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FRIDAY

GO! ON & OFF BROADWAY



IN "TALES FROM THE TUNNEL," WILSON JERMAINE HEREDIA TAKES QUITE A JOYRIDE

'Subway' actor pulls out all the stops

As a native New Yorker, Wilson Jermaine Heredia knows the subway and relates to "Tales From the Tunnel," opening Sunday at the Bleecker Street Theatre.

Tweaked and partially recast since its run at last year's Fringe Festival, the play knits together true-life straphanger stories. Six actors portray dozens of characters whose recollections run the gamut from silly to sad to scary.

Co-writers and directors Troy Diana and James Valletti, whose dad worked for the MTA for 27 years, based the show on interviews with subway riders and personnel.

Heredia, 38, known for his Tony-winning role as Angel in "Rent," has his share of underground experiences. "I grew up in Brooklyn," he says. "In high school, my brother and I used to pretend we

didn't know each other on the subway and pick fake fights with each other.

"Then we'd get off and hug each to watch people's reactions," he continues. "It was a way for us to draw attention to ourselves."

In other words, it was his first acting gig.

Another vivid memory: Using what he calls "the Jedi mind trick" to defuse a drugged-out kid itching to cause trouble on a subway platform.

"He was just blasted and looking for a fight," says Heredia. "So I was just incredibly ingratiating — and took control and won him over."

Has Heredia ever channeled his inner Jedi since then? "Yeah," he says. "It's called 'dating.'"

Joe Dziemianowicz

"Tales From the Tunnel" runs through Sept. 5 at 45 Bleecker St. Tickets: \$50; (212) 239-6200.