ISSUE 18 — VOLUME 52 — DECEMBER 2024

SGN

PRIDE OVER FEAR



NEW FACE ON THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
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WE WON! LGBTQ+ VICTORIES
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Facing the darkness, we find strength in our unity once again

BY THE *SGN* EDITORIAL BOARD

The LGBTQ+ community faces one of the darkest times in memory. American voters have reelected Donald Trump — not through a constitutional loophole but by a majority of the popular vote.

To be frank, this is terrifying. It is beyond heartbreaking to know that people across this nation voted in a convicted felon who has targeted Transgender people, has been found guilty by a jury of sexual abuse, and promises to round up immigrants and refugees.

People everywhere are in fear for their families, futures, and freedoms. The Trevor Helpline, a crisis line for LGBT+ youth, saw a 700% increase in calls following the election. The LGBT National Hotline saw a fivefold increase.

Trump's anti-LGBTQ+ cabinet choices and alt-right pundits confirm our worst fears that Project 2025 has been the blueprint for his next term all along. Together, his nominees aim to undo decades of LGBTQ+ progress.

With Trump's nomination of anti-Trans fearmonger Robert F. Kennedy Jr., we will see rollbacks on public insurance programs providing gender-affirming care and PrEP. With Linda McMahon as secretary of education, we will see more school districts banning books that promote tolerance. McMahon, cofounder of the America First Policy Institute, aims to limit federal funding to any public school that teaches lessons on race, racism, sexuality, and gender.

We will see more of our neighbors, encouraged by a new era of Trumpism, perpetuate physical and emotional violence against us. In fact, this has already begun around the nation. Immediately following the election, Black people started receiving threatening text messages telling them they had been "selected to pick cotton." Two weeks later, immigrants reported similar messages, telling them to prepare for an ICE roundup. A Lesbian was told via text to report to an eight-week "LGB re-education camp" on Inauguration Day; it added that Trans people will be sent to "work camps" indefinitely.

Strength through unity

Though it's frightening, in times of great struggle, we must remember that we are not powerless. When LGBTQ+ people speak out and continue to show up for one another, we find our greatest strengths as a community.

During the Lavender Scare in the 1950s, we stood in solidarity with those unfairly targeted for their gender and sexual orientation. In 1969, a diverse group including drag queens and Trans women of color united to riot against oppression outside the Stonewall Inn and sparked a movement to obtain equal rights. During the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and '90s, we united to care for the sick and dying and agitate for needed funding, research, and treatments.

Our community is built upon the legacy of standing up for one another, and we will continue to do this. Our rights will not be taken away in silence. We are prepared to fight back through peaceful nonviolence and civil disobedience against unjust laws and policies.

In the coming administration, people will seek to divide us. There will be opportunities for those whom Vice President-Elect JD Vance has referred to as "normal Gays" — so long as they are willing to turn their backs on their Queer and Trans siblings. It is essential for our survival that we remain united, stand up for the most vulnerable, and continue to fight to protect the rights of all Americans.

Washington

Here in Washington state, we are privileged to have dedicated government officials fighting to protect our rights. Marriage equality is the law in our state, and so are protections against discrimination. Governor-elect Bob Ferguson said he is committed to defending LGBTQ+ rights. City councilmembers, including the incoming Alexis Mercedes Rinck, are already preparing to cement protections for immigrants, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and disabled people in Seattle.

It may come as a relief to live in one of the safest cities for LGBTQ+ rights in America, but we cannot just keep our heads down. We must use our privilege and safety as tools to help those more vulnerable than ourselves. We will see an influx of new residents who will flee anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and prejudices to find safety and comfort. When they do, we will welcome them. We can use our state as an example of what the rest of the country can be if people choose love over hate.

No apathy

For many, relocation is not an option, so from the safety of our homes we can use our voices to support those stuck in regressive states. We can donate to organizations that provide resources and aid, speak out and lobby our representatives in Washington, DC, to fight for our rights, and show our support in as many ways as we can.

If we give it space, apathy will be our downfall: we can't give up. Showing up for community members will be essential in the coming years.

If you are angry, tell your elected leaders, but don't give up on democracy — show up for the next election or attend city council and school board meetings. Our allies can support the LGBTQ+ community and protect their rights by educating and advocating at all levels, investing in mutual aid, donating to a local GoFundMe to cover medical or travel expenses, and celebrating all the small victories with our found families.

Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling right now, please reach out to the following resources:

- The National LGBT Helpline can be reached at 888-843-4564 for free confidential support, information, and local LGBTQ+ resources
- The Trans Lifeline, a confidential 24/7 peer support phone service run by Trans people for Trans and questioning people, can be reached at 877-565-8860.
- The Trevor Project, which provides free confidential crisis counseling to LGBTQ+ young people, can be reached at 866-488-7386.
- For the Suicide Prevention Lifeline in your community, dial 988.

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SGN



The ultimate guide to Gay gift giving

BY MIKEY ROX

The holidays are an excellent distraction after an election cycle — makes ya wonder if it was planned like that, huh? — and this year is no exception. Instead of churning out endless political memes on social media (really, give it a rest), turn your attention to making memories and exchanging gifts, like these carefully curated selections that'll lighten the mood, facilitate festiveness, and bring joy to those on your Nice List (because we not givin' Naughty List-ers nothin' this year).

SEE **GIFTS** PAGE 24

NATHAN LEMON



Unpacking drag star Dina Martina's layers of fabulousness this holiday season

BY ANDREW HAMLIN

COURTESY DINA MARTINA

Words cannot describe Dina Martina. Or perhaps more accurately, valiant wordsmiths the world over scrape their barrels of simile, metaphor, and adjective, in their noble quests to describe her.

Allow me please, dear reader, this humble stab at such: Like Ronald McDonald hit by a Cragmont Diet Chocolate Mint Soda truck then held captive by Scientologists, she simply has to be experienced to be believed.

Broad of visage, smeared of lipstick, built like a midnight Milwaukee bowler with a belly full of borscht, our local heroine rapidly claimed the title Worst Drag Queen of All Time. Except that her show transcends drag as it ushers viewers into an alternate dimension, where she transmogrifies bad into good and horrible into fabulous, as in her insistence on "faux velour" for her furnishings, and her long-suffering offspring Phoebe (pronounced "Pho-EBB-ee") remains forever mute against the sweet dysfunctions of Mommie Dearest.

Dina brings the latest iteration of her long-running *Christmas Show* to the ACT Theatre December 6–24. She was fabulous enough to take some questions over email.

Andrew Hamlin: What are your first Dina Martina memories? Do any of them involve faux velour?

Dina Martina: Well, I suppose all of my memories are Dina Martina memories, since that's been my name since birth. I was born in the Appalachian Mountains, but I don't remember it. My mother swaddled me in, you guessed it, velour, and we moved to Las Vegas so she could pursue her lifelong dream of becoming a compulsive gambler. My father died in childbirth, so he wasn't able to go with us.

AH: Did you know from the start how fabulous you were, or did that take time?

DM: Quite honestly, I don't think it'll really sink in until my autopsy.

AH: What did your teachers at school think of you? Did they understand your fabulousness, or did that prove a struggle?

DM: I don't think they really understood me, because the comments they wrote on my report cards were always things like "Dina daydreams constantly" and "Dina is falling into a serious position. She answers every question with a 'What?'" and stuff like that.

SEE **DINA** PAGE 26



Legendary John Waters returns to Seattle for annual Christmas show

BY ANDREW HAMLIN

GREG GORMAN

As a lifetime purveyor of cinematic, literary, and enthusiastically oral filth, Baltimore's own John Waters should need no introduction — but in any case, I just gave him one. The legendary "Prince of Puke," who at 78 shows no signs of easing up on the gas , brings the annual *A John Waters Christmas* to the Neptune Theatre on December 3-4.

And you'll find his new Christmas single, "John Waters Covers The Singing Dogs' "Jingle Bells" / "It's A Punk Rock Christmas" out now on Seattle's own Sub Pop label.

Andrew Hamlin: What are your favorite stories of taking the Christmas show to the masses?

John Waters: It's completely new every year, I'm memorizing it right now. That's the tedious part, memorizing a new 70-minute show.

People with stories, they tell me in the question-and-answer period, often about the tree falling over. That's a very common thing that happens in houses. It usually involves liquor or pets.

The one thing I hate is when people wear blinking corsages in the audience, 'cause I think it's forbidden video cameras.

AH: Any thoughts on Seattle?

JW: I've always had really good audiences out there. Dina Martina is my favorite. We always came to each other's shows. I like the weather. I like when it rains — I don't mind it. Some of the most original styles and fashions come from there. Lots of riots and rebellion too!

AH: Your current Christmas sobriquets are "St. Nick the Dick, Father Fistmas, and Kris Kingleberries." Did you write all these yourself?

JW: Of course. Nobody else's ever written my material, ever. I guess Kris Kingleberries would be a newer, fresher, title.

AH: I noticed the A-side of your new Christmas single is very short…

JW: Well, no novelty records are long! And the B-side is longer.

AH: Do you remember hearing the original, growing up?

JW: Oh, they still play it, and it's the most hideous Christmas carol ever! Everybody changes the channel. That's why I wanted

SEE **WATERS** PAGE 26


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SGN SEATTLE NEWS



World AIDS Day: Honoring lives lost to HIV/AIDS

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

KLAUS NIELSEN

Gay City: Seattle's LGBTQ Center, the leading provider of essential HIV education, prevention, support, and care in the King County region, will host its 21st annual "Stronger Together: World AIDS Day" fundraiser on December 1 to remember and celebrate the lives lost to AIDS. This gathering will kick off at the Century Ballroom, located at 915 E. Pine St.

"By supporting this event, you will be supporting the largest community HIV testing organization in King County, physical space for art and remembrance of the AIDS crisis via the AMP: AIDS Memorial Pathway, affirming youth programs, and so much more," says Gay City's event page. "This event creates vital space to gather together, commemorate the impact of HIV/AIDS on our communities both past and present, celebrate the progress that has been made, and provide essential resources for ending the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic."

The fundraiser opens at noon (doors open at 11 a.m.) and is free to attendees, who will learn about HIV research updates and have an opportunity to enter a silent auction and raffle, or simply enjoy the drag performances. A community vigil and procession will proceed through the AMP starting at 2 p.m.

The AMP was created to recognize the impact of the AIDS crisis in Washington, both past and present, and includes a list of names of Washingtonians who have passed away. It's estimated that 14,000 state residents are living with HIV/AIDS, with over half living in King County, according to Gay City.

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As the third-oldest LGBTQIA+ newspaper in the United States, the Seattle Gay News (SGN) has been a vital independent source of news and entertainment for Seattle and the Pacific Northwest since 1974.

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we need your support to continue our mission. Your contribution will ensure that SGN remains a beacon of truth and a virtual gathering place for community dialogue. Support us printing and providing a platform for LGBTQIA+ voices.

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Suspect who shot and killed Transgender woman Kenji Spurgeon still at large

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR


FACEBOOK

The Seattle Police Department (SPD) is still searching for the suspect who shot and killed 23-year-old Kenji Spurgeon, a Black Transgender woman, during the early hours of July 1.

Spurgeon's murder marked the second killing of a Transgender person in Washington state this year. Earlier, the *SGN* reported on the slaying of Reyna Hernandez, a Trans Latina resident of Renton who was found dead in a Mexico cemetery bound by her hands and feet and shot in the head.

On July 1, dispatchers received a report of a shooting on E. Pine Street shortly before 12:30 a.m. Law enforcement officers found Spurgeon lying on the ground with a gunshot wound, and provided first aid until the Seattle Fire Department arrived on scene, whereupon Spurgeon was pronounced deceased, according to the SPD Blotter, which states that the circumstances leading up the shooting remain unknown.

"It's an incredibly close community, and everybody's trying to look out for each other," SPD's Sgt. Patrick Michaud told the *SGN*. "The most important thing we can ask of the community is that if somebody knows anything, please call us."

Sgt. Michaud said that if someone has a small bit of information that they don't think is pertinent to this case that it's could be the key to solving the case and getting closure for the Spurgeon family.

"I know it's not what anyone wants — they'd rather have Kenji back than closure on this," Sgt. Michaud said.

A GoFundMe page was launched this summer to assist the Spurgeon family with funeral costs, and it met its goal.

"Kenji was a bright light in our lives, known for an infectious smile and quick wit. Kenji had an extraordinary ability to uplift everyone around with laughter, a joke, a song, or a dance. Kenji inspired us all to seek joy and be cheerleaders for one another," wrote Malia Burns, who organized the fundraiser on behalf of the family.

Sgt. Michaud said the East Precinct in Capitol Hill is focused on crimes against the LGBTQ+ community. During warm weather, the SPD places greater emphasis on patrols outside of bars and clubs in the area, according to Sgt. Michaud, who also acknowledged how historically, officers have not treated Transgender people properly.

"The fears they have are valid. The concerns they have are valid," he said. "We have quite a few Transgender officers, so it's something that we're trying to be more accepting of on our end — [and] control the things we can control within our department, so that people feel comfortable coming to us and speaking to us, and bridge those gaps that have historically been there, and do our damnedest to make sure everybody in our neighborhoods feel welcome."

Concerns about violent crimes involving LGBTQ+ people stem partially from those visiting Capitol Hill's vibrant nightlife.

"There's a lot of concern there, because you don't know where people are coming from, and they bring whatever beliefs they have in here and they cause problems," Sgt. Michaud said.

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the SPD Violent Crimes Tip Line at (206) 233-5000.

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I sat in on the anti-Trans panel at Seattle Central Library so you didn't have to

BY MADISON JONES


MADISON JONES

"Liar! You're a liar, it's all lies!" These were the words I could no longer contain as I yelled out from the back of the room in anguish and frustration.

On the evening of Sunday, Nov. 17, at the Seattle Central Library, the self-proclaimed "gender critical" organization known as Women's Declaration International USA held a panel discussion on Transgender people and their rights. With Transgender flag in hand, I stood alongside the two married gentlemen who had very kindly snuck me in, so we could endure the conspiratorial and hate-filled presentations by the event's speakers.

Before my protestation, the last speaker of the evening, Carol Dansereau, proclaimed that "Transgender ideology is the biggest medical travesty of our time," completing a long-winded diatribe on how there was a "sadomasochistic" cabal of predatory doctors, psychologists, and Transgender adults that were funneling vulnerable children into a medical pipeline of bodily harm and "genital mutilation."

As much as I wanted to wait until the Q&A at the end to press them all on their hurtful rhetoric, and not give in to their caricature of the scary, aggressive Transgender woman, this statement above all else really pushed me over the emotional edge. I had heard enough, and not long after, asked the gentlemen to accompany me out of the building.

The big question running through my mind that evening — echoed by the many other demonstrators and library staff members rightfully protesting outside — was this: how could the SPL be so callous and apathetic as to allow such an awful and bigoted organization a platform in one of their spaces?

Use of SPL spaces

The SPL's stance on permitting anti-Queer organizations use of its event spaces is not new. "This is the third time in the last five years that an anti-Queer group has been allowed to book space in our public library system," wrote a group of SPL staff members, many of them Transgender themselves, in their open letter condemning the WDI USA event. On Sunday evening, many of the protesters whom I joined outside in marching, chanting, and drawing Trans-rights graffiti with chalk on the sidewalk were SPL employees.

In late October, Executive Director and Chief Librarian Tom Fay wrote in a SPL blog post that "the Seattle Public Library affirms, values, and celebrates transgender and gender-diverse people." But then he states that the library refuses to turn away any group, based on "intellectual freedom" principles, even if its sole purpose of existence is to advocate for the full legal and social disenfranchisement of Trans people.

In these seemingly conflicting sentiments, it is apparent that a decision must be reached: Should the SPL veer away from its DEI policies and become more "neutral" about the groups it allows inside its doors, or should it take a more principled and proactive stance in ensuring that its LGBTQ+ staff and patrons feel safe and celebrated? The events of last Sunday show that the SPL can no longer afford to not take more decisive steps. The Transgender people, alongside their allies, out on the streets that night called on them to choose wisely.

These organizations see the SPL's green light as a form of implicit recognition and legitimization of their bigoted, malicious causes. "I commend the Seattle Public Library for allowing us to speak on this very important issue" was the opening remark of the second panelist, Susanna Keilman. (The first, Kara Dansky, spoke to the purpose of why WDI USA decided to hold its event at the library in the first place.)

The *Olympus Spa* case

The main agenda of panel was to organize support for the upcoming *Olympus Spa v. Armstrong* case in the Ninth District Court of Appeals, scheduled for the morning of the next day.

The *SGN* had covered this court case back in 2023 *[https://www.sgn.org/story.php?326399]*, but to briefly summarize, in May 2020, Olympus Spa in Lynwood denied services to Transgender woman, Haven Wilvich. According to Ms. Wilvich's account of events and court documents, she was invited along to a bachelorette party being hosted at the spa. She called ahead in advance to check if the spa would be willing to make accommodations, and the spa staff told her that they refuse to take Transgender women customers based on their right to religious freedom as a Christian-owned business. Ms. Wilvich decided to file an anonymous complaint to the Washington State Human Rights Commission, which found the business in noncompliance with antidiscrimination law. This led Olympus Spa to file a subsequent lawsuit in 2023 that failed but is being appealed.

It is important to know the facts of this case, because at the WDI USA panel, Ms. Dansky's rendition of events was significantly different. She claimed that Ms. Wilvich came to the spa in person and demanded service, and that she was the one who filed a lawsuit against Olympus Spa directly.

Of course, Ms. Dansky and the other panelists also never referred to Ms. Wilvich as "Haven" but rather by her deadname and exclusively used male pronouns. Everything Ms. Dansky and the other panelists said about Ms. Wilvich was done to slander and demonize her as much as possible.

A mutual friend reached out for comment on the situation, but Ms. Wilvich refused, stating that "...at this point, I'd rather lay low." And after hearing all the awful things WDI USA had to say about her that evening, as well as all the other harassment and death threats she has endured, it is not hard to understand why.

Using Korean culture to justify transphobia

Susan Keilman was brought on next by WDI USA to share her experiences as a Korean woman and third-generation immigrant with a personal and cultural background on the issue. She argued that "inclusion cannot come at the expense of Korean culture," going on to explain how traditional Korean spas are sacred female spaces in which women can come together to heal after menstruation, childbirth, and menopause and "biological men" should never encroach upon.

She also described it as a place to "be naked and celebrate our sexuality together" — which I assume meant celebrating the biological sex of being female and not sexual orientation. She also told the audience how Korean culture is a "matriarchy" that worships women, and how grateful she feels that "I have somebody that embraces being a man, and me being a woman."

I found all these narratives of traditional Korean culture and its idealized gender roles to be a little disingenuous. It was quite clear she was only using the elements of her culture that would be expedient to the narrative she was telling. But what really proved my suspicions was when she admitted near the end that "traditionally there have been some coed nude spas in Korea, but this instance is completely different!" That kind of sank her and Olympus Spa's entire argument for why "a person with a penis" cannot enter a Korean women's spa for cultural reasons to begin with.

All I could keep thinking about during that time were the Korean Transgender friends I have made in Seattle over the years, and how they have recounted their struggles to me with unaccepting family members, obtaining resources for their gender transitions, and being ostracized from their community spaces because of their queerness. One friend once told me about how grateful she felt that she gets to live in Seattle as a Korean Transgender woman, because of how much more strict and unforgiving gender roles and expectations are in South Korean society. Seattle was the first place where she felt like she could unashamedly be her authentic self.

"Junk science" and "invading women's prisons"

For the remainder of the evening, the other panelists got up one by one to share their perspectives and experiences on how "fake progressive" gender ideology was negatively impacting women's lives more broadly; however, their arguments as to how exactly that was the case did not hold up to any sort of empirical evidence or scrutiny. Nonetheless, the WDI USA panelists each confidently came to the podium to cite their fringe findings and anecdotal accounts.

Amy Sousa was the resident psychologist of the evening, who talked about how public calls for concern around the plight of Transgender children was an "empathy trap" meant to trick people into supporting medically irreversible damage. "We must trust our wince response" was her rallying cry, an obvious dog whistle for validating people's deep-seated transphobia. She also called the DSM-5 definition of gender dysphoria "junk science" without any clear explanation why.

April Morrow, the speaker on how "biological men" were invading women's prisons, was not even present; another panelist, Irene Lawrence, had to read her speech instead. (That tracks with the overall vibe of the evening and the low audience turnout, which led the SPL to move the panel to a smaller conference room.)

Elle Palmer is a cis woman detransitioner who during her late teen years thought she was a Trans man. She was brought on to accuse the gender-affirming doctors and therapists trying to help her of maliciously misleading her into transitioning. At one point, she even accused her therapist of pressuring her to get a hysterectomy, which was very surprising to hear.

One of the married gentlemen who I was with at the event was actually a Transgender man himself, and he told me in that moment how overwhelmingly difficult it has been for him to obtain gender-affirming services even as an older adult. He had to move across the country to the Seattle area just to find healthcare providers that would even agree to treat him.

And his personal account of transitioning, in contrast to Ms. Palmer's, lined up much more closely to the many other transmasculine friends of mine who have told me similar stories of struggle to obtain even basic-level gender-affirming care.

Ms. Palmer's speech was the only time Transgender men were mentioned throughout the evening. The rest of the time was unsurprisingly spent on painting Transgender women as hypersexual, male-bodied monsters. And that sentiment was particularly hit upon during the last speaker, Carol Dansereau, mentioned earlier.

Preparing for the storm on the horizon

The legitimacy and existence of Transgender and gender-diverse people across history and cultures is objective and academically verifiable. But after all the time I spent watching and listening in on these panelists, I can tell you firsthand that WDI USA isn't interested in having an intellectual debate or genuine conversation; through words and actions, it has proven that it exists purely to evoke fear and confusion among the public about the presence of Transgender people in public spaces. Its only goal as an organization is to completely revoke all civil rights protections and DEI policies, however tenuous, currently in place for Transgender people.

The ultimate irony of the panel is that they are correct on one thing: women's rights are currently under assault in this country; however, it is not the Transgender community they so vehemently despise waging it but rather far-right conservative politicians that will also be coming for us all and our civil rights next year.

For this reason alone, it is imperative that the few institutions left supporting the LGBTQ+ community, like the SPL, step up their allyship game. It is long past due that the SPL starts properly protecting the Transgender people that make up its employee and patron base by denying hate groups like WDI USA to platform.



Alexis Mercedes Rinck is ready to fight for Seattle's marginalized communities

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

COURTESY ALEXIS MERCEDES RINCK

As election results trickled in late into the night on November 5, Alexis Mercedes Rinck watched with bated breath. The following day, it was clear that her grassroots city council campaign was a success: Rinck defeated incumbent Tanya Woo to become the next member for Position 8.

"I am truly honored," Rinck told the *SGN*. "I'm proud of the base we've built — including laborers, the entire Democratic Party, advocates from transportation, housing, immigrant rights, and LGBTQIA2S justice."

Throughout her campaign, Rinck laid out clear goals for her time on the council and earned recognition from several interest groups for her detailed plans to improve housing disparities and transportation and advocate for citywide protections for LGBTQ+ people. Rinck believes her on-the-ground efforts, like connecting face-to-face with her neighbors, set her apart from her opponent.

"I tried to stay focused on the task at hand, which was talking to our neighbors and listening to what people were saying," she said. "We were out [knocking on] doors, we were at farmers markets, we were at community events, not just sharing our message but also continuing to listen to what our community was saying and hearing the messages about affordability, concerns around a Trump presidency, a desire to address climate change locally, building transit infrastructure that works for everybody — all of these pieces were things we continued to hear about."

The housing crisis

Once she takes office in January, Rinck plans to address housing concerns she heard about from many Capitol Hill residents. "The comprehensive plan is a really exciting opportunity for us to think about where we're building housing, how much housing can be built, and pushing for a strong urbanist agenda to ensure we have more housing in every neighborhood," she said.

Rinck aims to bring costs down by voting to invest in affordable housing programs, restore funding to tenant protection services, and expand rental assistance programs.

Another concern Rinck is ready to address on day one is Seattle's homelessness crisis. "A really important way that we can prevent our homelessness crisis from getting worse is by preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place, and that means an expansive rental assistance program," she explained. "Right now, we are not meeting the need. Last I checked, 5,000 folks are on United Way of King County's Rental Assistance Program waitlist. Being able to expand rental assistance is a priority for me."

The current city council is working with Mayor Harrell to approve next year's budget, and rental assistance programs are one of the proposed cuts. "That's something I was critical of. I'm hoping it will be restored," Rinck said.

Behavioral health services

City Council Position 8 represents all areas of Seattle, rather than just one district, and Rick said she's excited to address citizens' most significant needs, like expanded behavioral health services.

"We know that the introduction of fentanyl and meth into our communities — two of the most addictive substances on the planet — has been so tremendously challenging and deadly for too many," Rinck said.

She plans to address the city's substance use problem by partnering with state and county departments to introduce more comprehensive treatment programs, especially ones aimed at helping those struggling with substance use disorders *and* mental health disorders.

Rinck also wants to look into how county funds are allocated and lobby the state legislature for long-term care funding.

"Our city lacks those long-term behavioral health settings for folks who are particularly high acuity, [such as those] struggling with psychosomatic disorders like schizophrenia," she said.

Fighting Trump's anti-LGBTQ+ agenda

Through all the excitement of her electon win, Rinck acknowledged that the presidential results have left many afraid for the future. Rinck said she's committed to protecting Seattle's most vulnerable from the next administration.

"In running in this race, I wanted to be very clear with the public about my commitment to stand by and protect our rights and liberties within the city of Seattle and partner with our different levels of government, especially state government, and make sure we are protecting the rights of women, LGBTQIA neighbors, immigrants and refugees, and people living with disabilities," she said.

Rinck predicts that Seattle, like many progressive cities in blue states, will experience a population boom as red states become increasingly hostile toward immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, and those with disabilities. "People will look to cities like Seattle as a safe haven where we celebrate human rights, liberties, and diversity," she said. "We need to be prepared for an increase of people moving into our city; we need to have legal protections in place to ensure that folks who come in are welcome and protected here too."

Rinck is committed to ensuring that the city council partners with King County Public Health, UW Medicine, and Planned Parenthood to safeguard gender-affirming care and reproductive health rights.

"Also [I stand] with Queer leaders in this community when we're talking about what could be attacked on our fundamental rights," she added.

Rinck will fight for Seattle to remain a sanctuary city and do whatever she can to keep ICE out. "There are a lot of unknowns as it stands, and … since election day, I've been working to partner with folks in the community to figure out how we [use] organizing apparatuses, so we can figure out [quickly] what will be coming down and what we should be doing," she said. "There's a lot of work to be done, and it's something that I'm just really focused on doing for the sake of all of the neighbors that have found safety and refuge here, myself included."

With more threats facing LGBTQ+ citizens at the federal level, Rinck is determined to protect the rights of all of Seattle's marginalized communities, so the city remains a safe haven no matter what happens in DC.



RINCK CELEBRATING ON ELECTION NIGHT
CHLOE COLLYER



Sen. Jamie Pedersen's election as Senate majority leader makes WA first state to have two LGBTQ+ legislative leaders

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

COURTESY SENATE DEMOCRATS & LAURIE JINKINS

Having served in the Washington state legislature since 2006, Sen. Jamie Pedersen was recently elected as the Senate majority leader, which marks a historic turn during an election cycle that shattered the hearts of many LGBTQ+ Americans, leaving them concerned for their futures.

Sen. Pedersen joins House Speaker Laurie Jinkins, making Washington the first state in the nation to have two LGBTQ+ legislative leaders serving at the same time.

"As a kid growing up in Puyallup in the 1980s, I didn't think that a career in politics — or getting married to a man and having kids — was possible for me," Sen. Pedersen told the *SGN*. "I hope that young LGBTQ+ folks in our state see a Lesbian speaker of the House and a Gay Senate majority leader, and see that there are no limits on what they can do."

Sen. Pedersen will replace Sen. Andy Billig, from the 3rd Legislative District, who is retiring.

Rep. Jinkins told the *SGN* she's excited to be serving alongside Sen. Pedersen, whom she met about 30 years ago, while working on LGBTQ+ rights.

"While it's always wonderful to make history with him, our focus this year will be on improving the lives of all Washingtonians, including LGBTQ people," Rep. Jinkins said.

Shoring up protections

Rep. Jinkins said Trump's campaign rhetoric and Project 2025 provide a solid outline of what his administration is likely to pursue.

"I am especially worried about all of the anti-Transgender propaganda we saw during the campaign. One of my highest priorities will be to shore up protections for our Trans community," Rep. Jinkins said. "Our LGBTQ community has a long history of statewide grassroots organizing, and we need [to] restart this approach as the best way to support the work legislators are ready to do."

To prevent negative experiences and to pursue "great policy," Rep. Jinkins said LGBTQ+ people must continue to educate, advocate, legislate, and litigate.

Sen. Pedersen said Washington state has much experience with protecting LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, women, and others from the harmful federal actions of Trump's first term, and that state laws enacted during that period will, once again, be of use.

"We … have strong protections in state law for Trans people. One of our first actions in the 2025 session will be to amend Initiative 2081, the so-called 'Parents Bill of Rights,' to make it clear that the initiative does not change or undermine our robust protections for Trans youth, and young people seeking reproductive health care or mental health care," Sen. Pedersen said.

I-2081 is a citizen initiative that was passed by the state legislature this year and became effective early in Pride Month. It allows parents and legal guardians to obtain school records, like vocational counseling and medical records, and to opt their youth out of surveys, assignments, questionnaires, and any other engagement activities that relate to a child's sexual orientation or experiences.

In a recent interview with the *SGN*, Montana Rep. Zooey Zephyr said how she wished legislators had fought "tooth and nail" to ensure I-2081 didn't pass, and that when "you allow even the seeds of an anti-Queer policy to be planted in your state, maybe you can root it out, but it impacts red states, where we have to fight with everything we have. Those decisions ripple [out to] our states and cause so much harm."

A press release earlier this year from Sen. Pedersen stated that 90% of I-2081 is already state law or standard practice, but acknowledged the potential harmful impact it has on LGBTQ+ students — and said that he's ready to act if necessary.

Another pressing constituent concern Sen. Pedersen plans to address in the upcoming legislative session, which begins January 13, is the high and increasing cost of housing. He said he will work on a variety of policies, including rent stabilization and increasing the affordable housing supply.

"Other top priorities for 2025 include funding for public schools; increasing treatment for substance use and mental health; and resolving the shortfalls in our operating and transportation budgets," Sen. Pedersen said. "One of the great things about working at the state level is that we live in the communities we represent, and get a chance to help solve problems that we see there. We do our best work when we get good ideas from the people we represent."





Seattle Queers react to election results

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

NATE GOWDY

As the vote counts rolled in on November 5, 2024, Kamala Harris's supporters quickly lost hope. Faces fell when results from Georgia and Ohio projected those states' electoral votes going to former President Donald Trump. Harris trailed Trump in exit polls throughout the night. Not even California and Washington's delegates could push her close to Trump's numbers.

Voters remain resilient at The Wildrose

Across Seattle, voters gathered to watch the results. Drinks were flowing at The Wildrose, where many attempted to drown their sorrows with shots. Conversations around the bar remained mostly hopeful, with patrons reminding one another that they survived the last four Trump years, and can persevere again.

However, outside, a group of friends took a smoke break and got candid about their sorrow. "It's not processing," first-time voter Rome Carroll told the *SGN*. Carroll was 14 the first time Trump was elected, and even then she remembered feeling the gravity of the situation.

"I remember being in middle school and having a Queer teacher and crying, because I knew what it meant to have Trump win. He said it would be fine, and we weren't fine," she said, referencing the Supreme Court justices Trump appointed who overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Since the ruling, and consequential abortion bans in red states, reports have started coming out about women such as 28-year-old mother Josseli Barnica, who died from complications related to a miscarriage. Doctors waited 40 hours to treat Barnica due to Texas anti-abortion laws that threatened to revoke medical licenses of doctors who perform or assist in abortions.

Carroll doesn't believe we'll all be fine. She fears the next four years may be even darker than the last Trump presidency. Like many Americans, Carroll felt major 2016 déjà vu: "I feel the same way now, sitting in this Lesbian bar, where everyone is kind of telling me, 'You're gonna be fine.' It's a welcome energy being here with fellow Queer people, but also I don't know how much I agree. It's a little bit questionable. I'm scared to be a Queer person here."

The other women outside The Wildrose echoed Carroll's despair. "I'm disappointed and I'm really sad and scared for a lot of my Trans friends, and a lot of my DACA friends," Jessica Collins said.

Maybe it was the drinks or the drunk cigarettes, but Carroll and Collins's friend, Bianca Quist, admitted she was feeling a mix of emotions, including gratitude for tThe Wildrose's Queer feminine space. "I am feeling verklempt. I am feeling forlorn," Quist said. "But, you know what, I'm also feeling a sense of hope at The Wildrose that everything is going to be okay."

Queer Bar watches election results in silence

Down the street, at Queer Bar, an election night watch party progressed. The room grew more quiet as Trump's path to victory became certain. By 10 p.m., it felt less like a bar and more like a wake.

After all the votes were in, Andrew Wittkowske stepped outside to get air. "It's gone wrong," he said with a look of despair on his face. "We're watching President Trump collect votes left, right, and center. It's kind of hard to watch. There's so many things on the line: women's rights, abortion rights. It's just hard to watch."

Though Wittkowske now lives in Seattle, he formerly resided in Florida. Still registered in the deeply red state, he decided to vote in Florida, to have a say on many of the state's initiatives, including ones to legalize abortion and recreational marijuana. Both initiatives failed.

"I'm glad I just moved to Washington, so I'm at least in a safe place, hopefully," Wittkowske said.

Throughout his campaign, Trump emphasized increasing oil drilling. The Heritage Project's "Project 2025" also proposes spending cuts for climate change research, though Trump has insisted throughout his campaign that he knows nothing of "Project 2025." Regardless, if prior climate trends continue under Trump's second term, a symposium by Washington State University and the University of Portland predicted that more Southern residents like Wittkowske may make their way to the Pacific Northwest in the coming years, especially as major climate events such as Hurricanes Milton and Helene continue to rock the Gulf Coast.

Aside from women's rights and climate change, young voters like Carroll and Col-



LINDSEY ANDERSON

lins are also feeling anxious about their futures. "I just got into my first quarter of college, but now with Trump's plan to defund the Department of Education and cut the Pell Grant and everything, that's how I pay for my school," Collins said.

Carroll had originally put off college, having graduated high school during the pandemic. "I was gonna go and try and get a degree. I skipped getting a degree because by the time I graduated high school, I was still dealing with the fallout of COVID and everything with the Trump presidency, the first one," she said. "I was going to go get a degree, but we might leave the country now."

"It kind of feels like no matter what, they are gonna win. They don't play by the rules, and that sucks," Collins added.


NATE GOWDY

Progressives blame lack of outreach

Many Seattle voters like Carroll and Collins had believed the close polls weren't accurate and that Harris had a clear path to victory. Throughout the campaign, news outlets highlighted stories about former Trump voters who had decided to vote for Harris. It seemed like the moderate Republican vote was leaning toward a progressive change, but some voters feel it was Harris's rejection of progressive leftist voters that may have cost her the election.

Seattle-based Queer filmmaker and comedian Ian Crowley believes Harris spent too much time campaigning on the promise that conservatives would cross party lines to support her to prevent a Trump presidency. "In an attempt to pander to the center and right, Harris actively alienated progressive voters with her campaign's positions on issues such as immigration, fracking, and Gaza — just to name a few," he said.

"People voted for Biden in 2020 because he offered a change from Donald Trump. By 2024, Americans had experienced inflation and real negative wage growth under Biden," Seattle-based research analyst Spencer Thulin told the *SGN*. "They wanted a change from the status quo, and Harris didn't effectively distance herself from Biden and didn't effectively communicate how she would be different.

"This, combined with her running to the right on immigration — essentially adopting a 2016 Trump framing of the southern border, a drastic change from the Democrats' 2020 platform — caused many in her base to not show up and vote.

"So the 'rightward shift' many are seeing is not a result of a genuine change in ideology but from a depressed turnout for Democrats."

A rough morning after

As the sun came up on November 6, Seattle seemed quieter. TikTok think pieces were already rolling out, and Democrats began posting obligatory Instagram stories shaming their conservative friends and family who voted against their rights.

In one of Seattle's most beloved establishments, business was booming. Across King County, Top Pot cafes sold out of pastries. "All our stores ran out by 9:00 or 9:30 this morning," Julie Hartley, a barista at Capitol Hill's location on Sumit told the *SGN*.

Top Pot typically sells around 300 donuts on an average Wednesday, according to Hartley. It's rare to sell out, let alone before noon. "Our bakery made more to bring, so some [stores] may get more again," she said, reassuring the many customers who arrived to mend their broken hearts with donuts, only to find an empty case.

Hartley has worked at Top Pot for over a decade and said she wasn't surprised by the busy morning rush. "It was really busy the day of the election, excitement on the day of, and sadness the day after," she said. "We experienced the same thing when Hillary Clinton lost. We've been through this a couple of times."

Despite the depressing atmosphere across town today, most Seattleites are still grateful to live in a progressive city, even if its echo chamber disconnects us from the views of the rest of the country.

"It's interesting growing up in bubbles like this... in Seattle. I grew up in Berkley, California," Carroll said. "I think we tend to be a little sheltered and [mistaken] that everyone is on the same page, because [we are] in a city where everyone is on the same page. Watching the election is a harsh reality — seeing how much hate people have for us and our people. Not just us, but people of color, the Black people in this country, the single mothers, and immigrants. I think it's hard watching everyone as a collective have that realization yet again. At the same time, I'm proud of how much joy we're having in the midst of it."

The LGBTQ+ community has seen many dark days, whether during the Trump presidency, before it, or after. There may be immense struggles to come, but we are resilient and will continue to lean on and protect each other. This election is truly a reminder that community is our greatest power. Reach out to your friends, especially your Trans, BIPOC, immigrant, and disabled friends. Today is a sad day for many, but there will be joy again.



LINDSEY ANDERSON

If you or someone you know is struggling, please consider reaching out to one of these resources:

- *For QTBIPOC mutual aid and community events, check out Alphabet Alliance. https://alphabetalliance.org/*
- *For confidential and culturally relevant support with sexual assault, contact API Chaya. https://alphabetalliance.org/. You can also call 1-877-922-4292.*
- *For immigrant rights, legal services, and HIV/AIDS care, reach out to Entre Hermanos. https://entrehermanos.org/*
- *For Trans, Nonbinary, and Two-Spirit civil rights resources, reach out to the Gender Justice League. https://www.genderjusticeleague.org/, (206) 538-0423, or info@genderjusticeleague.org*
- *If you are the parent, grandparent, or guardian of a Trans or Nonbinary child seeking support or resources, reach out to Gender Spectrum and Gender Spectrum Youth Programs. https://www.genderspectrum.org/home*
- *If you need legal help or representation, consider the Lavender Rights Project and QLaw: https://www.lavenderrightsproject.org/ and https://www.qlaw.org/.*



What can LGBTQ+ Americans expect to see from the next Trump presidency?

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

Donald Trump has been elected by the American people to be the 47th president of the United States. Now, many members of the LGBTQ+ community are wondering: What will a second Trump presidency look like for us?

Project 2025

Despite the detailed plans laid out in the Heritage Foundation's 2022 document "Project 2025," Trump has repeatedly stated that he is unaware of the conservative manifesto and does not intend to use it in office. However, he has nominated Brendan Carr as chariman of the Federal Communications Commission (he has served as a commissioner since 2018 under both Trump and Biden). Carr was one of the authors of Project 2025, responsible for the "presidential transition" chapter.

While alarming in nature — especially as it proposes some draconian ideas, like an end to fault-free divorce and the classification of educators and librarians who distribute LGBTQ+ books as "sex offenders" Project 2025 is not the first proposed roadmap for conservative leadership in the United States.

Since the 1980s, the Heritage Foundation has released lengthy documents calling for similar changes, such as national bans on same-sex marriage and abortion. Trump has been relatively quiet on these topics since his victory on November 5, but his campaign has pushed its own policy platform, "Agenda 47," on its website over the last few months.

Many political analysts began taking note earlier this year of another, smaller think tank group that may end up being even more influential to the next Trump presidency than the Heritage Foundation. The America First Policy Institute is a group of far-right MAGA supporters who have been planning the next Trump term since 2020. Many of their goals and policies overlap with Project 2025, and many of the group's founders will soon find themselves in very high government positions.

So, taking Agenda 47 and the America First Policy Institute into account and not discarding Project 2025 as a possibility, what can LGBTQ+ Americans expect to see in the next four years?

Reversals on LGBTQ+ protections

One likely change will be national rollbacks in protections for Queer and Trans people. In Agenda 47, Trump vows to revoke gender-affirming care policies and plans to use the Republican majority in Congress to "permanently stop federal taxpayer dollars from being used to promote or pay for [gender-affirming care]."

Though our state's antidiscrimination laws are unlikely to change, federal protections for Queer and Trans people may weaken during the next Trump presidency. The Supreme Court is expected to revisit a challenge to a Biden administration attempt to extend Title IX protections to LGBTQ students, and to take up the issue of whether restricting certain medical treatments for Transgender minors violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.

Changes for students and patients

Another change may come for LGBTQ+ students, as Agenda 47 calls for reversing Title IX expansions for Queer and Trans students, under the guise that this will "protect women's sports."

"We will keep men out of women's sports, ban taxpayer funding for sex change surgeries, stop taxpayer-funded schools from promoting gender transition, reverse Biden's radical rewrite of Title IX education regulations, and restore protections for women and girls," Agenda 47 states.

Though disheartening, these proposed changes won't have a huge impact. Medical physicist Joanna Harper estimated in 2023 that there aren't more than 100 Trans girls competing in public school sports.

As for government funded gender-affirming care, Medicare — which only covers care for people in a specific income bracket — also only funds "medically necessary" services, as determined by a physician, and then the request must be approved by local coverage laws. As of 2024, Medicare Part A, B, and C usually cover gender-affirming surgeries, and Part D covers hormone replacement therapy. Trans patients can expect to see this coverage federally limited under the next administration.

For anyone worried about funding their transition costs, several private organizations, including the Jim Collins Foundation, Genderbands Transition Grants, TransMission, Black Transmen, Inc. Surgery Scholarship, and Point of Pride offer financial aid to assist with medical costs.

An end to "gender ideology" and "critical race theory"

What will likely have a larger impact on LGBTQ+ youth are the ramifications of Trump's plans to shut down the Department of Education. In Agenda 47, Trump vows to send all education needs to the states — many of which are eager to ban books that include prominent LGBTQ+ and BIPOC characters.

Project 2025, however, goes further in-depth regarding education goals for the near future.

"The noxious tenets of 'critical race theory' and 'gender ideology' should be excised from curricula in every public school in the country," it reads. "These theories poison our children, who are being taught on the one hand to affirm that the color of their skin fundamentally determines their identity and even their moral status while on the other, they are taught to deny the very creatureliness that inheres in being human and consists in accepting the givenness of our nature as men or women."

Trump's official policy echoes the demands to end "critical race theory" and "gender ideology" in schools. If the term "gender ideology" seems unfamiliar, that may be because it is a false assertion that being Queer and Trans is an "ideological movement rather than an intrinsic identity," according to GLAAD. The phrase has become increasingly popular among far-right commentators.

In his Madison Square Garden rally at the end of October, Trump told a crowd of cheering fans, "We will get Transgender insanity the hell out of our schools." Experts are unsure whether this means teaching Queer and Trans issues in health and history classes, including Trans students in sports, banning books, or more.

Marriage equality

While attempts to federally ban abortion have been hinted at by Trump's closest allies, including JD Vance, one fear of many Queer people — the overturning of marriage equality — doesn't seem to be a priority for the next administration.

Neither Project 2025 nor Agenda 47 explicitly mention passing legislation to limit marriage to one man and one woman. Additionally, any reversal would likely need to come from the Supreme Court, regardless of whether Trump is in office or not. A federal protection of same-sex marriage, however, does seem rather unlikely to pass in the next four years, especially with a conservative majority in Congress.

While it doesn't use specific language to plan a path to federally ban same-sex marriage, Project 2025 does support the belief that the government should "affirm that children require and deserve both the love and nurturing of a mother and the play and protection of a father."

Yes, abortion is a Queer issue

Project 2025 proposes reinstating the Comstock Act, a law from the 1800s that banned pornography and contraception, though Trump is unlikely to support this. It also provides a roadmap to reversing the FDA's approval of mifepristone, the oral medication used for abortions, but once again, Trump has expressed that he would not sign such a law. Melania Trump, though often behind the scenes, spoke out on the campaign trail in support of abortion.

What's the Trump cabinet looking like?

Trump has made several alarming promises to those who supported him throughout his campaign. At a rally on October 27, Trump said he would appoint Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to a top position in the Department of Health. "I'm going to let him go wild on health. I'm going to let him go wild on the food. I'm going to let him go wild on the medicines," he said to a cheering crowd.

Trump made good on this promise, nominating Kennedy to head the Department of Health and Human Services.

Kennedy has spoken out repeatedly against vaccines, pushing the lie that they cause autism. He has also spoken out against gender-affirming care.

At a campaign rally in 2023, Kennedy took his distrust of the LGBTQ+ community further by claiming that manufactured chemicals in the water lead to the "feminization of boys" and the "masculinization of girls." He has repeated this on his popular podcast. Doubling down in 2022, he said, "If you expose frogs to atrazine, male frogs, it changes their sex, and they can actually bear young. They can lay eggs, fertile eggs. And so the capacity for these chemicals that we are just raining down on our children right now to induce these very profound sexual changes in them is something we need to be thinking about as a society."

According to Kennedy's campaign following his remarks, he does not believe chemicals in the water are the *only* factor. "Mr. Kennedy's remarks are being mischaracterized. He is not claiming that endocrine disruptors are the only or main cause of gender dysphoria," a spokesperson said. "He is merely suggesting that, given copious research on the effects on other vertebrates, this possibility deserves further research." Scientists from around the world have debunked this theory.

"I will create a government efficiency commission tasked with conducting a complete financial and performance audit of the entire federal government," Trump said in a September rally. He has since announced that he will be creating an all new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE — yes, like the coin), which will be helmed by Musk and Trump supporter Vivek Ramaswamy.

Everett Kelley, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, warned Reuters that this department could mass fire nonpartisan civil service workers to fill government jobs with workers loyal to the Trump administration.

Other picks

According to *Politico*, Trump confirmed that his next chief of staff will be Susie Wiles. She was the CEO of his Save America PAC in 2021 and ran his Florida operations while he campaigned in 2016 and 2020. Insiders have described Wiles as

"left on LGBT issues."

The chief of staff oversees daily White House issues and administration policy. In his first term, Trump went through four: the first two were fired, the third quit after Trump was impeached, and his final one was indicted in election interference cases in Georgia and Arizona.

Trump selected Sen. Marco Rubio as to be secretary of state. Rubio earned a 0 out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign's "Congressional Scorecard" for his votes against LGBTQ+ protections and abortion rights in the Senate. In 2022, he ran on similar anti-Trans rhetoric that the Trump campaign pushed throughout the last election cycle. Rubio has spoken out against a ceasefire in Gaza and promotes a "negotiated settlement" in Ukraine, which could result in Russia seizing large parts of the country.

The Department of Homeland Security will be run by notorious dog-killer Kristi Noem. She will be in charge of making major decisions regarding immigration. As South Dakota's governor, she once sent the National Guard to the southern border.

Trump has selected Brooke Rollins, the CEO of uber-conservative America First Policy Institute, as agriculture secretary. Also coming from the America First pipeline is motivational speaker and former NFL player Scott Turner, who will lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

John Ratcliffe has been nominated to run the CIA. Trump tapped Wall Street billionaire Howard Lutnick as commerce secretary and pro-union Oregonian Lori Chavez-DeRemer for secretary of labor. Former Democrat turned Republican Tulsi Gabbard was nominated as director of national intelligence.

Trump has tapped Lee Zeldin, a former New York representative and fracking supporter, to head the Environmental Protection Agency. He has also selected climate change skeptic Chris Wright to lead the Department of Energy. Under their leadership, voters can expect to see many of Biden's environmental policies halted and reversed. Experts from *Politico* speculate that clean-air regulations will be the first to go.

New York Rep. Elise Stefanik is the next proposed ambassador to the United Nations — despite repeatedly speaking out against the U.N. Stefanik strongly supported Trump during his first impeachment trial in 2019. She has also condemned student protests about the Israel-Hamas War and supports its continuation.

TV stars and scandals

Staying true to his roots, Trump has selected several TV stars to join his cabinet, including Fox News hosts Pete Hegseth and Sean Duffy as the defense and transportation secretaries, respectively. Duffy first appeared on MTV's *The Real World*.

Trump also chose reality TV star Dr. Mehmet Oz to head Medicare and Medicaid and former Fox News host Mike Huckabee as ambassador to Israel.

While Trump's cabinet picks tend to vary wildly in terms of background and even policy, there was one sweeping theme: several have been accused of sexual assault. The most significant controversy came from attorney general appointee Matt Gaetz, who, at the time of his selection, was being investigated by the House on allegations that he paid a minor to for sex. Gaetz resigned from Congress, halting the investigation, and later withdrew from consideration for the position, claiming it was taking too much attention away from the Trump administration.

Trump then selected Pam Bondi, the Florida attorney general, for the position. Bondi is a staunch opponent of marriage equality, going so far as to claim prior to the Supreme Court ruling of *Obergefell v. Hodges* that same-sex marriage would "impose serious public harm."

Making history as the first female cabinet appointee accused of knowingly enabling sexual assault, Linda McMahon, cofounder of the WWE, will be in charge of the Department of Education if confirmed. McMahon's education career was limited to a single year on the Connecticut Board of Education in 2009. She has previously expressed support for charter schools and school choice.

Most of Trump's cabinet picks are anti-LGBTQ+ conservatives vying to impress him. While they still must be approved by the Senate, with its solid Republican majority and track record of promoting his loyalists, it is unlikely any of the nominees will see serious challenges.

The next four years are looking bleak. Now, more than ever, it is essential for Queer and Trans people to embrace the protection of the community and prepare defensive legislation.



NATE GOWDY

Activists around the world offer potential path forward for American counterparts

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS


MICHAEL K. LAVERS

Donald Trump early on Nov. 9, 2016, declared victory over former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. My husband and I arrived in Jerusalem less than 48 hours later.

A Wider Bridge, a group that "advocates for justice, counters LGBTQphobia, and fights anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred," months earlier had invited us to participate in one of its missions to Israel. It was my first time in the country.

Our first meeting was at the Shalom Hartman Institute, which describes itself as a "leading center of Jewish thought and education" that seeks "to strengthen Jewish peoplehood, identity, and pluralism; to enhance the Jewish and democratic character of Israel; and to ensure that Judaism is a compelling [force] for good in the 21st century."

The staffer who greeted us welcomed us to Israel. He then pointed out that Benjamin Netanyahu had been prime minister for nearly a decade. [Netanyahu was Israel's prime minister from 1996 to 1999 and from 2009 to 2021. He became the country's prime minister for a third time on Dec. 29, 2022.]

"Now you will know what it will feel like," he said.

His comment was cold comfort to many of us who were still reeling over Trump's victory. It is also one that has repeatedly come to mind as I continue to process the results of the presidential election and what a second Trump presidency will mean for this country, for me as a Gay man, for the community that I cover, and especially for Transgender Americans and immigrants whom the first Trump administration disproportionately targeted.

The US is certainly not the only country in which voters in recent years have elected authoritarian figures who pose a threat to LGBTQ rights. Viktor Orbán has been Hungary's prime minister since 2010. Javier Milei has been Argentina's president since December 2023. Jair Bolsonaro was Brazil's president from 2019 to 2023.

Hungary, among other things, has enacted a so-called propaganda law and effectively banned same-sex couples from adopting children since Orbán took office. Milei's government in August closed Argentina's National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism. Bolsonaro, among other things, encouraged fathers to beat their sons if they came out as Gay and said people who are vaccinated against COVID-19 are at increased risk for AIDS.

Activists who protested [last year] against Netanyahu's proposed judicial system reforms say they would have adversely impacted LGBTQ Israelis. The prime minister postponed these efforts in March 2023 after a nationwide strike paralyzed the country, [but] Israeli lawmakers a few months later approved [one] after opposition lawmakers stormed out of the Knesset in protest. [It was later struck down by the Supreme Court.]

[These are several] of the dozens of countries around the world in which LGBTQ rights have been under attack — and the US will certainly remain on this list once Trump takes office again on Jan. 20. It is certainly a frightening prospect for many in our community, but the activists in the aforementioned countries have not given up, and their American counterparts should not either.

"I'm not saying it's not easy, but the direction is so clear," András Léderer, the head of advocacy for the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, told me in April during an interview at a Budapest coffee shop. "They [the Hungarian government] can try to introduce setbacks. They can make life miserable, temporarily, but, you know, you just can't go against the entire world in that sense."

Hamas [terrorists] on Oct. [7], 2023, killed Israel Defense Forces Maj. Sagi Golan in Be'eri, a kibbutz near the Israel-Gaza border, [during the attack that killed over 1,200 others]. His fiancé, Omer Ohana, with the support of Israeli advocacy groups, successfully lobbied Israeli lawmakers to amend the country's Bereaved Families Law to recognize LGBTQ widows and widowers of fallen servicemembers.

"It was a big effort, and a big success," Yael Sinai Biblash, the CEO of the Aguda, the Association for LGBTQ Equality in Israel, told me [in October] after she attended Golan's memorial service in a Tel Aviv suburb.

Bru Pereira and Gui Mohallem, co-directors of VoteLGBT, a Brazilian organization established in 2014 with a mission to increase LGBTQ representation in politics, [said], in response to Trump's reelection, [that] they and others in Brazil are "witnessing how grassroots efforts, particularly from marginalized communities, are crucial in defending LGBTQ+ rights under right-wing governments."

Donald Tusk became Poland's prime minister last December after a group of coalition parties that he leads won a majority of seats in the Sejm, the lower house of the country's parliament. President Andrzej Duda, an ally of the conservative Law and Justice party who opposes LGBTQ rights, remains in office as part of the governing coalition. Deputy Justice Minister Krzysztof Śmiszek is openly Gay. His partner, former MP Robert Biedroń, [is] a member of the European Parliament.

Magda Dropek is an activist who ran for the Lesser Poland Regional Assembly in Kraków, Poland's second-largest city, in April. (Lesser Poland is among the provinces that had declared themselves "LGBT-free zones" ahead of the 2020 presidential election.) … Dropek, like others, pointed out [that] Russian President Vladimir Putin and other politicians respond to "antagonized societies" with "populism and (sacrifice) human rights." Dropek, however, stressed [that] the new Polish government presents an opportunity.

"What happened in Poland a year ago is still an important story that brings hope to others," she said. "It's a huge responsibility, but also work, because this is the time to change mentalities and educate using democratic tools. Because we've been coping with everything else, grassroots support and organization for so many years, you know yourselves."

Trump leaves office on Jan. 20, 2029.

First published in the Washington Blade: https://www.washingtonblade.com/2024/11/12/activists-around-the-world-offer-potential-path-forward-for-american-counterparts



LGBTQ+ election victories around the country

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

For most Seattle voters, election night went differently than planned. Instead of the country's first female president, Americans again voted for Donald Trump. The 2024 results carry an added weight, as this time Trump enters office following a failed insurrection and has vowed to enact "retribution" on his adversaries.

But even as post-election depression continues to hover over Seattle, here is some good news to restore a little hope in the country. Despite the anti-LGBTQ+ vitriol many on the right used to evoke fear in voters, several Queer and Trans candidates emerged victorious, especially in Southern states.

Queer candidates win at home

Right here at home, Washingtonians also voted for Queer candidates. Alexis Mercedes Rinck beat incumbent Tanya Woo to represent District 8 on the Seattle City Council. Rinck hopes to use her position to help Seattle keep programs and services that aid low-income families by protecting Jumpstart funding and proposing a local capital gains tax, a high payroll tax, and real estate transfer taxes. She will also work to expand transit development and fight gentrification by advocating for state-level renter protections and sensible caps on rent increases.

In a hotly contested primary election, Dave Upthegrove earned a spot on the November ballot. He has now defeated his conservative opponent to become Washington's next public lands commissioner. Previously a representative from South King County, Upthegrove served as chair of the House Environment Committee and worked hard to reduce carbon pollution, clean up toxins, and improve oil spill prevention. As public lands commissioner, Upthegrove plans to preserve mature legacy forests, expand recreational opportunities, and honor treaty rights by strengthening the co-management role of tribes. He also vows to center environmental justice in everything he does.

"Washington Voters embraced the conservation values of the Evergreen State — and we've won by a clear margin," Upthegrove said on election night. "Voters have sent a powerful message: These lands don't belong to industry. They don't belong to big business. They belong to 'we the people.' They are public lands. Our lands."

In a win for intersectionality, Washington's own Emily Randall became the first LGBTQ+ Latina in Congress. Randall is a third-generation Washingtonian who grew up in Port Orchard. The first person in her working-class family to graduate from college, she grew up working in retail and waiting tables, and even worked for Planned Parenthood to help women access healthcare. She decided to run for office the night Donald Trump was elected the first time. With a grassroots campaign, Randall worked hard and flipped Washington's 26th Senate District, unseating a MAGA Republican. Randall plans to emphasize reproductive healthcare in DC and hopes to build strong coalitions with other progressive members of Congress. (More on other federal races below.)

Randall won't be alone as a pioneer of minority representation. She will be joined by Ritchie Torres, Mark Takano, and Sharice Davids, who all won their reelection bids in 2024. All have made history in their own rights: Torres became the youngest elected official in New York City at the age of 25 and the first openly LGBTQ+ official from the Bronx; Davids is one of the first two Native American women to serve in Congress; and in 2012, Takano was the first openly Gay person of color elected to Congress.

Queer candidates take on the South and Midwest

Beating the odds, Keturah Herron (she/they) became the first LGBTQ+ person of color elected to the Kentucky Senate and will bring her experience in youth and justice advocacy to the position. A go-getter, Herron was essential in passing Breonna's Law after Breonna Taylor, a young Louisville woman, was killed in her home by police. The legislation now outlaws "no-knock warrants" in the state. As a state senator, Herron plans to push for an Office of Community Safety to address gun violence better. She also wants to fully restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated people and provide pay raises to public educators.

In Georgia, Rasham Kemp became the first Gay Black man elected to the state legislature. Kemp is new to politics, having previously worked as a high school teacher, principal, and senior director of a nonprofit. His goals include increasing funding for public schools, reforming the justice system to focus on rehabilitation, and ensuring that all citizens can vote by making Election Day a national holiday.

In Tennessee, Gabby Salinas became the first LGBTQ+ woman *and* LGBTQ+ Latinx person elected to the state legislature there. A fighter from the beginning, Salinas overcame childhood cancer and a tragic car accident that killed her father and sister and paralyzed her mother. Salinas said her dream has always been to "help people through science." She will continue to do that in the legislature by expanding Medicaid and state funding for education. Salinas will also fight to pass mandatory three-day waiting periods for all gun sales, as well as required background checks.

In Texas, Molly Cook became the first openly LGBTQ+ member of the state Senate. A registered nurse and grassroots organizer, Cook says she prioritizes caring for people. Her platform includes funding community violence intervention programs, raising the minimum age to purchase an assault-style rifle to 21, and passing safe-storage legislation. Despite her state's laws, Cook has a very progressive stance on abortion, because she had one in 2014.

"All Texans should be able to consider every option regardless of their income or neighborhood," she said in a campaign statement. She also believes abortions should be covered by insurance.

Iowa elected its first Trans person, Aime Wichtendahl, to the state legislature. Wichtendahl became the first out Trans woman to be elected to government in the state when she won her election to the Hiawatha City Council in 2016. Now, she has earned a seat at an even bigger table and promises to fight to repeal the "Don't Say Gay" law and book-banning laws in the state. She also aims to legalize marijuana and repeal abortion bans and laws banning gender-affirming care for minors.

"For me, the American Dream is the freedom to live your best life. It is the ability to find and hold a good-paying job that can cover all the expenses and leave enough left over to enjoy the things that make this life worth living," she said in a campaign statement. "It's the freedom to raise a family and not have to worry about rising costs in healthcare, housing, and food. It is the freedom to be yourself — because no government official gets to tell you who you are."

Queers heading to Congress

LGBTQ+ candidates not only swept victories in state governments across the country but also earned seats in the US Congress.

Sarah McBride made history on November 5 as the first Trans person to be elected to Congress. Now representing Delaware in the House of Representatives, McBride will be a bold voice defending LGBTQ+ rights. She also supports expanding healthcare access for Americans and aims to provide more economic policies for the working class. McBride sees climate change as a significant issue and vows to support legislation to help fight it.

"None of us know how long we have, but we do have a choice in whether we love or hate," she said. "And every day that we rob people of the ability to live their lives to the fullest, we are undermining the most precious gift we are given as humans."

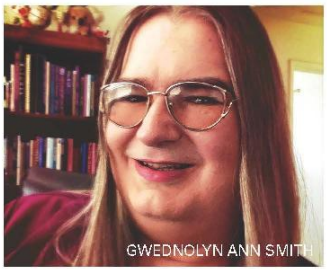
Julie Johnson was elected to represent her district of Texas in the US House of Representatives, and has made history as the first LGBTQ+ person from a Southern state to serve in Congress. As a state representative, in the last session alone, she helped kill 76 out of 77 anti-LGBTQ+ bills proposed. Johnson has also fought relentlessly for women's reproductive rights as the vice chair of the Women's Health Caucus. In the House, she hopes to reinstate reproductive rights by writing *Roe* into law. Like many progressive candidates, she also plans on supporting laws to raise the minimum age to purchase a firearm and protect the Affordable Care Act from Republican attacks.

The next four years may be difficult, but these LGBTQ+ candidates have proven they're up for a challenge. From making history in the South to preserving legacy seats in Congress to serving our neighborhoods, Queer and Trans legislators are ready to do the work to defend our rights.



The election fallout for Trans Americans

BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH


GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Typically, at this time of year, I would write about the Transgender Day of Remembrance and the dozens of Transgender people who have been killed at the hand of anti-Transgender violence. It's an issue that has driven much of my work since 1998.

There is something bigger that needs to be discussed right now, however, and that is the recent 2024 presidential election.

Now, I'm not all that interested in discussing why former President Donald Trump was elected for a second time or whose fault it was, aside from noting that it wasn't Transgender people who caused it.

The Republican Party, Trump's campaign, and related forces did spend big on anti-Trans issues, with Trump-supported ads running during major sporting events nationwide. Yet the ads themselves were not effective: only 4% of voters said that preventing Trans surgeries or stopping Trans kids in sports drove their vote, according to ananalysis from GQR, a woman-owned polling firm, and the Human Rights Campaign.

Indeed, the only people really talking about Transgender issues this election were the right wing, as the left largely remained silent. The Democratic vice presidential candidate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, did speak on it a bit, but Vice President Kamala Harris — and the rest of the Democratic Party — avoided the issue as much as possible. Even as Delaware state Sen. Sarah McBride (D) became the first out Transgender woman elected to Congress, it is worth noting that the party did not have her on stage at the Democratic National Convention this summer, nor was her historic campaign touted during this election season.

Post-election, some Democrats are also seeking to throw Transgender people under the bus — even though we never had a seat on it in the first place.

Meanwhile, it was LGBTQ voters who made up a huge part of the support for Harris-Walz: 84% of LGBTQ people who voted supported the ticket, and [that] made up 8% of the overall vote in 2024, per the analysis from GQR and HRC.

But what is done is done, and no matter what Trump and his administration do, we all will be harmed. The right has pushed hard on demolishing Transgender rights for years now, and this is its chance to bring it all to fruition.

Trump has vowed to end President Joe Biden's "cruel policies" on gender-affirming care on "day one," though, as with anything that tumbles out of his mouth, it is unclear what that means. In many of Trump's speeches, he claimed he was ending Trans surgeries performed in schools, which is a thing that simply doesn't happen.

Trump can, however, push to see Trans identities stripped from our government documents, he can push for schools that include recognition of Trans identities to be stripped of federal funding, and he can make it vastly harder for people to acquire needed medications. Of course, any anti-discrimination protections will also be on the chopping block, both from this incoming administration and from a strongly conservative Supreme Court.

Beyond this, of course, Trump's victory will embolden anyone who seeks to harm Transgender people. This will only encourage our attackers and aid those who take our lives. Since the first Trump presidency, anti-Transgender violence has only continued to grow, and it is surely poised to get much, much worse.

Furthermore, the reluctance of the left to even mention Transgender people — even by McBride, the Democrats' soon-to-be member of Congress — makes it clear to me that there's no help on the horizon. No one in this country's halls of power will be coming to save us. We're on our own.

So, it's up to us to stay safe. Now is a time for us to come together like never before.

We need to set aside our petty arguments and join together in purpose. We need to watch over each other, provide for each other, and work to keep us all safe and well.

With that in mind, I want to suggest a few things you should be doing right now to watch over your needs:

If you need a supportive voice, please remember that the grassroots Trans Lifeline exists, and it is there to help. Hotline officials also won't out you to law enforcement. You can reach it at https://translifeline.org or 1-877-565-8860. We need you to remain in the community.

Get your identity documents updated now, before Trump returns to the White House on January 20. US passports are valid for 10 years. The Biden administration approved gender-neutral passports in 2022, and these may be at risk. I assure you, however, that getting your identity down on paper is worth doing right now. Keep these documents in a safe but easy-to-access place.

Talk to your medical provider too, about extending your prescriptions, and stock up on your medications. They could become a lot harder to obtain, so research do-it-yourself options for hormone replacement therapy. You can find some tips on that at https://diyhrt.wiki. (Note that the site is not intended as medical advice.)

If you can, get a durable power of attorney and an advance health care directive. Those, too, should be kept in a safe, accessible spot.

Consider now your emergency plans. Make a physical list of contacts and information, and prepare what you might need with you in a case of extreme emergency. I hope it doesn't come to this, but being prepared is always better than not. Especially now.

If you need a safe place, and if you are a Trans person of color, please reach out to Garden of Peace Project at https://www.gardenofpeaceproject.org — and if you can, consider donating to it. The organization works to uphold and affirm the lived experiences of Queer and Trans people of color.

And finally: understand that if you need to detransition, go into the woodwork, or go stealth — that's OK. If you can get out of the country, that may be something you'll want to consider. The important thing to do here is survive, and a retreat is a better option versus many others.

Finally, hold onto hope. I'm not going to tell you this future is easy, but we can survive. We have to.

Stay safe and stay well.

First published in the Bay Area Reporter*: https://www.ebar.com/story.php?ch=News&sc=Commentary&id=336418&title=transmissions:_election_2024:_the_fallout*





Ho-ho-homo: The Gayest holiday on Seattle's Queer scene

BY ALAN MOTLEY

@KLOONEY.CREATE

As the crisp winter air settles over Seattle and the city transforms into a wonderland of twinkling lights, our vibrant Queer community is gearing up to make this December the Gayest holiday season yet.

If you've been following along since last month's "Embrace Your Inner Stretch Pants," you'll know I'm all about finding comfort and authenticity amid the holiday hustle. This month, let's carry that spirit forward as we unwrap a lineup of events that promise not just celebration but also connection, self-care, and a sprinkle of festive mischief.

DECK THE HALLS WITH DRAG ROYALTY

There's no better way to shake off the winter chill than by basking in the glow of drag brilliance. Our queens are pulling out all the stops to bring you shows that are as heartwarming as a mug of hot cocoa (with a splash of something extra, of course).

Betty Wetter's Blue Xmas
Dates: December 6, 7, 13: doors at 8:30 p.m., show at 9 p.m.; December 15 (masks encouraged): doors at 2:30 p.m., show at 3 p.m.
Venue: Clock-Out Lounge,
4864 Beacon Ave. S,
Seattle, WA 98108
Admission: 21+
Tickets: Various seating options available; free tickets offered for those in need

Don't try to beat the holiday blues — join them! Betty Wetter's Blue Xmas returns to the Clock-Out Lounge for four shows this December. Expect all-new laughs, lip-synes, and loads of fun. The holidays are best spent with loved ones, so Betty won't be doing it alone! The Them Fatale of drag and burlesque, Moscato Sky, will be the real XXXmas treat this season. Start a new tradition with your chosen family and friends.

Three seating options are available: reserve your spot in the front or snag a table for you and three friends. Plus, no one should miss out due to lack of funds, so free tickets are offered for each show — don't hesitate to ask.

While masks are encouraged at every show, the Sunday matinee on December 15 is specifically for attendees who prefer a masked environment. It's a perfect blend of safety and sass!

Holiday Drag Brunch with Gaysha Starr and Friends
Date: Sunday, December 8
Time: 12 p.m.–2 p.m. (doors at 11:45 a.m.)
Venue: Shaker + Spear,
2000 Second Ave.,
Seattle, WA 98121
Tickets: on Eventbrite
Admission: All ages
Parking: Paid venue parking

Get ready for a fabulous Holiday Drag Brunch, hosted by the one and only Gaysha Starr and her talented friends! Shaker + Spear is hosting a delightful brunch filled with spectacular drag performances, delicious food, and festive drink specials.

This event supports GenPride's mission to advocate for the unique needs of older LGBTQIA+ adults. A portion of ticket sales will benefit GenPride, helping to reduce social isolation and eliminate discrimination. It's the perfect way to spend a Sunday afternoon embracing the holiday spirit in a warm and inclusive environment.

Jingle All the Gay
Dates: Friday–Sunday, December 13–15
Venue: Neptune Theatre: Dec. 13 & 14: doors at 7 p.m., show at 8 p.m.; Dec. 15: doors at 2 p.m., show at 3 p.m.
Tickets: Starting at $40; VIP experiences at $95
Admission: All ages, bar with valid ID

After 15 years, Kitten N' Lou are back to deliver a heaping helping of holiday hilarity and heart, blendsing classic tunes with campy comedy. With VIP tickets, enjoy perks like a dedicated bar line, complimentary coat check, festive pop corn, and a special gift from the cast.

The Jinkx & DeLa Holiday Show
Dates: Saturday–Tuesday, December 21–24
Venue: Moore Theatre
Showtimes: December 21–23: doors at 7 p.m., show at 8 p.m.; December 24 matinee: doors at 2 p.m., show at 3 p.m.
Tickets: Prices start at $30 (not including fees)
Admission: All ages, bar with valid ID

You better watch out, you better not cry, because "The Queens of Christmas" are coming to town! Jinkx Monsoon and BenDeLaCreme, Seattle's own drag superstars, return with a brand-new edition of their internationally acclaimed holiday show. Expect a night of fabulous spectacle, whip-smart comedy, and songs that will have you laughing and feeling all the festive feels.

Marquee Series at Queer/Bar
Venue: Queer/Bar,
1518 11th Ave.,
Seattle, WA 98122
Showtime: 9 p.m.
Tickets: general admission: $20; reserved seating: $40

Queer/Bar is unwrapping a trio of treats during its December lineup: **Aquaria**: Saturday, December 7; **Mariah Paris Balenciaga**: Friday, December 13; **Jaida Essence Hall**: Saturday, December 28. These queens are ready to slay all night, blending holiday classics with their signature flair.

Reserve a table for VIP treatment, including table service and a preshow meet-and-greet.

NIGHTLIFE THAT SPARKLES AND SHINES

Balancing festive fun with personal well-being is key to enjoying the season without burnout. Here are some events that offer the best of both worlds.

BRÜT: Silverback
Date: Friday, December 6, 9 p.m.
Venue: Massive,
619 E. Pine,
Seattle, WA 98122
Tickets: Final release: $25
Ages: 21+

Unleash your wild side at one of the most tantalizing events of the year. DJs ourHOUSE and Dan Darlington will command the dance floor with electrifying beats. The dress code is daring — jockstraps, underwear, harnesses, or leather — so come prepared to roar. A clothes check is available.

Santa's Slut Jamboree at The Cuff Complex
Date: Saturday, December 7
Venue: The Cuff Complex,
1533 13th Ave.,
Seattle, WA 98122
Time: 8 p.m. to close
Admission: $20 cover
Ages: 21+

Ho, ho, ho, and a bottle of festive fun! This evening of merriment and mischief will be hosted by Joon, Isaiah, Alfonso, and Kitty. The night promises hot DJs, dancers, flash tattoos, a photo booth, and prizes. On the dance floor, catch sets by Nick Bertossi, Alfonso Tan, BIG SIR, and Starkey. The patio features Isaiah's Thotty Takeover, with music by Essex and Taylor Elizza Beth.

At midnight, Kitty Glitter will host the "Biggest North Pole" contest with a $300 prize. Enjoy performances by go-go dancers Johnny Moon (PDX), Starr (PDX), RJ (PDX), Leaf, T Mattel, Danny, and Rafa. In the main bar, get your picture taken at the Sexy Santa Photo Booth with Walt Williams, and receive a flash tattoo by Stabra.

Sapphic Soirée: All Femme Party
Date: Saturday, December 7, 9 p.m.–1 a.m.
Venue: Asylum Collective,
108 S. Jackson St. B,
Seattle, WA 98104
Tickets: $10 suggested donation
Ages: 18+

Descend into the Seattle Underground for a night tailored for femmes, WLW, T4T, and allies. The Sapphic Soirée features Polaroid photo sessions, tooth gem applications, tarot readings, flash tattoos, and a dance floor that'll keep you moving all night.

The Bar of Misfit Fetishes
Date: Saturday, December 7, 8 p.m. to close
Venue: CC's Seattle,
1701 E. Olive Way,
Seattle, WA 98102
Admission: No cover
Ages: 21+

For those looking to explore the edgier side of the holidays, this is the place to be. This dress code invites you to express yourself in your favorite fetish attire. It's a night where you can embrace your authentic self in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Whether you're a seasoned enthusiast or curious newcomer, this event promises a memorable experience. Please note that respectful behavior is expected to ensure a safe space for all attendees.

The 13th Annual March of the Mistletomosexuals
Date: Saturday, December 14
Time: 8 p.m. 1 a.m.
Venue: Starts at CC's Seattle,
1701 E. Olive Way,
Seattle, WA 98102
Admission: 21+
Tickets: Available now

Seattle's biggest Gay Santa-themed bar crawl returns! It promises awesome costumes, Santas, misfit toys, and more fun than you can shake a candy cane at. Here's the lowdown:

Schedule:
8:00 p.m.: Gather at CC's Seattle
9:45 p.m.: March to Neighbours on Broadway for free entry
11:00 p.m.: Head to Union, with options to visit Diesel and Pony
Final stop: Massive for free admission and dance takeover

Rules: (1) dress to impress (full festive outfits); (2) bring ID, plus cash for transportation home; (3) pay your bar charges and be courteous to staff and the public; (4) stay with your group, no wandering alone

The Wildrose celebrates 40 fabulous years
Dates: Saturday, December 30
Venue: The Wildrose,
1021 E. Pike St.,
Seattle, WA 98122

Seattle's iconic lesbian bar is turning 40! On December 30, celebrate four decades of community and joy. (Then keep the good vibes rolling at the legendary NYE Party on the 31st; see below.)

FESTIVE MARKETS AND COZY GATHERINGS
In the spirit of the season — and embracing our inner stretch pants — why not explore events that nourish both the soul and the community?

Kringle's Inventionasium at LIT Immersive
Dates: November 30–December 24
Venue: LIT Immersive, 1000 First Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98134 (across from Lumen Field in the Palmer Building)
Admission: Family-friendly
Tickets: Available now; photos and B-roll available
Ages: All ages

Join in on a magical, family-friendly adventure! From November 30 to December 24, families can explore Mr. Kringle's top-secret toy lab, design their own puppets, and meet whimsical characters in a STEM-certified experience. Perfect for igniting creativity and enjoying festive fun together.

Queer Fall Market 2024
Date: Saturday, December 14
Time: 11 a.m. 5 p.m.
Location: Seattle LGBTQ+ Center,
400 E. Pine St. #100,
Seattle, WA 98122
Admission: Free (donations appreciated)

At the seventh annual Queer Fall Market, patronize uplifting local QTBIPOC artists and vendors. From handcrafted jewelry to unique art pieces, you'll find treasures as diverse as they are delightful.

Seattle Queer Crafts at Charlie's Queer Books
Date: Saturday, December 14, 2 p.m.–5 p.m.
Location: Charlie's Queer Books,
465 North 36th Street,
Seattle, WA 98103
Admission: Free (RSVP required due to limited space)

Embrace the art of relaxation by engaging in some DIY creativity. Whether you're a seasoned crafter or just looking for a new hobby, this gathering is all about community connection.

COMMUNITY AND COMPASSION
The holidays can be a complex time emotionally. If you're seeking connection or support, these events offer spaces to feel seen and heard.

World AIDS Day: Stronger Together
Date: Sunday, December 1
Venue: Century Ballroom,
915 E. Pine St.,
Seattle, WA 98122
Time: doors at 5 p.m., event 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.
Suggested donation: $150

Reflect on the lives we've lost and the progress we've made at the 21st annual event.

Queer Munch at Stir
Date: Tuesday, December 17, 7 p.m.–10 p.m.
Location: Stir,
818 E. Pike St.,
Seattle, WA 98122
A safe space for Queer people in the kink community to socialize and connect.

HOLIDAY HARMONIES
Let the sounds of the season lift your spirits with performances that celebrate diversity and joy.

Ho Ho Ho: Seattle Men's Chorus Holiday Show
Dates and Locations: December, various
Tickets and details: Visit *https://www.seattlechoruses.org/2024/09/16/ho-ho-ho/*

Experience the magic of the Seattle Men's Chorus as they present a festive concert featuring seasonal classics, comedy, and a chorus line of dancing Santas.

GIVING BACK WITH STYLE
Embrace the true spirit of the holidays by supporting community initiatives.

Haircuts for the Holidays at The Cuff Complex
Date: Sunday, December 15, 5 p.m. 9 p.m.
Location: The Cuff Complex,
1533 13th Avenue,
Seattle, WA 98122

Freshen up your look while contributing to a good cause.

RINGING IN THE NEW QUEER
As we bid farewell to 2024, Seattle offers fabulous ways to welcome the new year.

New Year's Eve at The Wildrose
Date: Tuesday, December 31
Venue: The Wildrose,
1021 E. Pike St.,
Seattle, WA 98122

Celebrate the new year in a space that's been a community cornerstone for four decades.

Queer NYE Countdown at Pony
Date: Tuesday, December 31
Venue: Pony,
1221 E. Madison St.,
Seattle, WA 98122

For a more intimate celebration, Pony offers eclectic music and a cozy atmosphere.

A new chapter: Introducing the Radio *SGN* Podcast

As we look ahead to the new year, I'm thrilled to share that I'm working on an exciting new project: the Radio *SGN* Podcast.

Starting in 2025, the podcast will be the new voice for the LGBTQ+ community and our allies. Much like NPR, we're committed to delivering in-depth journalism, insightful interviews, and captivating stories — but from a Queer perspective, and in a convenient podcast format.

Join us each week as we explore the issues that matter to you: from politics and culture to health and entertainment. We'll be talking with activists, artists, leaders, and everyday people who are making a difference in our community.

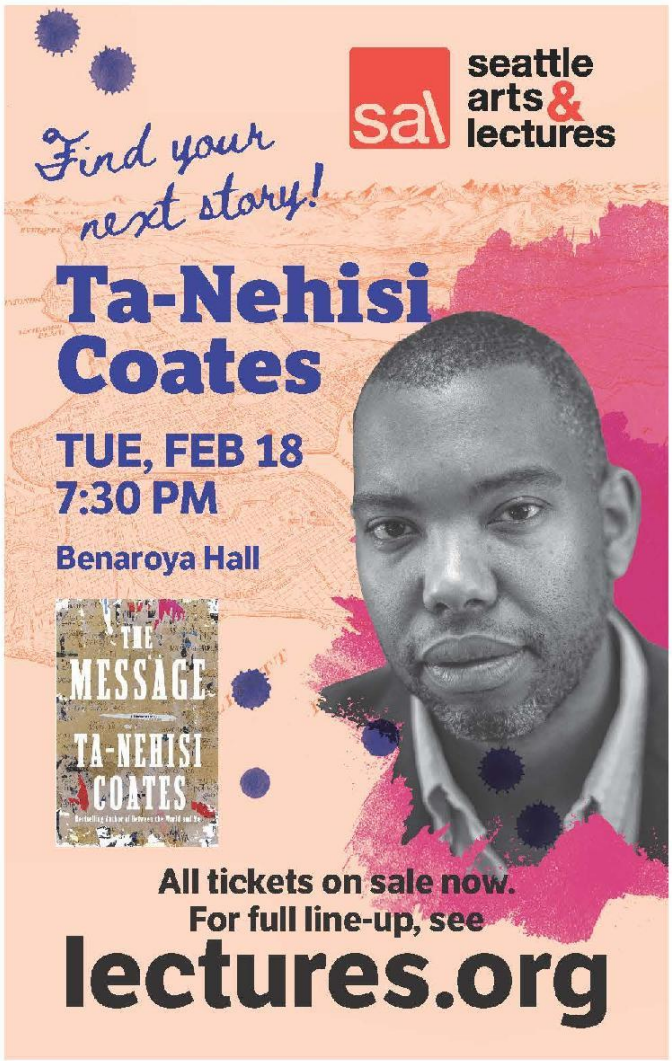
This is more than just a podcast; it's a platform for voices that need to be heard and stories that need to be told.

So subscribe, tune in, and become a part of the Radio *SGN* family. Together, we'll inform, inspire, and ignite change.

Final thoughts

As the year winds down, let's make a collective effort to prioritize what truly brings us happiness. Embrace your inner stretch pants — literally and metaphorically — and step into the new year feeling refreshed and authentically you.

So here's to a December filled with love, laughter, and lots of comfy clothing. May you find joy in the big celebrations and the quiet moments alike!





Intiman's *Black Nativity* returns to celebrate community and the holiday spirit with Food Lifeline

BY KYLIN BROWN

DANCER KEARIA KEKE DUNCAN
PHOTO BY JOE MOORE

In a second annual revival of a longtime tradition, Intiman Theatre returns this year with *Black Nativity* to unite performers and audiences in a shared holiday celebration of hope and joy while showcasing the richness of Black American cultural heritage.

Black Nativity became a beloved Seattle holiday tradition during its original run from 1998 to 2012. Today, the musical has been reimagined by a distinguished creative team, including director Valerie Curtis-Newton, musical director Rev. Sam L. Townsend, Jr., and choreographer Vania C. Bynum, and it won the 2024 Gregory Award for Outstanding Musical.

While based upon the original Christmas story of the birth of Jesus Christ, Langston Hughes' original *Nativity* featured an all-Black cast and interweaved Black Christian traditions in song and dance, such as gospel music.

In partnership with The Hansberry Project, whose mission is to promote and support Black theater artists, Intiman's *Black Nativity* also features all-Black cast of 30 local singers and dancers (with one exception), a live band, and a citywide gospel choir. The second act, typically performed as a sermon, now comes in a sing-along style carol, fostering inclusivity and communal celebration through a shared experience.

Curtis-Newton, who also teaches at the University of Washington's School of Drama, said she is invested in "telling the story of Black people, not to the exclusion of all others but to be sure we are included in the fabric of how we tell the American story."

"I want everyone to fall in love with Black people by seeing our work," she added. "And because they fall in love with Black people, they then embrace their own humanity more fully."

Curtis-Newton expressed that creating a space for people to come together and, in the second act, join in singing Christmas carols is at the essence of *Black Nativity*'s importance.

"Last year, our driving message was: we wanted to have people come together and … join in communal singing as ritual," she said. "That is the real heart of what it is we're trying to do here."



DANCERS DAEZHANE DAY, IVERSON HARDING
PHOTO BY JOE MOORE

Engaging the community

During this year's production, the theater will again partner with Food Lifeline to raise funds for those experiencing hunger. This is integrated easily in the play's theme through a "Pass the Basket" tradition in the second act.

Intiman's managing director, Wesley Frugé, saw this moment as a chance to give back.

"I felt that it would be a missed opportunity to keep all of the money for ourselves," he said. "So we've formatted this… as an opportunity to lift up our friends and neighbors."

In 2023, this effort raised $15,000 for the nonprofit, which supplies nutritious and culturally relevant foods to 299 pantries across Western Washington.

In addition, the partnership has involved mutual support from both sides. This year's cast spent a day volunteering in the Food Lifeline warehouse, and during select performances, Food Lifeline staff will also serve as ushers.

"One of Intiman's values is to 'engage our local community,' and we could not think of a better organization to partner with this holiday season," said Frugé. "This partnership is built on the spirit of abundance and the idea that we can do more together."

Black Nativity plays December 4-29, 2024, at the Broadway Performance Hall. Tickets are on sale now at https://www.intiman.org. To learn more about Food Lifeline's work, make a donation, or to volunteer, visit https://foodlifeline.org.



Priyanka's Devastaisa tour inspires everyone to believe in the fabulousness of their dreams

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

SHAUN VADELLA

Seven years ago, Priyanka strutted down Toronto's Church Street in her high heels for the first time. Now, she's embarking on a North American tour, recently stopping in Seattle, and filming her latest TV show, *Drag Brunch Saved My Life*. Once a little Queer kid in Whitby, Ontario, now she's one of Canada's hottest pop stars and even has a giant mural of her face painted in the neighborhood where her drag career started.

Before she was a *Canada's Drag Race* winner, though, Priyanka was Mark Suknanan, a Queer kid who found inspiration and community in the queens he'd see out at night in Toronto's Gay Village. "I loved the way that, going to Gay bars, you get to see all kinds of people," he said in an interview with the *SGN*. "And then drag queens! There was something about drag that makes you feel like you can do anything," he said with a smile.

One year, he decided to book a drag performer for his birthday. "She [the performer] suggested I should do drag, and that's how I was born," he said.

Inspiration

Beyoncé heavily inspired Priyanka's early looks. "It started as 'What would Beyoncé do?'" Suknanan said. Eventually, he started asking, "What would Beyoncé wear?"

"All of Beyoncé's references are high fashion, like Alexander McQueen, and not just her references, but the designers — because she is rich — that she's working with are high fashion," Sukhanan explained. "My referential point started to change, and it was less about the pop diva and more about the fashion designers creating the garments that my favorite pop stars are wearing."

Ultimately, the greatest inspiration came from within. Of course, Priyanka still wears the iconic designer-inspired outfits that earned her the recognition of Brooke Lynn Hytes. Still, many, including those worn in her *Devastasia* tour, are inspired by childhood experiences.

One of her most iconic is a monstrous interpretation of a classic schoolgirl outfit. "I went to Catholic school, and they made us wear uniforms, and the girls' kilts had this red and blue plaid in it," Sukhanan explained. "For my show, the first act is a school scene, so we made this sexy PVC and the fabric… it's like crocodile skin, because Devastasia is supposed to be like a Godzilla monster."

Stage show

Devastasia is all about subverting expectations and embracing the monster society tries to suppress in us, told through a campy and nonlinear look into Sukhanan's life. Growing up, he was always told he needed a "regular person's job" and would never be a star. With hindsight proving all the naysayers wrong, Sukhanan said it wasn't hard to look back on who he used to be as a teenager.

"The revisiting of it and being able to take it and turn it into a celebration of ownership is what I'm most proud of," he said. "To be like, yeah, we're all fucked up, but we're all here dancing together, laughing, and crying, and singing. The mission is to make the audience escape."

The show opens with Priyanka's victory speech from *Canada's Drag Race* and acknowledges that drag is just as much an escape for the audience as it is for the artist. "I want people to watch my shows and see me do drag and escape life's problems. I know, for me, in the end, it's for people to escape whatever difficult problems they're having," Sukhanan said.

He also hopes the show will inspire people to embrace their dreams, just as he did. "I was a huge dreamer," he said. "I always was someone who wanted to be something. I would watch other people, be inspired by them, and want to be something. What keeps me going is trying to convince myself and other people that you really can be anything in this world."

Priyanka often embraces nostalgia. During her season of *Canada's Drag Race*, she earned the nickname "Hannah Montana," and when she returned for *Drag Superstar*, she performed her own rendition of "Best of Both Worlds." Touring *Devastasia* across the United States and Canada allows her to play with nostalgia while also remaining aware that childhood dreams can still come true.

"Me being this brown kid from Canada who is currently on a world tour, becoming a pop star after winning one of the world's biggest franchises, and then also [being] on an HBO show and [winning] a Critics Choice Award, [being] also one of the only drag performers in North America to be one of Apple Music's Up Next Artists — these are crazy things," Sukhanan said. "I want people to not give up on themselves so easily."

The *Devastasia* tour is headed down south as well. While some people might be nervous about traveling into red states, especially in the wake of the presidential election, Sukhanan has no fear. "I lived in Oklahoma and Tennessee for a month. I'm very aware of the culture wars, the politics, the homophobia, the transphobia that's going on," he said. "It doesn't make me nervous because Queer people are resilient."

Despite the hate, Sukhanan believes in the power of art. "The message of my show is all about that power that people can't forget they have. A lot of people feel like they need to hide who they are, because the rhetoric is 'I don't care if you're Gay, just don't put it in my face,' and then Gay people are like, 'See, they accept us,' and I'm like, 'No, honey, we shouldn't have to hide who we are.'"

Reality show

In between tour stops, Sukhanan has been flying back to Canada to shoot his new reality TV show, *Drag Brunch Saved My Life*. Unlike other shows that focus primarily on the glitz and glam of drag, the series highlights the behind-the-scenes drama that goes into producing a drag brunch in local establishments.

"This is a great opportunity for us to show people of all different walks of life working with a drag queen in a business way," he said. "The main goal is, 'Oh shit, I'm working with a straight owner to make the drag brunch.' It's performance, laughter, and fun."

"Lots of tears, everyone is crying," he added with a smile.

While many would be overwhelmed with this busy popstar life, Sukhanan is grateful for every moment of it. "It's not easy, let me tell you that, but I love it," he said. "I'm addicted to this shit."



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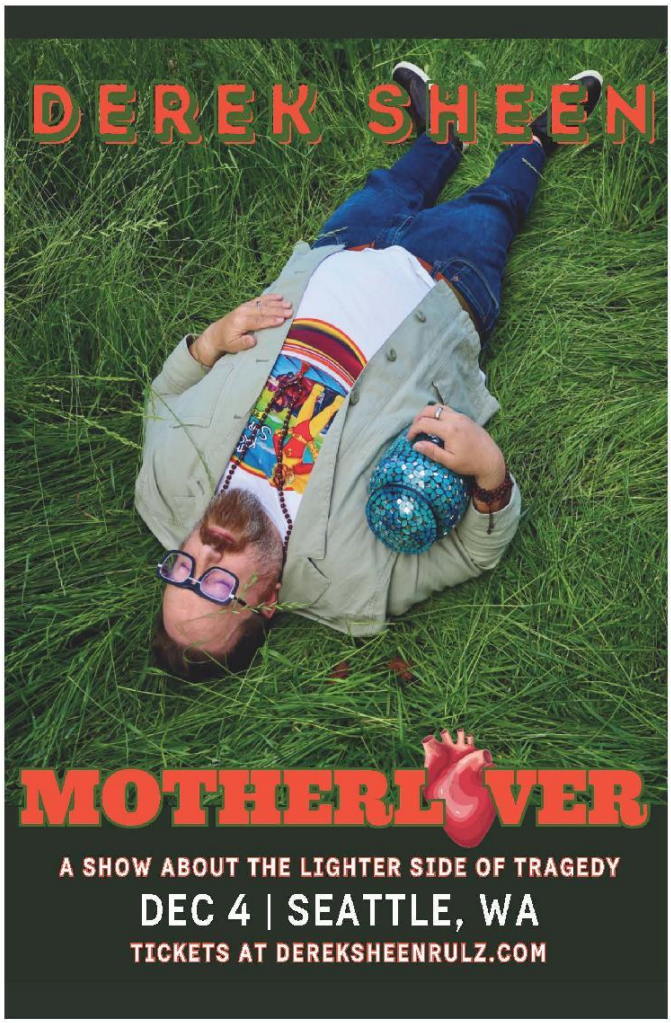
Grammy-winning saxophonist Kenny G: Coming home

BY MK SCOTT

CHARLES SYKES / AP

Every December, one thing we can always depend on is a series of shows from Northwest native Kenny G at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley. The saxophonist, producer, and composer still calls Malibu home, but he always enjoys returning to the city that he grew up in and the club that he loves to play in.

Kenny G has a way with melody. That's not necessarily a revelation — more like a huge understatement — but it really comes into focus at this point in his amazing career. This is a musician who has sold more than 75 million albums worldwide, owns the best-selling instrumental record of all time (1992's 12-times-platinum *Breathless*), and has the number one Christmas record of all time (1994's eight-times platinum "Miracles"), and whose song "Going Home" has, improbably, become the official end-of-work-day anthem in China.



New album

At the heart of those achievements is Kenny's ability to convey deep emotional resonance with his saxophone, a skill never more apparent than on *Innocence*, his 20th studio album and fifth for Concord Records.

The 12-track project's theme is lullabies, which have existed for thousands of years, not only as a means of soothing babies to sleep but also to impart cultural and familial traditions. "Lullabies are very special to me," said Kenny, who has been mulling an album with this focus for several years and even mentioned the idea in passing in Penny Lane's acclaimed 2021 HBO documentary on him, *Listening to Kenny G*. "They hold a special place in my heart," he said. "It's the melodies. They are beautiful and timeless, and whenever I hear them, wonderful memories start rushing back to me."

For the last several years, Kenny has taken to the internet with gusto as new generations of listeners have discovered his music, and contemporary hitmakers, such as The Weeknd and Jon Batiste, have featured him for guest appearances on their albums. His posts have become memes and gone viral, as he continues to have fun with being his iconic self.

While the material from *Innocence* may not make much sense as part of Kenny's live show ("unless I'm playing at a nursery school or a private gig at somebody's house," he joked), it's most definitely not just an album for kids. Although, in Kenny's words: "I've already given you the albums that have made the babies — now I give you the album that puts them to sleep!"

"You can put it on when you want to get into a peaceful frame of mind," he offers. "Some people will hear the new tracks without thinking about them as lullabies and say they just sound like my original music, and that's great too. Also, young parents can enjoy this album. It might help them finally get some sleep."

Below are some excerpts from a recent conversation:

On Seattle

To me Seattle seems like a city that has a great balance. It has a great vibrant downtown, as well as a real working waterfront. But to balance that, one can drive for 10 minutes (let's pretend there is no traffic) and be out in a more natural setting. I love the views of the Olympics and Cascades, etc., and of course, I love it because I grew up here, so I feel "at home."

On what makes Jazz Alley unique

Wow, good question. I can't remember how many times we have done a run at Jazz Alley. Maybe six or so? Never for New Year's Eve, so this will be a first for us. And I really love performing [then], because I like providing a place for people to go to celebrate. It makes me proud of my team for working hard that night so others can enjoy and celebrate. And by the way, we do have fun too!

On seeing him live

Well, we have a lot of albums to draw from, so we do songs from a lot of different recordings. I think we will throw in a holiday song just because it's so close to Christmas. But my band is amazing, and I know the audience will be very impressed with their musicianship and showmanship. We have been performing together since the mid-'80s, so we are a really tight group, and I am very proud of the show we provide. It has great music, phenomenal musicianship (I humbly include myself with the rest of my guys here), dynamics, pace, etc., and we aren't stuffy musicians. We like the audience to feel like there is no wall between the performer and the listener.

On collaborations with The Weeknd and Jon Batiste

Yes, I did those collaborations. And they just happen. Someone talks to someone, and then I get a text message from The Weeknd, for example, and we take it from there. It's actually pretty cool how easy it is to collaborate, because everyone is so connected. And when I play on someone else's music, to me it's like putting together the pieces of a puzzle. So I work really hard to find just the right notes to put in the song when I am doing a solo for someone else. I try to play enough but not too much. It's a tricky balance.

On the wonders of the Sax

I wish I knew. It's all from my heart and instincts. I play things that sound good to me. I play things that sound right to me, and I just follow that, and it seems to lead me to the right places.

See Kenny G at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley, Dec. 27–30, 2024. For ticket info and dinner reservations, go to https://www.jazzalley.com or call 206-441-9729.

Theater legend Anne Allgood conjures the afterlife in Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit* at the Seattle Rep

BY MK SCOTT





Anne Allgood is one of the top actresses in the Seattle theater scene today. I saw her play a murder victim in *Something's Afoot* at the 5th Avenue Theatre this past spring, and I am super excited to witness her conjure a spirit in *Blithe Spirit*, the Noël Coward classic, now playing the Seattle Repertory Theater.

Allgood plays scatterbrained psychic Madame Arcati, who accidentally summons the spirit of Elvira, his late wife of Charles, the host of the séance — which infuriates his current wife, Ruth. Charles suddenly finds himself caught in a supernatural love triangle, and his attempts to fix the situation only make things worse.

Filled with sparkling wit and hysterical hauntings, Coward's irreverent classic comedy provides an otherworldly alternative to your usual holiday fare, and appeals to anyone who ever longed to see *Downton Abbey* go completely off the rails.

Below are highlights of a recent chat with Allgood:

On Madame Arcati

Madam Arcati has been a professional psychic since she was a child… The thing that I love about [her] is that she is … connected to the mystical world and super practical. She rides her bicycle everywhere. She loves good food, sandwiches, and martinis… She's super practical and grounded and also just … connected to psychic, mystical eternity...

On the rehearsal process

I love this rehearsal process, because I love Allison Narver as a director... The rehearsal process is … highly technical, very demanding. The language is very... musical and very specific. There's British dialect, and … comedy in the rhythm of the lines…

At the same time, Allison has this wonderful, free improvisatory, "let's try this" or "maybe this will work" kind of energy in the room, so that we can just be goofy and spontaneous and try new things, right…

On the level of production

It is another Carrie Wong set... It's going to be such an elegant production. Kathy Hunt is doing the costumes, and they are just straight out of Hollywood glamour. Not me, because that's not my character. My character has adorable tweeds and Fair Isle vests and culottes. Culottes because I ride my bicycle, right? So, yeah, just cute as can be.

On if spirits exist

There's a school in Britain, a school of mediumship, that I looked up online… You can do like a spiritual reading over Zoom... and I thought maybe I should do that.

My… big Southern family [is] obsessed with its own genealogy… A thing that we used to do for fun is walk around the graveyard and say hi to all the relatives. So I'm not afraid of ghosts. They're my family.

See Anne Allgood in Blithe Spirit at Seattle Rep's Bagley Wright Theater now through December 22. More information can be found at https://www.seattlerep.org/plays/202425-season/blithe-spirit or call the box office at 206-443-2222.



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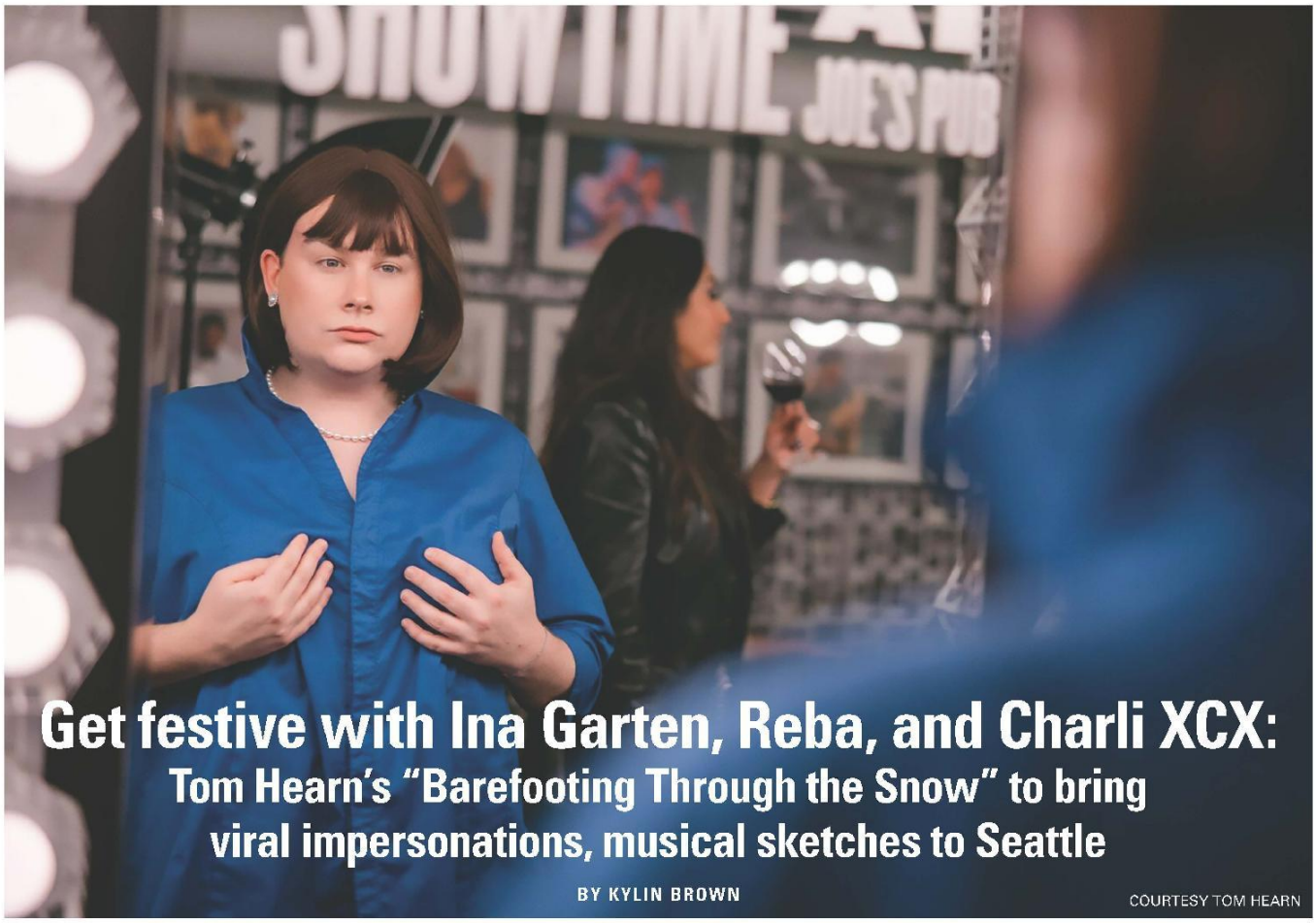
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Get festive with Ina Garten, Reba, and Charli XCX:

Tom Hearn's "Barefooting Through the Snow" to bring viral impersonations, musical sketches to Seattle

BY KYLIN BROWN

COURTESY TOM HEARN

On December 15, social media sensation and long-time Toronto comedian Tom Hearn will perform at the Rabbit Box on his holiday-inspired "Barefooting Through the Snow" tour. The *SGN* spoke with Hearn about his artistic motivations, viral impersonations, and his tour stop in Seattle.

"Barefooting Through the Snow" transports audiences into what appears to be 2003 Food Network holiday crossover episode featuring all of the channel's best hosts. On this tour, Hearn will grace the stage in the form of the Barefoot Contessa herself, Ina Garten (Christmas Cosmo); Martha Stewart (Ultimate Gift Wrapping); Reba McEntire (holiday stories); James Corden (improvised holiday movie magic); and original characters' sketches and musical numbers. New to this tour is an added holiday *Brat* number that Hearn will perform as Charli XCX.

Hearn's comedy impressions have recently gone viral, most notably, that of Garten — whose persona he can snap into with a slightly exaggerated, but convincing, recital of her signature line: "And *how fabulous is that?*"

Inspired by the era of television he was raised on, including the likes of *Friends* and *Trading Spaces*, Hearn's impersonations of all-star TV show hosts like Garten and McEntire seem to have tapped into an era of a generation's collective nostalgia.

"Recently, I've been doing things that don't seem like they're super zeitgeisty or top of mind at this moment but people are deeply passionate about," he said. "I think my characters are successful because there is an appetite online for nostalgic millennial content."

According to Hearn, his Garten impression received instant virality when he decided to post a clip during the early pandemic. "Overnight," he said, "the first clip saw about three million views." He has since seen continuous positive engagement on other impersonation clips, including an approving comment on a Martha Stewart bit from Martha Stewart herself.

Before his online takeoff, Hearn cut his teeth at Toronto's Comedy Bar and others for 15 years. His newfound virtual fame led to the decision to take "Barefooting through the Snow"—which first debuted in 2023 with a sold-out workshop performance—on tour.

Apparently, demand for a Seattle stop was quite high. Hearn also prefers smaller city markets. "There's something to be said about going to a smaller city," he said. "Especially with a show that is so heavily focused on queerness."

With a popped collar and a raised cosmopolitan, Hearn can't wait to share this ode to "the queen Ina Garten" and "all things Holi-Slay" with Seattle.

"Plus," he said, "you never know who might drop by for a Holiday Cosmo."

"Barefooting Through the Snow" will take place at the Rabbit Box on Saturday, December 15 at 7 p.m. Find tickets and additional information at https://www.therabbitboxseattle.com/events/barefooting-through-the-snow. Follow Tom Hearn on Instagram @isthattomhearn and on TikTok at @isthattomhearn4real.

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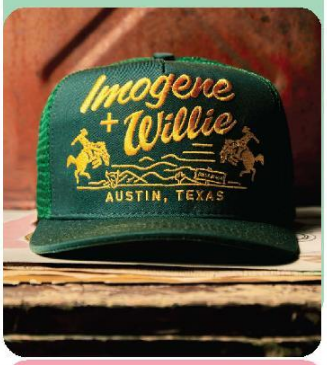


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Honed your sourdough skills during the pandemic? Level 'em up in Le Creuset's handsome enameled cast-iron bread oven, available in seven of the French manufacturer's signature ombré hues, for stunning artisan loaves ideal for gifting or your own private gluttony. Make it a meal with Julia Turshen's Fastest Chicken Noodle Soup recipe from the Queer cook's latest book, *What Goes with What*. *$300, Food52.com; $26, Amazon.com*

Imogene + Willie tees /accessories

Streetwear takes the sophisticated track via imogene + willie's audacious selection of graphic products, like its popular "bolt" in black and increasingly prescient "burn it all" tees, along with accessories that include the standout "bronco" trucker and "dead wrong" knit watch cap. For Queers of a certain age (you know who you are), these style-forward mix-ins give edge without looking desperately trendy or — God forbid — completely out of touch (you know who you are too). *$38-$68, imogeneandwillie.com*





Beekman 1802 Advent calendar

There's no place like home when you've got Beekman 1802's luxurious storybook-inspired Advent calendar to see you through the holidays, each door revealing one of 24 cult-fave face and beauty products, including 16 full-size bestsellers. Bring the somewhere-over-the-rainbow sentiment 360 with a few selections from the boys' *Wicked*-branded lineup, like the Glamorous Gal Bodycare Gift Set or Make Your Own Magic 3-Pack Bar Soap Set, for all the good witches (and bad bitches) in your life. *$179, Beekman1802.com*

Cedar Ridge The QuintEssential whiskey

You're gonna need a buffer that packs a punch — so none are thrown — this holiday season, and Cedar Ridge The QuintEssential is the American single-malt whiskey up to the task, with its notes of caramel and vanilla combined with a persistent pepperiness that's H-O-T-T-O-G-O. *$60, CedarRidgeDistillery.com*





La Boule dinnerware set

Home-based meals are anything but avant-garde these days (and, no, Uber Eats doesn't count), but Villeroy & Boch brings a splash of panache to the table with its multicolored, premium porcelain La Boule seven-piece dinnerware sets — in Miami and Memphis styles — which include two stackable regular bowls, two pasta bowls, two plates, and one serving tray that form a single nesting round and an artistic conversation piece after the dishes are done. *$450, Villeroy-Boch.com*

The EnergyLounger wellness platform

Need a timeout? You'll get one with a kickback on the EnergyLounger wellness platform, offering cutting-edge, full-body red and near-infrared light therapy sessions designed for relaxation and rejuvenation in the comfort of your own home. Benefits include reduced pain and stiffness, improved blood circulation, and cell regeneration for an experience that'll take you away when Calgon ain't cuttin' it. *$7,500-$9,998, EnergyLounger.com*





Pasturebird Chicken/"Hot Ones" Season 25 10-pack

Read the reviews for Pasturebird free-range chicken products (five stars across the board, including its holiday-ready party wings), and you'll be an instant convert — especially after you light 'em up with Heatonist's "Hot Ones" Season 25 10-pack, featuring flavors like Little Dick's Ghost Pepper Pear, Pepper North's Jerk & Scotch Bonnet, and Hot Ones' own The Last Dab: Xperience, an apropos name for the Pepper X–based sauce with a Scoville heat unit rating of over 2.6 million. (For reference, a classic buffalo clocks in at a mere 1,800 SHU.) Santa might be S.O.L. on milk this year. *$10-25, Pasturebird.com; $120, Heatonist.com*

Pepper Pong game

Make room, table tennis — there's a new player in the game. Pepper Pong — a 2023 Best New Game winner — is ping pong's "go-anywhere, do-anything, challenge-anyone cousin… with a mean mullet and pickleball-infused DNA," according to its website, and that translates to a whole lotta fun for the whole family… if you're into that sorta thing. *$70, PepperPong.com*





FinaMill Grinder

Save your knuckles from skin-chewing microplanes and graters with a convenient automated replacement in the rechargeable FinaMill Grinder that allows kitchen whizzes to season with ease, thanks to its one-handed click-grind-release technology. Max and Pro Plus pods pulverize everything from cardamom seeds to coffee beans sans blood, sweat, or tears, in complementary culinary mill colors that include black, white, red, and gray. *$100, FinaMill.com*



Danish Creamery UCS

Danish Creamery renowned for its fresh-churned European-style butter—keeps you *and* your sticks rizzed up and ready to spread this holiday season with its branded ugly Christmas sweater that includes a tiny additional sweater to dress up your serving dish, in a twofer that's both salty and sweet. *$80, UglyChristmasSweater.com*



Tom of Finland Duffel

Henry Cavill is a prime candidate for the anatomical embodiment of a Tom of Finland illustration, and it's hard not to fantasize about the oversized actor decked out in head-to-toe leather, especially after you cop Loqi's Tom of Finland Day & Night Recycled Weekender, featuring all-over printed ToF artwork that looks suspiciously like the Superman that lives rent free in our collective spank banks. *$40, Loqi.com*

DC Comics Style Guide/ Batman DVD set

Pair a reissue of the 1982 DC Comics Style Guide — designed to assist licensees in delivering a consistent look for the brand's celebrated Super Heroes — with the Batman 85th Anniversary 10-Film Collection, which includes fan-favorite animated classics like *The Killing Joke*, *The Long Halloween*, and *Soul of the Dragon*, among others, for a gift that'll instantly elevate you to Super Friend. *$95, StandardsManual.com; $200, Amazon.com*



Andy Warhol x Absolut Vodka

Art imitates life imitating art in Absolut Vodka's full-circle Andy Warhol collab featuring elements of the pop icon's overlooked 1985 blue bottle painting, rediscovered in 2020. With colors extracted directly from the original work and made with multilayer screen printing to create an authentic sensory experience to touch, the spirited 2024 collector's item also includes a QR code that opens a portal into the world of Warhol and the story behind both brands' historic and enduring connection, this limited-edition release now among them. *$26, ReserveBar.com*



Dwayne Chestnut sunglasses

Did Vontélle sleep on the app to name its Dwayne Chestnuts flip-up transitioning glasses the Dwayne Waynes, paying homage to the iconic spectacle-shades popularized by Kadeem Hardison on *A Different World*? Perhaps. But slap on a pair of these bad boys and you'll bring all the early-'90s vibes (and maybe a few Whitleys or Ron Johnsons) to the yard. *$189, Vontelle.com*



Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than a hundred outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @ mikeyroxtravels.





DINA
CONTINUED FROM COVER

AH: Who influenced you the most, so far as singing, dancing, acting, comedy, and the important of faux velour?

DM: Without a doubt, it was Soupy Sales. Now, I realize a lot of your readers are too young to know who Soupy Sales was, so for them, I'll just say that he was sort of the "Mort Sahl" of his era.

AH: You first stepped on stage at Seattle's Center on Contemporary Art, in 1989. How did that show go?

DM: Quite well, thanks. It was more surreal than anything, because the audience watched the performers through peepholes in the wall. We really couldn't see them at all from the stage, so it was kind of like the pods in *Love Is Blind*.

AH: Do you ever feel stage fright?

DM: I don't ever feel stage fright, but sometimes I do get that anal reflux.

AH: How has your fabulousness grown and changed over the years?

DM: Oh, it changes daily. It's like the tide, really, because it reaches highs twice every day and then it has some pretty awful lows too, and those seem to happen only when I'm onstage.

AH: Any makeup and fashion tips for folks who want to be as fabulous as you are?

DM: Yes! Always wear your black pumps during cold and flu season, and your white pumps during flea and tick season. Another thing I've always adhered to is the advice of Coco Chanel, who famously said, "Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take everything off." Also very important: Rouge your hips.

AH: Your Facebook page says you've recently played San Diego, San Francisco, Palm Springs, New York City, and Los Angeles — though possibly not in that order. How do those cities compare and contrast with each other for you?

DM: Pretty well.

AH: Does San Francisco really have most of the fabulous people in the world, or is this just myth?

DM: It really does, but they're all homebodies, so I never see them.

AH: What cities are the best and the worst for the Dina Martina experience, and why?

DM: I can't really pick a favorite city because there are so many great ones, but boy, Pyongyang was a low point.

AH: What are your best, worst, and wackiest stories of bringing Dina Martina to the world — which tours, cities, venues, etc.?

DM: Hm, let's see...one of the best was definitely performing on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2019. One of the worst was the one cruise I performed on, because I got seasick (not during the show, thank goodness). One of the wackiest was when I did a show at the Tacoma Art Museum, which oddly enough received one of the best audience responses I've ever gotten. Go figure!

AH: Have you ever toured overseas? If so, how do people there respond to you?

DM: Yes, I've performed in London many times, and the audiences are always wonderful. I love how they laugh with a British accent.

AH: Anyone ever start a fistfight? Anyone ever jump onstage to shower you with hugs and kisses and fabulousness? Anyone ever do both?

DM: Neither one of those have ever happened, but quite often there's a stampede to get out of the building.

AH: You obviously keep voluminous scrapbooks of your notices! Are you ever worried they'll fall through the floor?

DM: Oh I'm not worried at all. They came in real handy during [the pandemic], when the stores were out of toilet paper.

AH: What are your own personal favorite notices? I'm going with the dear departed *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*: "As graceful as a Coke machine moving about on a hand truck."

DM: Yes, I do love that one, but some other favorites are "She looks like Liz Taylor and Liza Minnelli hit with a brick" and also "Her face looks like the collision of a Maybelline truck with a Shoney's buffet."

AH: You've shared bills with Margaret Cho, Alan Cumming, Chita Rivera, and Nina Hagen. What can you dish about their fabulousness?

DM: Margaret is so wonderful and sweet, but Alan is sweet and wonderful. Chita was absolutely s'wonderful, and Nina Hagen was Nina Hagen.

AH: Your audience members have included John Waters, Jennifer Coolidge, Bette Midler, Eric Idle, Graham Norton, Whoopi Goldberg, Matt Stone. What can you dish about *their* fabulousness?

DM: They were all neat.

AH: Your daughter Phoebe must be in her thirties by now! Will she still be part of your act? Will she ever strike out on her own?



COURTESY DINA MARTINA

DM: She's 11, and let me tell you: she just shines. But she's also a handful. She's a shining handful.

AH: Please share your thoughts on winning, and not winning, the *Stranger*'s Genius Award for Theater plus three *Seattle Times* Footlight Awards (winning), and the Alpert Award in Theater, a SPIT Award for Best Solo Show, and two GLAAD Media Awards for Outstanding Off-Off Broadway Theater (not winning).

DM: Winning the *Stranger*'s Genius Award was neat because of the money, but it was also delicious because they gave out cakes. The *Seattle Times* Footlight Awards were so amazing because they print your name in the paper. I can't really say much about the other ones because you know what they say: "It's an honor just to win."

AH: What fabulousnesses can we expect from the new Christmas show?

DM: You can expect any kind of fabulousness you want, but the show isn't written yet, so I really have no idea.

AH: Years ago I noticed that Timothy Leary was an old friend of yours! Did he leave you any more of his special sweet sugar cubes?

DM: Oh, he wasn't actually a friend; he was merely an admirer. He saw me perform in Reno and then wrote a fan letter, and that was when he very generously included some magical sugar cubes. Boy, that really made for an interesting show.

AH: What's in the future for the Dina Martina experience? More globetrotting? More fabulousness? More faux velour?

DM: After the first of the year, I'm going into the studio to record my new album *Dina Martina: A Reason to Celibate* [sic], which I'm very excited about. I'm also thinking about doing a one-woman gender-swap passion play, but I'm not sure yet. And you know what I'd really love is to volunteer to help marginarized [sic] communities, you know, maybe bring them some chocolate pudding or something.

WATERS
CONTINUED FROM COVER

to do it. And this is probably the worst cover record ever done. That's why it says "Please don't listen to this record."

AH: Is your record on the charts?

JW: The charts — what are the charts? I get *Billboard*, they don't even have a chart anymore. It depends on whose chart. At Atomic Books in Baltimore, yes!

AH: I read your *Shock Value* book many years ago, and I noticed a very cute picture of a tiny John Waters, speaking with Santa. Do you recall those visits?

JW: Yeah, it was always Hutzler's Department Store, in Towson, [Maryland,] where I grew up. I probably believed in Santa, in that picture. What made me not believe in him was that every Christmas Eve, everybody went down to the town square and lit the tree. And Santa came, but I could see it was the man who lived two doors up from me. I could tell it was him! That's when I knew something was up.

And I didn't want to tell my parents, because then they'd be upset, but that was one of my first rebellious things. I always thought the Easter Bunny was so low-class, you know — you had to search around for what, a hard-boiled egg? I thought the Easter Bunny was Santa's enemy.

AH: So you would've taken Santa's side in that fight?

JW: I would've, yes.

AH; Over the years, what have been your favorite Christmas presents?

JW: A cashmere blanket Divine gave me, that I still have. You should never have cashmere in your home because it means "Attention, all moths, come here for Woodstock!" But I still use it sometimes, for the chill.

God knows where he got it, he could never have afforded it. He might have shoplifted it. And that comes to the question: Are shoplifted gifts more personal? Do they mean more? You take a risk — but you take a risk when you go into credit card debt during Christmas. I'm not pro-stealing, especially because of small businesses.

I always like books, rare books, weird books that people give me. I think everybody should just buy everybody books for Christmas. That should be the only gift. I think the biggest insult is when you get a gift card. People think you're so stupid you don't have any interests.

I still buy CDs. I'm one of the oldest people that do that, but then I put them in my Sonos, which causes technical trouble. I don't really ask people to give me music, because they give me streaming — that's like a weird present. I do have a list of books that people can get from my office, if they're looking for a present.

More information about A John Waters Christmas *can be found at https://www.sig-presents.org/events/a-john-waters-christmas.*



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Getting there together – chatting about Disney's *Moana 2* with producer Christina Chen and actor Hualalai Chung

BY SARA MICHELLE FETTERS
SGN STAFF WRITER

COURTESY D23

COURTESY HUALALAI CHUNG

Moana 2
Theaters

Moana 2 began life as a proposed animated television series for Disney+. It didn't take long for the powers that be at Walt Disney Animation Studios to realize that the big screen was where Polynesian heroine Moana (voiced by Auli'i Cravalho) and the shape-shifting demigod Maui (Dwayne Johnson) were most at home, and plans quickly shifted to craft the pair a story that would befit a second cinematic adventure.

With the sequel's Thanksgiving holiday release on the horizon, I sat down with *Moana 2* producer Christina Chen and actor Hualālai Chung on the Space Needle's observation deck to chat about the film. We touched on several hot-button topics, and the pair's overall joy at having the opportunity to be involved with the project was immediately palpable. Here are some of the edited highlight from our brief conversation.

Sara Michelle Fetters: Talk about a little about how this sequel came to be.

Christina Chen: There was so much love for the first animated film. We know *Moana* so well. We love the characters. We love the music. It really was begging for this expansion to the story. Everyone was wondering, where is Moana going to be a couple of year from now [the events of the previous film]?

So, there really was this groundswell of people at the studio and from audiences that wanted to see a sequel happen. We would do these screenings every few months, and everyone always agreed we needed to continue Moana's story, and it needed to be a big screen experience. It's just so beautiful. So expansive. Everyone is always just so blown away when we screen the first film. In that way, a sequel just happened organically. I had to be made.

SMF: I watched the original again just the other day, and I was struck once again by how celebratory it is of diversity, and not just in the natural world, but in the cultural human world as well. It's such cultural celebration. How would you say *Moana 2* picks up on some of those themes?

CC: This film is ultimately about identity and it is about connection. It shows how we as people continue to evolve as individuals and as a society. This time Moana is a leader. She has a new crew, and so the story shows that, as we get older and life and we become a leader, what does that mean? In the first film she went off on her own. This time, she has the responsibility of leading her crew knowing she is going on this new adventure for her people and with her people.

SMF: Hualālai, when you auditioned for *Moana 2*, what was it like to step into the shoes of this character, Moni, and knowing you'd be a part of continuing Moana's story?

Hualālai Chung: I'll be honest. When I sat down to audition, I had no idea this was the film I was auditioning for. Disney does this amazing job of keeping things under wraps, so I'd received all the materials unlisted, no character names, no studio names, nothing. But I have this mentality to not give up on any opportunity. It was a role, and I knew I wanted it, so I wanted to give the best audition possible so I could force whichever studio was doing the casting to make a tough decision.

Three or four weeks later, I get this phone call from the casting director at Walt Disney Animation Studios and I absolutely lost my mind. I was such a Disney kid when I was young. We went to the parks every summer whenever possible. But, that aside, I have an even deeper love of my culture, and *Moana* meant so much to me as a kid. I remember walking around the park and thinking, if there ever was an opportunity to pair my love of Disney with my love of my culture, that would be a dream come true.

SMF: So, elaborate on that if you could? You were a kid when *Moana* came out. Now, here you are, starring in the sequel. What does that feel like?

HC: Fun fact: Auli'i actually graduated from the same high school. How crazy is that? It as so cool when the first film came out that, not only did Disney create a film that celebrates Polynesian culture, Pacific Islander culture, but that it also starred someone our home town.

To be able to join her on this adventure? It's truly an honor. I try to come up with other words to describe what I'm feeling but there just aren't any. It's such an honor, such a blessing. Part of me still can't believe it happened.

SMF: Without going into spoilers, can you tell people how Moni fits into Moana and Maui's latest adventure?

HC: I like to say Moni is everyone's best friend. He's whimsical. He's giddy. He is obsessed with Maui, so much so it can get a little uncomfortable sometimes. [*laughs*] But Moni is also the dreaming historian Moana's village. He fits into the crew by, not only being an oarsman, but by also being able to recite many of the ancient tales and legends that will help Moana and Maui navigate through all the various trails and hardships they're going to face along the way to their destination.

SMF: Christina, having worked on the first *Moana* and now stepping up to the plate as one of film's producers for the sequel, what did it feel like to embark on this adventure knowing you had such a pivotal role to play?

CC: Like Hualālai, working on *Moana 2* was a dream come true. I was lucky enough to work on the first film, and that's where I became friends with my fellow producer Yvett Merino. She was a production manager on *Moana* and I was in production finance, so it was such a joy and an honor to produce this sequel alongside of her.

Two of our three directors, David G. Derrick Jr. and Jason Hand, also worked on the first film, so *Moana 2* was like this big family reunion. I think, as a group, we're just grateful we got the opportunity to work on this sequel each and every day. I'll say it again — it's a dream come true.

SMF: When Auli'I and Dwayne walked back into the recording studio to resurrect Moana and Maui for the first time, what was that like?

CC: Magic. It was magic. We were all so excited. The first words they uttered as their characters, Auli'I and Dwayne immediately snapped back into being Moana and Maui again. They have such a deep love of these characters and of their culture, it was like they'd never stopped being Maona and Maui. The *are* Maona and Maui. It was incredible to see. Just to see them in the booth, working out their lines, and bringing back that comedy and that emotion? It was amazing. Tears may have been shed. [*laughs*]

SMF: We're in this period right now where there all these heightened emotions regarding representation and diversity, especially as it pertains to the arts, cinema in particular. There is also such great enthusiasm for this sequel. How important is it for a film like *Moana 2* to come out right now and in this environment?

CC: This whole film is about connection. It's such a universal thing that I think, that I hope, everyone can relate to. As we grow older, we begin to realize how much we need one another. That everything is connected. This film is very emblematic of the idea that going on any type of adventure together is determinative of just how far we will ultimately go. If we don't go on the journey together, we won't get very far. We'll get stranded.

I think, for me, that's why this is such an important story to tell. It's valuable at any point in our lives to be reminded about that. I think that's especially true right now.

SMF: Hualālai, in that same vein, you know how much the first *Moana* meant to you as a youngster, what do you hope viewers, especially younger viewers, take away from watching *Moana 2*?

HC: I think the first and second film represent the importance of community so well. I hope this is something everyone can relate to. I think, my personal experience in all of this and in making this film also exemplifies that you can do anything you set your mind to, and that's also a really big theme that Moana herself typifies. Don't let the confines of life and society keep you from being who you are meant to be. Don't give up. Go for it.





Rambunctious *Queer* is an ejaculatory descent into the humanistic unknown

BY SARA MICHELLE FETTERS
SGN STAFF WRITER

COURTESY A24

QUEER
Theaters (Dec. 6)

The last time I tackled William S. Burroughs was when David Cronenberg's phantasmagorical oddity *Naked Lunch* played Spokane's Magic Lantern Theater in 1991. I hoped that reading the source material would add context and give additional insight into the wickedly weird motion picture I'd recently sat through. I was wrong.

However, I did pick up *Junkie* at the same time. Even though I haven't returned to it in over 30 years, I must have read that dog-eared, frayed-at-the-edges paperback four or five times. That book is a masterpiece.

Be that as it may, I have not read Burroughs' unfinished, semiautobiographical *Queer*, published in 1985 but written between 1951 and 1953. After watching *Challengers* and *Call Me by Your Name* impresario Luca Guadagnino's disquietingly rambunctious film adaptation, I feel compelled to read what Burroughs had to say about his doppelgänger William Lee's hedonistic adventures in Mexico City. Granted, I'd probably get next to no clarity, just like when I made my way through *Naked Lunch* back in high school.

Part of me thinks this is exactly as it should be. Burroughs was an indecipherable paradox. There is lucid lunacy to his crackpot musings, much of them dealing with gender, sexuality, and the unfathomable conundrum that is the human condition.

For *Queer*, Guadagnino reteams with his *Challengers* screenwriter Justin Kuritzkes, and again the pair show no interest in playing it safe. Their adaptation is a stream-of-consciousness explosion of sex, longing, adoration, substance abuse, and grief that leaps from one emotional permutation to the next, with zero thought as to whether the audience can keep up. They mix genres, visual styles, and melodramatic histrionics with carnally promiscuous ambition, then set it all to a killer score composed by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross (*The Social Network*), augmented by songs that run the gamut from Nirvana, Prince, Sinéad O'Connor, and New Order to big band tunes of the era.

As for the plot? It's 1950, and American expat William Lee (Daniel Craig) is shambling through Mexico City streets in an alcohol- and drug-induced haze as he thirsts after many of the young men who cross his path. He's particularly drawn to Eugene Allerton (Drew Starkey), a former soldier who crossed the southern border for reasons entirely his own. The pair strike up a friendship that quickly becomes intimate. Eventually, they travel to South America in search of a fabled plant that might grant them deeper psychedelic insight into the world and the peoples who inhabit it.

There's little rhyme or reason to any of this. It's all a foggy metaphorical blur of naked bodies, whirling cigarette smoke, and tequila shots with a lukewarm beer chaser. Are Lee and Allerton in love? It's hard to say, and Guadagnino and Kuritzkes refuse to allow any hints of emotional certainty. But there is lust and longing. There is a need that is not only sexual but intellectual in nature. While Lee clearly needs Allerton more than the latter does him, their mutual affection still comes across as genuine, and maybe that's all that truly matters.

A wild group of supporting characters rushes in and out of the story, almost all of whom make an impression. Chief among them are the virtually unrecognizable, scene-stealing veteran character actors Jason Schwartzman and Oscar nominee Lesley Manville. I'm not going to spoil who they play or what they have to do with the affair. Just know that each is outstanding, delivering two of my favorite supporting performances of 2024.

Craig is magnificent. Much will likely be made of his "bravery" in allowing himself to be seen in the buff while engaging in erotic scenes with Starkey, but I am far more impressed by his emotional nakedness. His Lee is a wild eccentric desperately trying to hold himself together, even though he's constantly on the cusp of a psychological breakdown. Craig's jittery, almost cartoonish vocal bombast is juxtaposed nicely with his sweaty terror at the thought that Lee may have to walk through the remainder of his days alone. I couldn't take my eyes off of him.

Does it all work? I honestly can't say. It took me multiple viewings to come around to not just liking Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* but also realizing that it's a bona fide cinematic masterwork. While I have no clue if my feelings about Guadagnino's adaptation of *Queer* will follow a similar trajectory, I believe this type of revelatory evolution could take place, as this film does speak volumes. The director crafted an ejaculatory descent into the unfinished humanistic unknown that's probably unlike anything I've ever seen. I have a feeling Burroughs, if he were still around to see the finished film, wouldn't have wanted it any other way.





Ambitiously magical *Wicked: Part One* defies cinematic gravity

BY SARA MICHELLE FETTERS
SGN STAFF WRITER

COURTESY UNIVERSAL PICTURES

WICKED: PART ONE
Theaters

It's taken over two decades for the popular — "You're gonna be pop-u-LAR!" — Broadway musical sensation *Wicked* to transition from stage to screen. Countless versions have been in production throughout the last 20 years, but, for whatever reason, no filmmaker has been able to rustle up the spark that could give an adaptation life. Would a new version remain a musical? Or should a feature-length production take a *Harry Potter* approach and hew closer to Gregory Maguire's best-selling 1999 novel? These were only two of the plethora of questions anyone wanting to tackle the property needed to answer.

Enter director Jon M. Chu, the man behind *Step Up 2: The Streets*, a pair of unexpectedly successful Justin Bieber documentaries, *Crazy Rich Asians*, and *In the Heights*. Along with screenwriters Dana Fox (*Cruella*) and Winnie Holzman (who also wrote the book for the Broadway production), they've kept the picture a musical while also including material from Maguire's source material that was excised from the stage play. The team has also cut the story into pieces, gambling that audiences will be thrilled to see a two-part epic filled with singing, dancing, and purposefully melodramatic emotions, all set in L. Frank Baum's Merry Old Land of Oz.

The fruits of this labor of love, *Wicked: Part One*, has now materialized. While I'm not exactly over the rainbow, there's plenty here worth celebrating, thanks to the pitch-perfect casting of Cynthia Erivo as the green-skinned future Wicked Witch of the West Elphaba and Ariana Grande-Butera as the selfish Galinda (who will put her past behind her to become Glinda, the Good Witch of the North) and a crackerjack climax that certainly defies gravity. I think general audiences will be clicking their ruby slippers in glee, likely making the decision to transform this story into a double feature a profitable one.

After a brief prologue in Munchkinland (which the less said about the better —it's borderline terrible), the story kicks off with Elphaba and Galinda being forced to share the latter's dorm suite at Shiz University. At first, the two despise one another. Later on, after a series of travails, they discover they have more in common than they thought. When Elphaba is invited by the wonderful Wizard of Oz (Jeff Goldblum) to visit him in the Emerald City, she in turn asks Galinda (now renamed Glinda to show solidarity with their history professor Dr. Dillamond, recently dismissed for being a goat) to accompany her on the trip.

That's precious little plot for a 160-minute motion picture (and it's only act one of the considerably shorter Broadway production). Even if Fox and Holzman go out of their way to flesh things out, make the world of Oz more complex, and add further layers to the core supporting characters — including Elphaba's paraplegic sister Nessarose (Marissa Bode), Shiz headmistress Madama Morrible (Michelle Yeoh), and dashing royal bad boy Fiyero (Jonathan Bailey) — the film noticeably drags, especially throughout the midsection. Chu has considerable trouble maintaining dramatic momentum, and it isn't until Galinda decides to give Elphaba a makeover and sings her signature song "Popular" that it begins to pick up steam.

From that point forward, *Wicked: Part One* takes off. The plot against the animals of Oz is revealed, and a blossoming love triangle involving Elphaba, Galinda/Glinda, and Fiyero is deftly hinted at with winking subtlety. There's a sublime musical set piece inside the walls of the Emerald City (which had my promo audience gasping and applauding in justified shocked euphoria), and Goldblum's initial appearance as the tongue-tied Wizard of Oz is just what one would hope for and more.

Then comes that climax. This may be only the midpoint of the overall tale, but Chu gives it all the energy, excitement, wonder, whimsy, and exclamatory, defiant joy a song like "Defying Gravity" deserves. Magnificently shot by cinematographer Alice Brooks (*tick, tick...BOOM!*) and cut with rapid-fire ferocity by editor Myron Kerstein (*Going in Style*), everything about this crackerjack finale overwhelms the senses and enlivens the soul. It builds to an explosive last few minutes that sent my heart soaring, and I nearly forgot about the elements that annoyed and frustrated me.

Still, Chu vexes me as a filmmaker. There are moments, like the one I just described, where his handling of the material is stratospheric in its attention to detail and stylishly inventive exuberance. But then there are others, much like *In the Heights*, when he overcuts the action and dancing to the point they become a visual blur and the athletic artistry of the ensemble is completely lost. Production designer Nathan Crowley (*Tenet*) creates one-of-a-kind sets overflowing in possibility — only for the director to make precious little of merit out of so many of them. It's exasperating.

The single element that keeps this Ozian odyssey from derailing is the exemplary, free-spirited performances delivered by Erivo and Grande-Butera. With an Academy Award nomination for *Harriet* under her belt (and more than deserving of another one for *Widows*), Erivo is incredible as Elphaba, which is no surprise. She is more than up to the challenge. The actor brings a multifaceted agency to the character that leaps off the screen, and I can't wait to see what she does in *Wicked: Part Two*.

But Grande-Butera? Even if the pop star got her start in teen/tween television showcases like *Victorious* and acquitted herself nicely in the NBC broadcast of *Hairspray Live!* as Penny Pingleton back in 2016, I still can't say I foresaw this level of mesmeric emotional and physical dexterity coming from her. Grande-Butera has to walk a difficult tightrope, and she needs to do it with a cocksure grace that also hints at nakedly raw vulnerabilities Galinda/Glinda desperately wants to keep hidden. It's a phenomenal performance, and don't be surprised if it wins her an Oscar. I know I won't be.

I could nitpick several additional elements. This includes the uneasy alliance between, on the one hand, the spectacular sets, costumes, and practical makeup designs and on the other, the computer-generated visual effects, which unhappily vacillate between being stunningly photorealistic and garishly unfinished (and even a little mushy) from one scene to the next. But, mostly thanks to Erivo and Grande-Butera, and courtesy of an assist from that major wow of a climax, I'm not going to let those bother me.

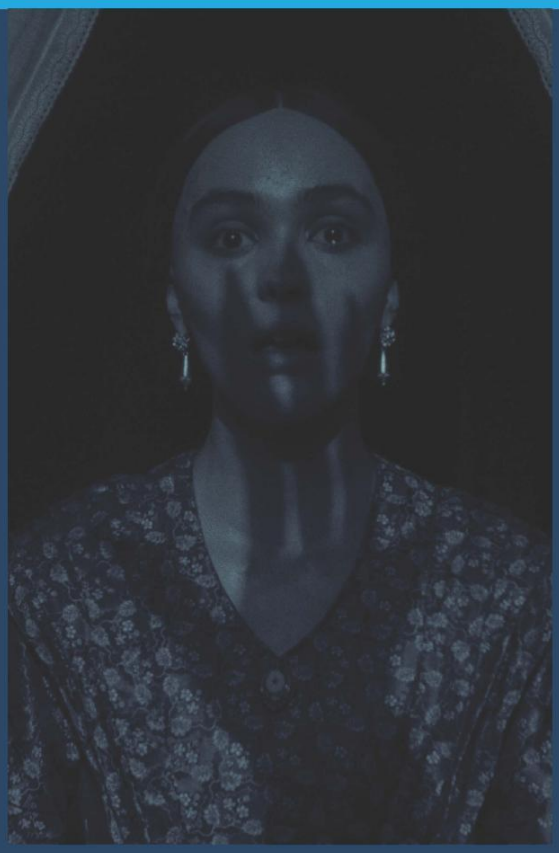
And as much as I wish the filmmaking team had refrained from splitting the story into pieces and delivered one three-hour musical adventure, *Wicked: Part One* won me over. There is magic here — elements that defy conventional cinematic gravity — and I'm not about to let my reservations bring me down.

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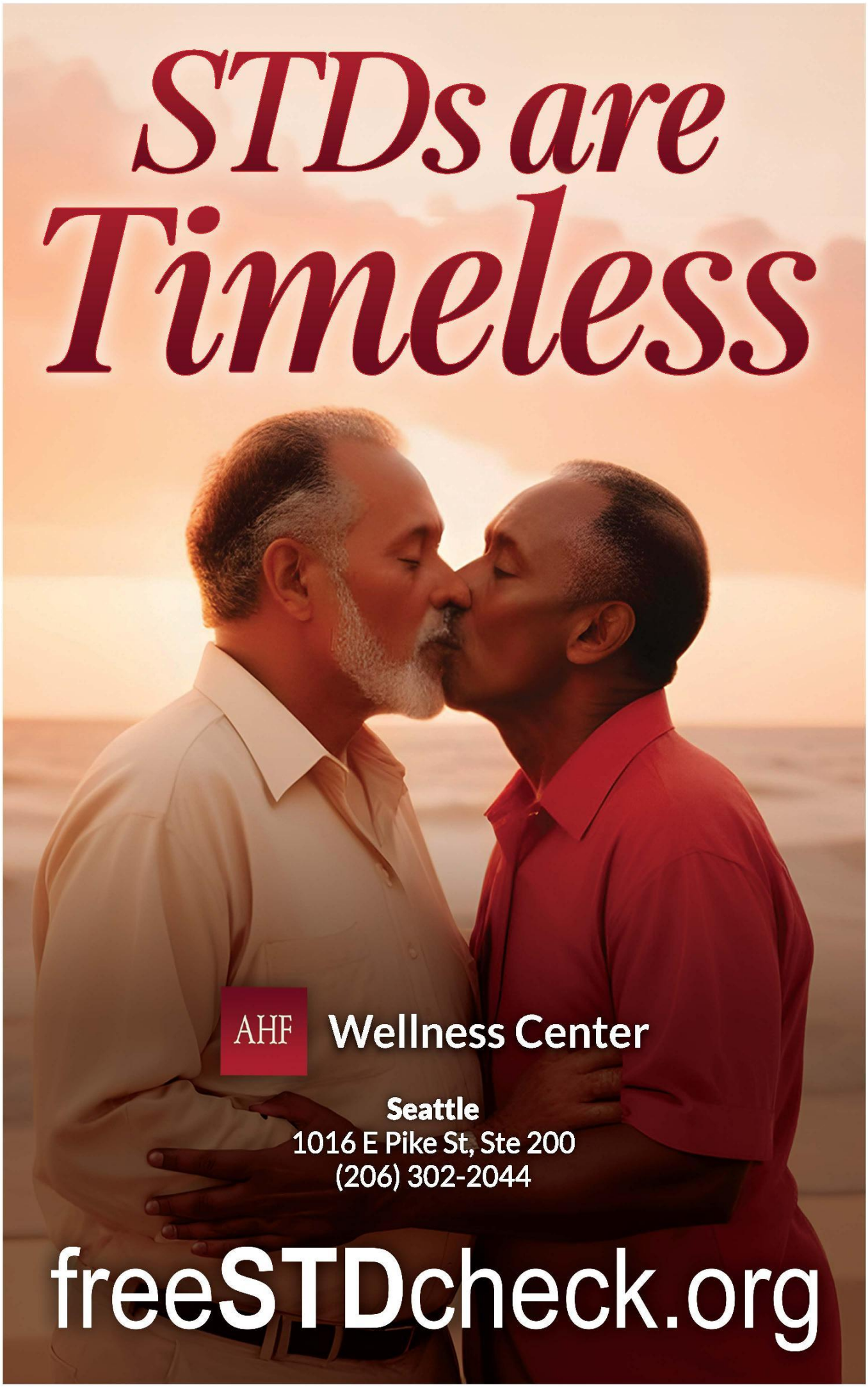
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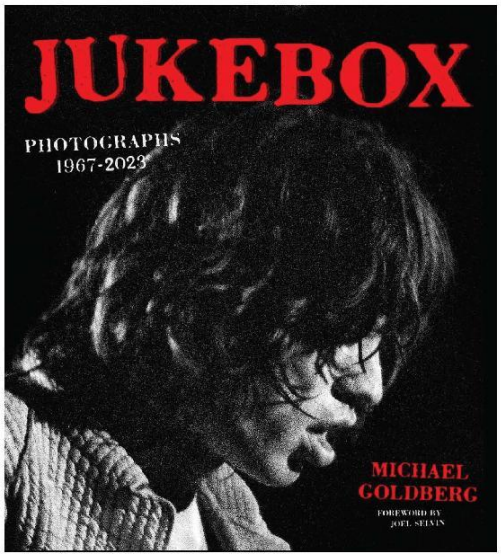
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New photo book features San Francisco feminism, fire

BY ANDREW HAMLIN



A writer, photographer, and one-time psychedelic poster purveyor, the Bay Area's Michael Goldberg started out on his high school paper and ended up working for *Rolling Stone*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the online music webzine he co-founded, *Addicted to Noise*. His latest book, *Jukebox*, collects his music photography from 1967 to 2023.

Below are excerpts from a recent conversation.

Andrew Hamlin: Which photography, growing up, made you want to take photographs? Which photos, subjects, approaches, magazines, books, etc.?

Michael Goldberg: My dad had an SLR [single-lens reflex camera], and he would always take photos when we went on family vacation trips. When we got back, he'd set up a screen in our living room, and we'd look at the slides he had taken. So I was used to the idea of taking photographs.

And when I was ten years old or so, he got me a Brownie camera and I started taking photos. And he set up a darkroom in our garage, so eventually I learned how to develop black-and-white film, and I learned how to make prints.

AH: You photographed the Doors and others at the Fantasy Fair and Magic Mountain Music Festival in 1967. Did you risk life, limb, and/or sanity?

MG: No. It was one of the best experiences of my life ... You could make your way up to the stage. Most of the people were sitting in the crowd watching. Not that many people were standing. I got right up to the stage and took photos of Jim Morrison and Ray Manzarek.

AH: Who were the most powerful Queer acts musically, and what were your impressions of them?

MG: I don't know the answer to that question. Sylvester was a Gay singer in San Francisco who appealed to Gay audiences, but, I think, to straight audiences too.

There were punk bands that had Gay and Lesbian members and straight members. From my perspective, it wasn't like a certain kind of music appealed to Gay and Lesbian folks. It just wasn't like that. There was a Trans woman I knew, and she practically lived at the punk club, the Mabuhay Gardens — just loved punk bands.

AH: I was fascinated by your portraits of Jane Dornacker with Leila and the Snakes, and the all-female band Eyes. How did those acts, in their different ways, manifest feminism and female power?

MG: Eyes was the first all-women feminist rock band. I saw them at this Lesbian bar, Mona's Gorilla Lounge, in Santa Cruz in 1973. I was 19, going to UC Santa Cruz. My girlfriend at the time was a 33-year-old ... professor teaching a class called "Women in Film." She was a huge fan of Eyes; she'd shot 16 mm film of them.

She took me to see them, and I thought they were the greatest. I have a very poorly recorded cassette tape I made of some of their music at Mona's, and I listen to it often.

Eyes were all women on stage: Drums (Vicky Gilliam), bass (Nikki Nutting), guitar (Peggy White), vocals (Alicia Pojanowski), keyboards (Janet Small). That was a very feminist thing at the time. Women *didn't* play drums and bass back then. Not many played electric guitar. There were very few all-women bands.

Their original songs articulated feminist ideas. One of their songs was called "Siren Sniper." Pojanowski sings, "I'm the siren sniper / I bide my time / I'm the ruler of the earth / I bide my time / I'm the rock and basalt soul-stopper / The foam and cool fire death dropper / You'll know me when I come / I'm the kind of woman you warn yourself about / And I won't let you down."

Sadly, Eyes never got a record deal. There were some labels interested, but some of the group members thought a label would mess up their sound and weren't interested...

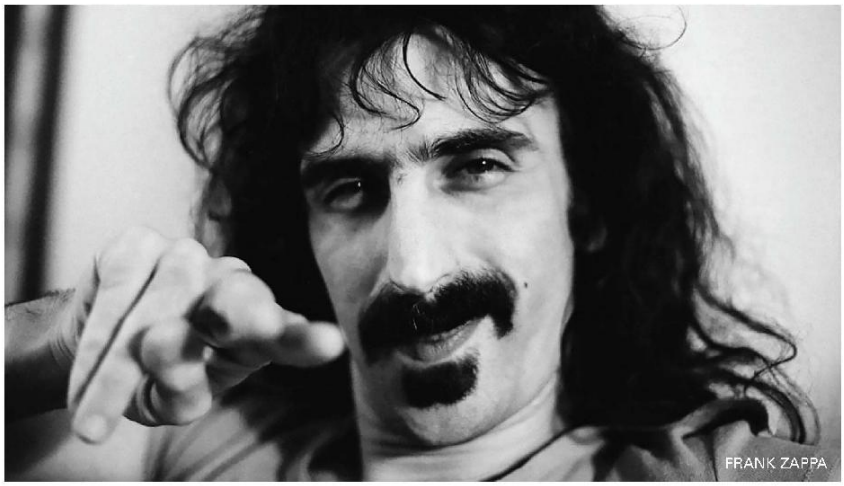
Leila and the Snakes were a cool band fronted by singer/writer Jane Dornacker; also in the band for a time was [singer] Pearl Harbor. Jane was a strong woman, and just by leading her bands and writing of co-writing the songs, she set a great example.

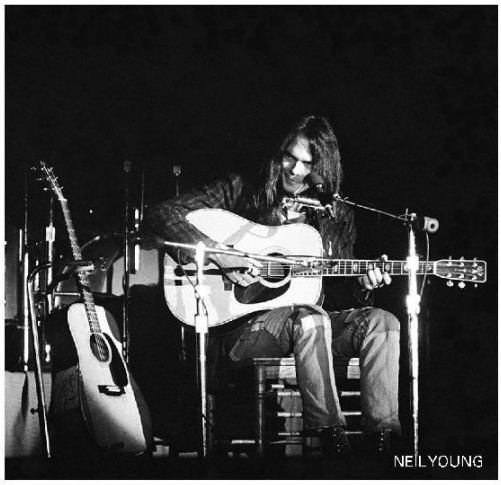
There was a lot of humor in Leila and the Snakes. Jane became a friend. Sadly she died in a helicopter crash in 1986.


JIM MORRISON



GRACE SLICK AND PAUL KANTNER


FRANK ZAPPA


NEIL YOUNG



Jelly Roll Morton's milieu: The old, filthy America

BY ANDREW HAMLIN

ELIJAH WALD
PHOTO BY SANDRINE SHEON

Music historian Elijah Wald, a prominent presence at the Pop Conference at MoPOP, took a turn into old-time obscenity for his new book, *Jelly Roll Blues: Censored Songs & Hidden Histories*, about the life and times of New Orleans jazz musician Jelly Roll Morton (1890-1941).

Below are excerpts from a recent interview:

Andrew Hamlin: You write that "virtually no research on male sex workers or Gay life in New Orleans" at the turn of the 20th century exists. What did your own research uncover?

Elijah Wald: Frankly, very little. I'm completely baffled that there hasn't been more work done on that. New Orleans was a Gay mecca already, but the press did not tend to cover that.

There are lots of stories in interviews with people — particularly in Jelly Roll Morton's world — talking about Tony Jackson, who was Gay, and saying he played at the Frenchman's [saloon], which was a Gay hangout. But nobody followed up. None of the interviewers ever say, "Could you say a little more about that?" I came up close to blank.

By the 1930s, there was a regular marching group at Mardi Gras called the Western Girls, Black men who dressed as women and had female names, and the suggestion is they'd been around for many years.

AH: What were the distinctive elements of the "pansy craze" from the late '20s to early '30s?

EW: That was about Gay male entertainers, specifically transvestite entertainers, for straight cabaret audiences. Largely I was finding [coverage] in the white press. It's a little messy, because there was a long, long history of Black male cross-dressing entertainers, who weren't necessarily performing as Gay. These guys were.

AH: What's the distinction between the two?

EW: Just that a lot of minstrel show performance was all male, and so if they were doing stories that had female characters, they'd be played by men. Like in Shakespeare. Whether these men were Gay, I don't know, but they were performing as women, not performing as — to use a term of the period — sissies.

Whereas [in] the "pansy craze," they were performing as sissies, and they were specifically doing off-color material, a lot of double entendre, a lot of single entendre. The act was their gayness.

For example, there was a man, Charles Anderson, who was the first person to perform "St. Louis Blues" in Black vaudeville, and his performance was simply as a woman. Whether he was Gay or not, I don't know, but that wasn't the act. Whereas Frankie "Half-Pint" Jaxon [from Chicago] was performing as a sissy. They all took female names: "The Bronze Mae West" or "The Ebony Eva Tanguay," those sorts of things.

The problem is, we don't have much of the material. Frankie "Half-Pint" Jaxon did do recordings, so we have a little. But not much.

AH: What were your impressions of those?

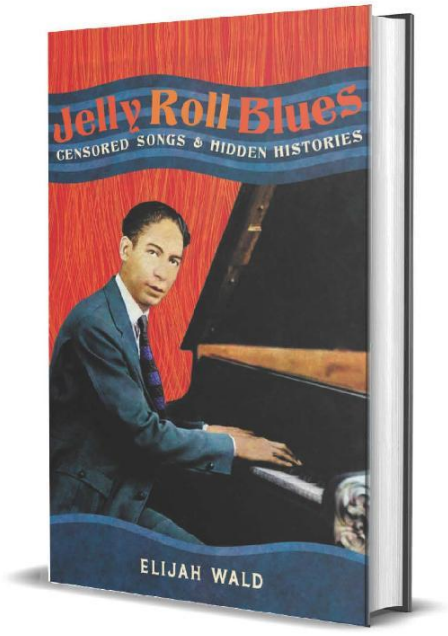
EW: They're funny. He's doing it in a high, feminine voice. He's being a female character. The classic (you can pull it up on YouTube) is his version of "How Long, How Long Blues," which was a very famous blues: "How long, how long, has that evening train been gone?" Except he does it (*high voice*) "How long, Daddy? How long? How long? How long?" and then does that over and over and ends up actually faking an orgasm on the record. This is from 1928. As far as I know, it's the first record of someone faking an orgasm. (*laughs*)

But again, how typical this was, I have no idea. Tony Jackson, his material was mostly not blues related; it was pop songs. His most famous song was "Pretty Baby," which apparently was written for his Gay male lover.

This is a world I would love for someone to do a proper exploration of. I have no idea what could be found, still. I know not a lot … in terms of documents. But I'd be interested in how much memory there is, in New Orleans.

AH: Morton's work sometimes seems like a ferocious onslaught of all possible obscenities, all possible orifices. Did you ever find yourself collapsing in exasperation, exhaustion, and/or uncontrollable laughter?

EW: I don't know about collapsing. A lot of it certainly amused me. There are points where it gets boring, the same thing over and over. But honestly, my main reaction was just being fascinated by the amount of this material, and how *normal* everyone seemed to think this material was, before commodification meant that it all had to get censored, so you could put it on records and put it in print.





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Celebratory Inaugural Concert

JANUARY 10-12 | 2025

FRI, JAN 10 | 7:30 pm | Kilworth Chapel, Tacoma
SAT, JAN 11 | 7:30 pm | Trinity Lutheran, Lynnwood
SUN, JAN 12 | 3:00 pm | St. Mark's Cathedral, Seattle

A celebratory convocation and kick-off of the Seattle Bach Festival with all the bells and whistles: a full baroque orchestra with trumpets, timpani and winds. Cantata 29 was written for the **Ratswechsel** in Leipzig, a lavish ceremony celebrating the inauguration of the Leipzig Town Council.

Vocal Soloists: Danielle Reutter-Harrah, Jacob Perry, Aryeh Nussbaum-Cohen, Jacob Herbert

Choir: The Evergreen Ensemble

PROGRAM: Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major, Brandenburg Concerto No. 4; Cantata 29 "Wir Danken Dir"



Masterclass with Aryeh Nussbaum-Cohen

THURS | JANUARY 9 | 2025
1:30 pm | Brechemin Auditorium
UW School of Music
2034 NE Skagit Lane | Seattle
THIS IS A FREE EVENT

Described as "a vocal wonder", "spectacular...a rising star" and "a redefining force in the countertenor field", countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum-Cohen shares his insights with young artists in this vocal masterclass.



Lecture/Recital at UW with Michael Maul

FRI | JANUARY 10 | 2025
1:30 pm | UW School of Music
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THIS IS A FREE EVENT

Michael Maul, director of the Leipzig Bach Archive and Leipzig Bach Festival, joins us for a tale of musical adventure and discovery - part Indiana Jones and part Sherlock Holmes! Michael discovered an unknown work by JS Bach, ***Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn,*** BWV 1127, among documents from the Anna Amalia Library in Weimar. With a performance by Carrie Shaw, soprano, UW Music students and SBF artists.

Cantata Trail with Miguel Rode and Dr. Michael Maul

SAT | JANUARY 11 | 2025
10am-12pm
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The Cantata Trail is an exploration of Johann Sebastian Bach's music, with special focus on his cantatas and other vocal works. Miguel Rodé introduces each piece on the program by providing historical context and some light musical analysis, to serve as pointers for deeper appreciation. Special guest Dr. Michael Maul.

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