



**PRESS CONTACT: Trisha Mead**  
**503.445.3763**  
[trisham@pcs.org](mailto:trisham@pcs.org)

## M E D I A R E L E A S E

*COMMUNISM, FRENCH WHORES AND BASTARDY: FOUNDING FATHERHOOD GETS COMPLICATED IN JOSH KORNBLUTH'S BEN FRANKLIN: UNPLUGGED*  
*Portland Center Stage's accidentally academic adventure into the life and times of a Founding Father and his homeland terrorist son opens October 2nd in the Ellyn Bye Studio.*

**September 17, 2009 – PORTLAND, OR.** Portland Center Stage invites you meet one of America's unlikeliest Ben Franklin scholars, monologist and fringe theater performer **Josh Kornbluth**, as he loses some hair and gains a fresh perspective on the costs of independence, the meaning of revolution and the vagaries of Founding Fatherhood in [\*Ben Franklin: Unplugged\*](#). *Ben Franklin: Unplugged* previews on Tuesday September 29th, opens on **Friday, October 2nd and runs through November 22, 2009**. Tickets **start at \$24**, with student and under 30 discounts available. Rush tickets for *Ben Franklin: Unplugged* are \$20. Show times are 7:30 pm Tuesday through Saturday, with a 2:00 pm Sunday matinee and alternating Saturday 2:00 pm and Sunday 7:30 pm performances. See the show calendar <http://tickets.pcs.org/buytickets/calendar.asp> for the complete performance schedule.



Neither Hal Holbrook style imitation nor scholarly lecture, [\*Ben Franklin: Unplugged\*](#) is more warmly comic autobiography laced with historical curiosity inspired by the moment when writer/performer Josh Kornbluth looked into his bathroom mirror and discovered a startling resemblance to the man on the \$100 bill. Hoping to make lemonade out of those hair loss lemons, Josh set off in search of the Ben Franklin beneath the surface of the kite-wielding, aphorism spouting, apocryphally syphilitic American icon. Soon he finds himself (with help from a 90 year old Franklin scholar named Claude and his flagrantly communist Mother) on an accidentally

academic adventure into the hallowed halls of the Yale Franklin Papers. What he discovers (that Franklin's once beloved bastard son, William, became the Royal Governor of New Jersey and one of our fledgling democracy's first homeland terrorists) will leave you questioning the global political implications of your own dining table debates.

**About Josh Kornbluth.** Josh was raised in New York City, then worked as a copy editor at a series of alternative newspapers in Chicago and Boston before moving to San Francisco. While supporting himself as a temp (up to 80 words per minute, with very few errors), he performed at open mikes around the Bay Area and was completely miserable. In 1989 he opened his first autobiographical monologue, *Josh Kornbluth's Daily World*, at Enrico Banducci's hungry id in San Francisco. Since then he has created and performed numerous solo shows, including *Haiku Tunnel*, *The Mathematics of Change*, *Red Diaper Baby*, *Ben Franklin: Unplugged*, *Love & Taxes*, and (most recently) *Citizen Josh* (which just completed a six-city tour of India). He has also appeared in several films: the back of his head was seen briefly in *Searching for Bobby Fischer*; the front of his head (and little else) was seen for a minute or two in Francis Ford Coppola's *Jack*, in which he played the pivotal character of "Cigarette Pack Man"; in addition, he has had slightly more extensive parts in Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Teknolust* (he was seduced by Tilda Swinton) and Jonathan Parker's *Bartleby* (no seductions whatsoever). In 2001 a feature-film version of *Haiku Tunnel*, starring Josh and co-directed by Josh and his brother Jacob, was selected for the Sundance Film Festival and then released nationally by Sony Pictures Classics; it is now available on DVD, and is priced to move. In 2002 Josh collaborated with the San Francisco Mime Troupe on *Mr. Smith Goes to Obscuristan*. More recently, a concert film of *Red Diaper Baby*, directed by Doug Pray,

(continued)

debuted on the Sundance Channel. Josh can currently be seen in Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Strange Culture* and in Finn Taylor's *The Darwin Awards*. For two years he hosted a public television interview program on San Francisco's KQED, cleverly titled *The Josh Kornbluth Show*. Josh started up a new production company, Quixotic Projects, which is creating (among other things) a feature film based on *Love & Taxes*, a new interview program titled *Josh Kornbluth Talks to Strangers*, and a new solo show called *Andy Warhol: Good for the Jews?* Josh lives in Berkeley with his wife and son and their snake, Snakey. You can follow his doings at [joshkornbluth.com](http://joshkornbluth.com).

**Ben Franklin: Unplugged** was originally directed by **David Dower**, the associate artistic director at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. and produced by **Jonathan Reinis**, who was also the multi-Tony winning producer of several Broadway productions including *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, *Kiki and Herb: Alive on Broadway* and *Def Poetry Jam*. Jonathan is in the process of bringing Carrie Fisher's *Wishful Drinking* to Broadway this fall.

Josh's shirts were selected by **Sara L. Sato**, and his Franklin get-up was provided by **Laura Hazlett**. The lighting was designed by **Jim Cave**. The musical compositions in the show were created by **Joshua Raoul Brody**, who had this to say about them:

*“Careful listeners to the taped period music throughout the show will hear samples relevant to the performance in different ways. There are samples of Franklin’s invention, the glass armonica, which operates on the same principle as running one’s wetted finger around the rim of a fine crystal glass.*

*The instrument caught the fancy of a few daring composers such as those featured here, W. A. Mozart and Nino Rota (who included the instrument in his score for Fellini’s tribute to Franklin’s contemporary, Casanova).*

*There are also samples of Franklin’s composition: a suite of string quartets whose very novelty -- they can be played on open (or “unfingered”) strings, thereby very democratically enabling just about anyone to play them -- results in their being nearly unlistenable.*

*And there is a Scottish folksong that made Franklin cry every time he heard it.”*

Additional support for this production has been provided by **Stoel Rives** and Michael Menashe. Media support has been provided by **Kink.fm**.

Portland Center Stage's 2009/10 season is funded in part by the **Regional Arts & Culture Council** and Work for Art; the **Oregon Arts Commission**; the **National Endowment for the Arts** and the Recovery Act; **The Schubert Foundation**; the **Paul G.Allen Family Foundation**; Joanne Lilley; Helen and Jerry Stern; and Tim & Mary Boyle.

**PORTLAND CENTER STAGE** inspires our community by bringing stories to life in unexpected ways. Established in 1988 as an off shoot of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PCS became an independent theater in 1994 and has been under the leadership of Artistic Director Chris Coleman since May 2000. The company presents a blend of classic, contemporary and original productions in a conscious effort to appeal to the eclectic palate of theatergoers in Portland. PCS also offers a variety of education and outreach programs for curious minds from six to 106, including discussions, classes, workshops and partnerships with organizations throughout the Portland metro area.

**THE GERDING THEATER AT THE ARMORY** houses a 599-seat Main Stage and the 200-seat black box Ellyn Bye Studio. It was the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue, to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. The Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public on Oct. 1, 2006. The capital campaign to fund the renovation of this hub for community artistic activity continues.

###