

'Hedwig and the Angry Inch' Producer's Catchall of Ideas

David Binder Keeps His Leather Jack Spade Messenger Bag With Him at All Times

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David Binder in front of the marquee of 'Hedwig and the Angry Inch' on Broadway *Bryan Derballa for The Wall Street Journal*

As a theatrical producer and a self-described brand storyteller who creates corporate events, David Binder is always on the hunt for the new and the innovative. He financed and produced the first iteration of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" in 1997 (at the modest cost of \$29,000) and brought the Argentine performance troupe De La Guarda to the U.S. the following year.

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Since then, he has resurrected "Hedwig" (now a smash on Broadway), as well as produced a star-studded "Of Mice and Men," with James Franco and Chris O'Dowd. In 2007, he also brought from conception to reality the High Line Festival, a series of performances curated by David Bowie and starring everyone from Ricky Gervais to Laurie Anderson and Arcade Fire.

"Whether it happens in a corporate context or off-Broadway, I am always trying to bring a transformative experience to audiences," Mr. Binder says from his office in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan.

His most elaborate event was a corporate celebration for [IBM's](#) IBM -0.21% centennial anniversary at Lincoln Center in 2011. He brought performers and artists from different arenas together to tell the story of the company and "the great ideas that pushed the last century forward," he says. "For example, the LXD, a hip-hop dance troupe from Los Angeles, worked with violinist Joshua Bell and the Juilliard orchestra to illustrate how diverse collaborations can make something beautiful and surprising and extraordinary," he says.



To channel his muse, he keeps his leather Jack Spade messenger bag with him at all times. "It's my mobile office," he says. It's a silo of inspiration that goes from his West Village apartment to London's West End and beyond.

Inside its worn canvas interior are the usual accouterments of a deal maker, including business cards, a 13-inch MacBook Air and a key ring with a Citi Bike fob. And there is lots and lots of paper.

Mr. Binder is currently carrying around a copy of the Playbill for "The Hurt Locker: The Musical," the fictional failed show that grants Hedwig an abandoned Broadway stage to use for the night. He's also got a new screenplay by John

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Clockwise from top left: keys with Citi Bike keyfob, programs from festivals, folder of reviews, a script, a flash drive of an event this year for IBM and magazine articles. *Bryan Derballa for The Wall Street Journal*

Cameron Mitchell, the writer and performer who originated Hedwig and is hoping to collaborate on a new project. There are magazine articles, including one from Vice magazine by the multi-hyphenate Mr. Franco. "My assistant

puts stuff in my bag so I always have something to read when I'm caught at rehearsal or sitting on a train," says Mr. Binder, who is always on the hunt for ideas.

In the coming months he's headed across Europe and as far as Australia on a quest for new talent. Most important in his bag are a manila folder filled with newspaper clippings of theatrical reviews of current productions and programs of various festivals around the world to determine what he'll attend.

"I do a lot of international travel," he adds. "The Easter Bunny did not bury all the eggs under the island of Manhattan. There is a big theatrical world out there with lots of exciting work. It's my job to find it."

—Heidi Mitchell