things have happened as a direct result of NAMT. First, Lou Spisto, Executive Director of The Old Globe in San Diego, saw *Kingdom* at NAMT, was fascinated, and set up meetings for us with three agents who he thought would be interested (no agents had been interested in us before NAMT). Soon after we signed with William Craver at Paradigm.

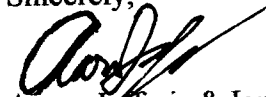
Producing Director Steve Stettler of Weston Playhouse in Vermont also saw *Kingdom* at NAMT, and brought us for a week-long residency to his theatre to work on *Kingdom* and to begin work on our next show, *The Weird Sisters*. We got more work done in that week than in months of long-distance collaboration (we live on opposite coasts).

*Kingdom* was awarded a 2008 Richard Rodgers award, which would fund 7 staged readings of the show at a Manhattan theatre. NAMT introduced us to the director of The Public Theater's new Musical Theatre Initiative, Ted Sperling, who ultimately helped produce the readings at The Public Theater and Queens Theatre in the Park, which generated even more interest in the show.

Our relationship with Lou Spisto and The Globe, which started at NAMT in 2007, resulted in our dream production: a collaboration between The Old Globe and a San Diego neighborhood and high school struggling to cope with gang violence that culminated in a wonderful run of *Kingdom* at the school and The Globe's main stage, great reviews in San Diego newspapers, and a model for how *Kingdom* can be produced at a regional theatre in a way that mobilizes the community around the themes of the show – which was our intent from the beginning.

We're now on to our next full production – at ReVision Theatre in New Jersey – and are excited about new possibilities opening thanks to the run at The Globe. NAMT caught us at just the right time, threw us into a big pond of theatres eager for new work, and the ripples are still extending outward. I hope you will help NAMT help other writers like us, and other shows like *Kingdom*.

Sincerely,



Aaron Jafferis & Ian Williams

*Kingdom* co-authors