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Bad Dog Theatre

Catching up with...  
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# The Editor

Welcome to the holiday edition of theBUZZ. Yes, it's that time of year when celebrations take place, family and friends gather, and the world takes a pause. It's a time for reflection on the past year, and a time of projection for the year ahead. It's also a great time of year to catch some holiday themed entertainment!

In this issue we have exclusive interviews with two individuals who are performing on stage over the holiday season. Cat Grant chats with singer/actress Taylor Dayne about her career, and her current role in the new production of Dee Snider's Rock & Roll Christmas taking over the Winter Garden Theatre. As well, Daniela Costa caught up with Toronto theatre mastermind Ross Petty, to chat about his latest holiday production of Peter Pan. This will be Petty's last year performing on stage, but he will continue working behind the scenes to continue creating one of Toronto's most beloved holiday traditions

As well, our regular columnist's chime in on a variety of topics. Donnarama gives her shakedown on where to get down with her take where to be seen on the scene. Cat Grant tells us about the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto, and their special Christmas Eve celebrations, and Paul Bellini gives his thoughts on holiday frocks and ugly sweaters. Boyd Kodak speaks with trans activist and jewellery designer Biko Beattah, and Daniela Costa provides a glimpse into the programming at comedy space, Bad Dog Theatre.

Finally our Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain, has scoured the World (WW) to compile a list of events that will get you through the holidays and into the new exciting year ahead.

Wishing everyone a safe and happy twenty-sixteen.

**Bryen Dunn**

Editor-in-Chief



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# Taylor Takes Toronto

By Cat Grant



Taylor Dayne is a multi-talented pop artist whose signature powerhouse voice and style quickly endeared her into the hearts of the global LGBTQ communities. Lesbians have been known to toss their bras on stage for this Gay Icon, and comedian Tig Notaro's own gushing fan experience was milled to comedic gold on Youtube.

Taylor has been performing at Gay Pride Festivals for over 20 years, and believes her LGBTQ fans are her most loyal. She recorded "Facing a Miracle" and performed this official song of the 2010 Gay Games, during the Opening Night Ceremonies.

Born Leslie Wunderman in Long Island, New York, Taylor Dayne knew from a very young age she wanted to be a singer. "I got a solo in kindergarten for 'I saw mommy kissing Santa Claus', and kissed Kevin on the cheek."

This petite dynamo is also quick like the fox she is, funny, curious, and compassionate. She supports diverse charities and many causes, such as nature preservation, and advocating to bring the arts back into the school system. Music was mandatory in her school experience and she has said that it was her saving grace.

Her earliest musical came courtesy of her father's gift of a transistor radio at the tender age of six. "Our station was the infamous WABC AM radio. Top 40 was mind blowing in the early to mid 70s, and the range was also very broad as to what was Top 40," Taylor recalls, "The first I can remember was Stevie Wonder's 'My Cheri Amore', along with Marvin Gaye and Karen Carpenter. then onto Led Zeppelin, Bad Company, Pink Floyd, Aerosmith, The Pretenders, Heart, and Jimi Hendrix"

She went on to study music theory and composition, and sang Russian folk songs around Brighton Beach, New York to support herself. Giggling with two bands, "Felony" and "The Next", she eventually went solo when music producer Ric Wake (Céline Dion, Gloria Estefan) gave Taylor her big break after hearing a cassette of her incredible voice.

Impressively it was Taylor who took a leap of faith and in 1987 borrowed \$6000 to produce the single "Tell It To My Heart". Then after it's release she signed with music mogul Clive Davis and Arista. The song and subsequent same titled album became a super smash worldwide, going double platinum in

Europe first, and also number one in many other countries .

"There was no internet, no cell phones, I had to either make a million phone calls in airports or hotel rooms to various radio and press, or physically be there." Taylor recalled, " I toured 15-months on my first single release, not to mention when the album released six months later in the U.S."

She performed with Michael Jackson during his "Bad Tour" and became world famous. Her entire life and lifestyle changed. "People recognizing you and wanting to talk to you, and know you, and be like you, was quite daunting at first", she recalls.

She has reached the top ten Billboard Magazine Chart an amazing 18 times, including her number one power ballad "Love Will Lead You Back". Taylor admits there is both good and bad in becoming a celebrity. "It can be very powerful, and you can make a difference, but you must remain true to yourself. It has to do with one's purpose, because your words do have an effect on others."

Wonder what Taylor would have done if not in the entertainment industry? "I always say I would be in the FBI, CSI, or the Forest service", she admits. Taylor's deep love for animals, particularly wild animals, is no secret. When asked which animal she would be in another lifetime she chose, "An Eagle, for sure...how vast and wild and incredible our world is...nature is my healing balm, walking in it, and using it as my prayer time."

A typical day off for Taylor is "sleeping in, hitting a yoga class or taking a hike, then getting into a sauna. That definitely releases me the most", she continued, "Sundays for me is family, and that's when I need my childhood music, 1970's mostly. Hah, my kids hate it!"

Now a single mom with teenage twins, staying fit and healthy is a constant challenge. "As I age and my body changes, and I have had to address those changes very head on, it isn't easy!" She explains, "Being well rested and not tired is the foundation. If I don't get enough sleep, I can't think or sing, Fatigue moves directly to my vocal chords, I have a very powerful instrument, and I speak pretty intensely as well, so rest and shutting down is honestly the only repair for me"





This fireball singer/songwriter has a driving work ethic and channels her creativity into acting as well. She performed on Broadway in Elton John's "Aida", in films such as "Fool's Paradise", "Fried Green Tomatoes", "Win a date with Tad Hamilton", and "Love Affair", and she had a recurring role on the Showtime series "Rude Awakening." She's also had fun on reality shows too, such as "Millionaire Matchmaker" and "Celebrity Cook Off". "I now have a good perspective in the kitchen and it isn't setting the table", she laughs. Her favourite role on stage thus far has been Grizabella in "Cats", and her most coveted was working with both Jules Styne and Fanny Brice.

Taylor is here in Toronto for the highly anticipated musical "Dee Snider's Rock & Roll Christmas Tale", where she plays club owner "Roxanne" alongside Snider (Twisted Sister) who is in a heavy metal bar band called Däisy Cütter. "I truly think this is a beautiful city. The people work hard, play hard, and I feel welcome. Everything is here - film, television, food, sports, entertainment, culture - and I hear Nordstrom's soon!"

Interesting side note is that Snider is the man who was partially responsible for giving the songstress her moniker Taylor Dayne at the beginning of her career. The story goes that she was in a recording session with Dee for a girl group he was producing. "He was having me do backgrounds for their record, and we were looking for a stage name for me", she recalls. The engineer mentioned his girlfriend's name was Taylor, and the last name came from a book of suggested baby names. "It all just sort of fell together".

Dee Snider's Rock & Roll Christmas Tale starts November 17, 2015, at The Winter Garden Theatre..

[www.rocknrollxmas.com](http://www.rocknrollxmas.com)

Photos: Brian To

Cat Grant OCAD is a multimedia artist. A published poet currently writing a book. She contributes to Home Life, Jingobox and her blog for theBUZZ. Painting, sculpture, photography/video, choreography/dance & costume design also make her days. Check out Cat's blog, Kitty Indacity, on our website at [thebuzzmag.ca](http://thebuzzmag.ca)





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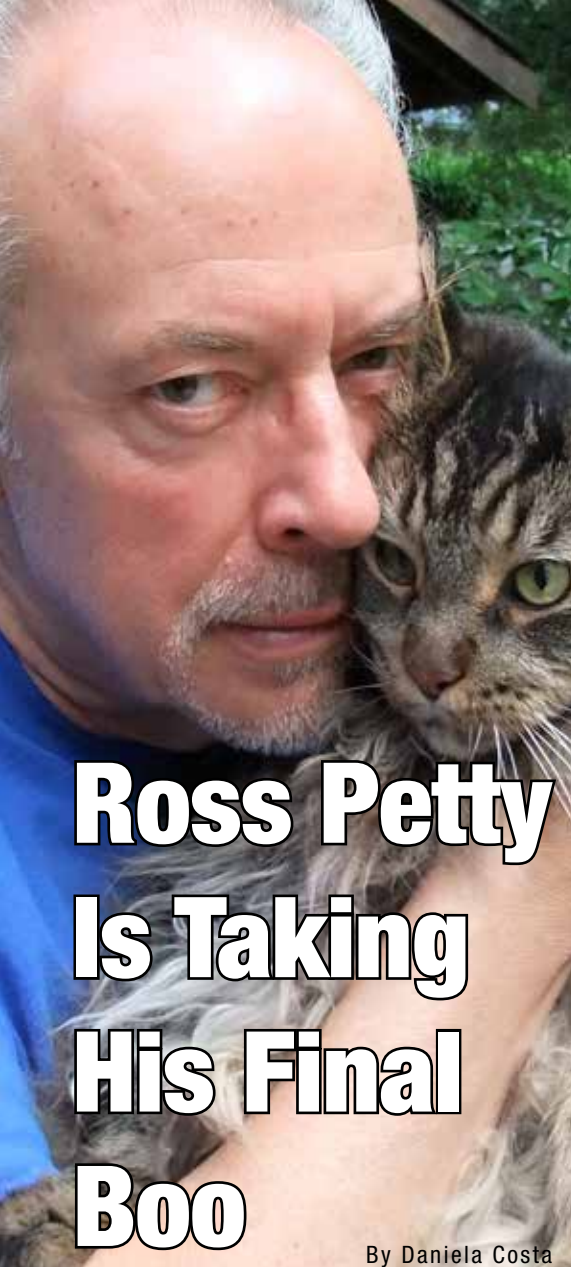
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# Ross Petty Is Taking His Final Boo

By Daniela Costa

When you think of the holiday season, it's hard to imagine a bigger GTA staple than the Fractured Fairy Tale Musicals at Toronto's Elgin Theatre. Produced by Ross Petty Productions, the shows are always over the top and fun for the whole family.

Part of that fun has been forever booing the production company's namesake, Ross Petty, who has produced and acted in every single one of the shows. But this season's performance will be his last on stage. After 20 years, he's taking his final boo.

"Twenty seemed to be the time to move away from performing," says Petty, who will stay on as producer for the foreseeable future. "I had to make a choice. After 20 years, there's a lot of wear and tear on the body."

There certainly is. As producer, he's had to be involved in every decision surrounding his shows. Add acting into the mix and it's no surprise the years have taken their toll. But fans need not worry – the show will go on. "I wasn't about to let them die out," he says about his decision to continue on as producer. And how could he? The Fractured Fairy Tale Musicals are his baby.

It was all the way back in 1996 that Petty plunged into his first solo effort as a theatrical producer with Robin Hood. Performed in the much beloved British pantomime style, the entertainer was already familiar with the format.

"We had done these shows originally at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in the '80s. At that time, they had been brought over to Canada by an English producer." That producer was none other than the renowned Paul Elliott, who hired Petty and his wife Karen Kain, a distinguished former ballet dancer and current artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada.

Although Elliott certainly contributed to Toronto's arts community, his shows relied heavily on bringing in English actors, sets and more. When Petty became his co-producer in 1986, he set out to make the shows a truly Canadian experience. "I turned it totally into a Canadian enterprise. Because we didn't need to bring all the actors over from England. We didn't need to bring sets and costumes," he says. "That's one of the things I was really proud of – the fact that it's 100 per cent Canadian."

A decade later, Petty branched out on his own. But why with Robin Hood and all the other classic tales that have come to define his company? "There are very few titles that have a kind of cache that is required for an audience to become intrigued by it," he explains. "You're not going to get a lot of folks wanting to come to see Mother Goose or something like that."

He learned that lesson the hard way. His second show at the Elgin was Jack and the Beanstalk, and it bombed. "That concerned me, obviously. Because I'm not spending a whole year trying to put a show together, only to lose money on it," he confesses. "That's why we switched to titles that were more in the public realm of favourites."

Ross Petty Productions revisits titles usually every four to seven years, and new additions are not uncommon.



The storylines, however, are always new and, as long-time fans know, pretty out there. "We don't do the Disney version of these stories. We go off on a tangent and do some really weird, strange, crazy stuff."

And audiences eat it up, year after year. It's a family affair that just won't quit. "I think what the main attraction for the audience is that parents can bring their children to something that they also enjoy equally. I would even venture to say that we entertain the adults more than we entertain the kids," he adds. The proof is in the fact that more adult tickets are indeed sold to these shows than kids' tickets.

Kids and adults alike all know to do one thing though – boo Petty. "Those boos to me, they're music to my ears. I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't have that kind of a reception." That's because he always plays the villain, and to great effect. "There's just something about my persona that indicates evil," he jokes. Ultimately though, he admits his age is a main factor. The producer is 69-years-old.

"I actually did start out as the hero," he says, reminiscing about his days at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. "That was fine, it was okay, but I didn't have anywhere near the kind of impactful fun experience of playing the villains that I do now." He adds: "Obviously I'm too old to play the good guy anymore."

The shows rely on corporate sponsorships to run, because as a for-profit organization the theatre company can't get government funding. So they're constantly trying to sway sponsors. "The tough part of putting these shows on is making the finances come together," says Petty. "I really count heavily on corporate Canada to become my sponsors."

It's because of the unknowns surrounding finances that he won't set a target date for the end of his producing days. "One never knows whether the sponsorship is going to be there or not," he laments. "I have to come up with really unique ways to intrigue corporate sponsors to join me," he tells. To that end, the company provides a million-dollar campaign opportunity for these sponsors, including the hilarious commercials we've also come to associate with the Petty brand.

"They have become a real highlight of the show, these sponsor videos," he says. He came up with the idea and has usually been successful getting sponsors to sign off on his writers' pitches. "We go into a sponsor's place of business with our actors in costume and we shoot these spots," he explains, adding that the whole process is very "guerrilla-style", and that they're in and out in just a few hours. "I think the kind of humour that we put forward is, frankly, missing in most of the commercials you see on television."

One of those spots was for The Bay and featured out

comedian Scott Thompson of The Kids in the Hall fame. Of course Petty has worked with many big names, with some personal standouts being figure skater Kurt Browning, children's entertainer Ernie Coombs (aka Mr. Dressup), wrestler Brett "The Hitman" Hart and, of course, his wife Karen. It's individuals like these who he credits as being the highlight of these past 20 years of his career.

"The thing that stands out in my mind as I look back over all the shows are all the wonderful people that have been in them. People that you would not necessarily think would be interested in appearing in something that is as silly and audience participatory as our shows are."

Silly is right, and perhaps there is no character sillier than actor Dan Chameroy's Plumbum. "My favourite character in all these shows is the character of Plumbum," admits Petty. "Dan has created just an iconic character." Plumbum is definitely a favourite amongst many LGBT fans too, and he thinks it's characters like Chameroy's that keep bringing in that demographic. "I think the kind of humour that Dan brings to all his roles is something that's appreciated by this particular demographic."

Last year Plumbum was the fairy godmother in Cinderella. This year, Chameroy is back as Tinkerbum (an obvious parody of Tinkerbell) in Peter Pan. Joining him on stage for the first time will be Jordan Clark, Taveeta Szymanowicz and Lamar Johnson, the stars of the Family Channel series, The Next Step. "That has such a teenage audience attached to it that I think we'll be able to cover that base as well," says Petty about the possibility of finally cracking the teen market.

For his part, he'll be back for one last hurrah (and boo) as Captain Hook. Really, how could it be any other way? "Listen to my voice," he prompts during our interview. "Is this the voice of a hero? I don't think so. This is a villainous voice."

Well it's a voice many of us will surely miss hearing year in and year out. The holidays will never be the same.

Born and raised in Toronto, Daniela Costa graduated from Ryerson University's journalism undergraduate program (with a minor in politics) in 2013. Since then, my writing has focused on matters concerning the LGBT community.



I've written many lengthy feature pieces, as well as plenty of news stories. More recently I began reviewing movies and recapping television shows that feature queer characters. I'm all about that #LGBT beat. Twitter: @danielaocosta



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# Take Me To Church

It's December, where we collectively start to reflect on our year past, our purpose, our spirituality, our loved ones. So, where does one go for a little community love?

Not so long ago we went to bars with our friends, as coming out as gay almost certainly meant no church time with turkey dinner. Well thank baby Jesus we live in a beautiful country that allows us and our spiritual leaders the freedom to worship in the way we so choose.

Sandra Ann Morris has called The Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto (MCCT) her second home off and on since 1990. She moved to New Orleans in 2005, just after hurricane Katrina, where she spent the next six years getting sober, off drugs, and going from being a painter to an artist. "I found my God and surrendered my life to God, turned 50, got divorced, then came home to Toronto in 2011, and got 'the call'. It was the third week of August and I got on Google, and found out that The University of Toronto / Toronto School of Theology has the best Masters of Divinity program in Canada", she recalls. Her application was accepted, she graduated, and recently began an internship here in Toronto (the largest MCC in the denomination), where she will be interviewed for her ordination this spring.

"I asked permission to begin a ministry specific to mental health and wellness. They said yes. I asked permission to talk about depression, anxiety, and addictions in front of our congregation, and again they said yes. What I would love to see is for our denomination to lead the way in eradicating the stigma and shame of mental illness, and for MCC to be a place of faith, community, and love for all who struggle", she says.

The good works of MCC are readily available to read on their website, and from the hundreds of testimonials everyday gays share with each other. MCC was the first church to marry same sex couples, I attended one of those nuptials in the 1990's when my very good friends, a lesbian and her transgendered partner, were hitched by the beloved Rev Dr. Brent Hawkes. It was a huge milestone for gay rights and religious freedoms.

"My son was baptized there 22 years ago says parishioner Donna Nuss, "I had heard about a gay non-denomination church and I began going regularly about 10 years ago." She expressed how she loves the music, the sermons, the humour, and the total acceptance. "MCC does not cram dogmatic religion down my throat. It is community of like-minded people who can accept that there are many paths to

God, and Christianity is but one of them. I like that they never take the Bible literally, but give you the tools for independent thinking. I also hold social justice high in my heart, and MCC also believes the same for all living creatures. They believe in caring and compassion for all", Nuss remarks.

One of the best Toronto traditions during the holiday season is the MCC Christmas Eve concert, now in it's 26th year. Team leader of events for MCC, Suzanne Christie, is in her 13th year of managing the concert held at Roy Thompson Hall on Christmas Eve. "MCC Toronto provides an opportunity to connect with a diverse community. It's a vibrant, inclusive, and progressive church that attracts people of all faiths and backgrounds. I have met so many wonderful people over the years. including amazing performers", Christie states.

Altar guild leader Rocky Clarke will be leading the MCC Christmas Eve processional service and preparing the altar for the 3rd year. "Am I ever excited! The long intense hours of rehearsal are well worth the miraculous results of the night", he says.

MCC has a celebrated choir led by Diane Leah, who will be joined by the talents of Jackie Richardson, Jigh Madjus, Kelly Holiff and Dale Miller. Clarkes points out that, "Christmas Eve with MCC is a glorious service and experience to be part of and witness" Rev. Dr. Brent Hawke's will also deliver a special ceremonious talk, and overall it's a spiritual, musical, and magical way to spend Christmas Eve.

It is a beautiful evening, and from my own personal experience a time to look around and see pride and love reflected in the faces of our brothers, sisters and allies. I will be attending again this year, as it's the perfect time for us to pray for peace and express joy to the world.

For more information and tickets visit  
[www.mccutoronto.com/christmas-eve](http://www.mccutoronto.com/christmas-eve)

Cat Grant OCAD is a multimedia artist. A published poet currently writing a book. She contributes to Home Life, Jingobox and her blog for theBUZZ. Painting, sculpture, photography/video, choreography/dance & costume design also make her days. Check out Cat's blog, Kitty Indacity, on our website at [thebuzzmag.ca](http://thebuzzmag.ca)





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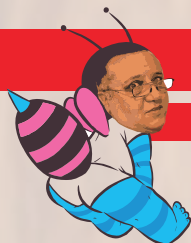
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# BUMBLE-INI

BY PAUL BELLINI

## Retro Festive

Il never know what to get anyone for a Christmas gift, leading to the purchase of – yawn! – lots of gift baskets and gift cards. But now the folks at Retro Festive have created the ultimate Christmas gift – ugly festive sweaters.



I know of which I speak. Years ago, my aunt bought me a sweater that defied description, but let me try. It was green and featured a large illustration of a drunken moose with his tongue hanging out. On the floor were various Christmas gifts, trampled and torn open, and a brown jug of moonshine (with “XXX” marked on the bottle) at his feet, er, hooves. It was so ugly I wore it everywhere throughout that holiday season, and everywhere I went, people reacted.

You know, reactions like “ugh!” and “gross!” This only encouraged me, and I wore it every Christmas season for at least a decade, until the damn thing just fell apart.

So I was thrilled to discover Retro Festive, a local retailer with pop-up stores throughout the city (at Union Station, the Distillery District, and in Oakville) but with a handy online catalogue as well ([www.retrofestive.ca](http://www.retrofestive.ca)). This year, as a nod to the almost-champs the Toronto Blue Jays, they created a line of Toronto Blue Jays Ugly Christmas sweaters. The excitement may be over for the Jays, but the sweaters can still be used to keep fans warm in winter. Indeed, there is a whole line of ugly sweaters for almost any team in Canadian sports.

Then there's the Christmas stuff. There's a sweater that depicts Santa taking a crap, and another of him pissing in the snow. There's sweaters of a reindeer three-way, a “Happy Birthday Jesus” one, and my favorite, the one that just says “Fruitcake” in huge letters. And if sweaters aren't your thing, check out the leg lamp, moose slippers, Santa toilet paper,

Buddy the Elf wigs, Grinch latex masks, bacon candy canes, all the Jewish stuff, and tree ornaments from various TV shows. Sissydude would be beside himself in this store.

It all started in 2007, when Tyler and Jordie Schwartz of Oakville founded Retro Festive to meet the growing demand for holiday movie collectibles and Christmas kitsch. Tyler is the author of *A Christmas Story Treasury* (Running Press) published in 2013 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of America's favourite Christmas movie, and recount its humble Canadian beginnings. So of course lots of the merchandise is based on the film, such as a Red Ryder BB Gun, or a Ralphie pink bunny suit.

I am sold. I love kitsch and I like Christmas, so put them both together and check out all the faboo merchandise at Retro Festive. Finally, no more gift baskets and gift cards. This holiday season, I can give all my relatives Mr. Hankey tree ornaments, because hanging a cartoon character of a turd on my tree is the best possible way I could ever say Merry Christmas!

Retro Festive – [www.retrofestive.ca](http://www.retrofestive.ca)

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Paul Bellini is a comedy writer who has worked on such TV shows as *The Kids in the Hall* (where he played The Towel Guy), *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and *Locker Room*. He was also a *FAB* magazine columnist for 11 years. He currently teaches comedy writing at George Brown College and the Second City Training Center in Toronto.



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# A KODAK MOMENT

BY BOYD KODAK

**Biko Beauttah** is a human rights activist currently attending George Brown College in Toronto, majoring in Jewellery Arts. Born and raised in Kenya, Biko moved to Canada in 2006 to seek asylum because being identified as part of the LGBTQ\* community is a crime in her home country. A champion of refugee and sexual minority rights, she has spread her message of tolerance and equality through various platforms, such as the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Refugee Pride Convention, where she was a discussant on panels. Biko was also the first person to give a lecture on gender studies at a high school in Canada.

At George Brown, Biko is the current Women and Trans Person's representative, bridging the gap between her constituents, the college administration, and the Student Association. Biko is currently working on Trans Workforce, the world's first job fair geared specifically to people who identify as Trans and Gender Nonconforming in Winter/Spring 2016. She also sits on the Board of Directors at George Brown College Student Association, and also Pride Toronto. If all that wasn't enough, in her spare time she edits the popular Facebook page Lamu Tamu, giving people a world view as filtered through her own eyes and mind.

**Boyd Kodak** You lead a busy life between school, work, and volunteering. What are you enjoying most at the moment?

**Biko Beauttah** I am going to sound lame but, I really like school! I go to the best school for what I am taking, with the best teachers and amazing colleagues. Everyday that I attend, brings me closer and closer to my goals.

**BK** Is there something specific that you are looking forward to accomplishing over the next year?

**BB** I am looking forward to Trans Workforce, an initiative I began which will be the world's first job fair specifically geared towards people who identify as Trans and Gender nonconforming.

**BK** That's a great initiative, and much needed in our community. What about Biko designs? Where and when can we see your work?



**BB** At the moment, I am a sponge soaking up as much knowledge as I can to saturation. When I put my name to something, it has to be the best, therefore you will see my work after graduation.

**BK** Ok, you will keep us in suspense, but can you tell us a bit about other future plans?

**BB** I would like to create a sustainable jewellery industry in among indigenous peoples of developing countries. Revive their dying art which I find impeccable, and focus on a business model that's not exploitive.

**BK** Excellent! Any message you would like to put forward to our readers?

**BB** My mantra is the poem "Our Deepest Fear" by Marianne Williamson. It should be everyone's life's mantra.

**BK** Finish the following sentence: Life wouldn't be the same without -----

**BB** seeing people smile, and knowing that I am the reason they are smiling.

Biko on Facebook - [www.facebook.com/bikodesigns](http://www.facebook.com/bikodesigns)

Trans Workforce - [www.facebook.com/transworkforce](http://www.facebook.com/transworkforce)

Canadian Council for Refugees - [www.ccrweb.ca](http://www.ccrweb.ca)

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Boyd Kodak is an award winning trans activist, musician, writer, activist, filmmaker, curator, and festival/entertainment director. Boyd put together both educational and artistic programs for festivals worldwide. In 2012 he was inducted into the International LGBT Hall of Fame.





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# BAD DOG

COMEDY THEATRE

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Bad Dog Theatre Company is located in an upstairs back corner of a west side comedy bar, and provides an array of queer-themed programming.



"Within our own company, what we just try to do is foster an environment of inclusivity," says Julie Dumais Osborne, Bad Dog's artistic director.

It's no surprise then that a monthly show like Salomon & Smith with its two queer hosts (comedians Jess Salomon and DeAnne Smith) would be a natural fit for the venue. So was Strippov for the past year, with its two drag queen hosts dropping sass while performers dropped clothing and jokes. And then there's the Wayward, which pulls together an all female cast for a show that's absolutely hilarious, even if not deliberately gay all the time. How appropriate, seeing as how "deliberate" isn't really Bad Dog's style.

"We don't have any specific programming currently that is deliberately etched out as being LGBTQ," admits Dumais Osborne. Nor have they in the past. Marcel St. Pierre was a founding member of Bad Dog in 2003 and served as artistic director from 2004 to 2010. He is now a performer and faculty member with the company. St. Pierre's history with Bad Dog is rich, going back to 1991 when it was still just a show – Theatresports Toronto (around since 1982). "We never really specifically set out to create something that was for the queer community, but we were always open to it," he says.

So open in fact that during his time as artistic director, he says he reached out to queer

## BEYOND THE VILLAGE

By Daniela Costa

### A GOOD SPOT FOR QUEERS

comedians about implementing a teaching program for people in the queer community. But St. Pierre didn't get back the positive response he was hoping for. "It never quite got off the ground," he laments.

Why was he committed to the idea at all? Because he rose up in the comedy ranks alongside many talented queer performers. One of those performers was the much-adored Don Berns (aka Dr. Trance). An incredible talent, Berns was a Toronto rave legend, as well as an on air personality, musician and actor. Sadly, he passed away in early March.

"I loved Don. He was such a force of nature," says St. Pierre. "He was just a bigger than life personality and a gregarious student of improv."

Today, that spirit lives on at Bad Dog with other queer talent, like Anders Yates. The out performer is one of the company's faculty members in addition to being part of the resident cast. He made the decision to formally work with the company five years ago. "It gave me a stronger sense of community than I had experienced at any other comedy company," he shares.

Bad Dog's positive stance on LGBTQ individuals and issues was certainly a factor in that. "It was definitely ingrained in the culture from the get-go, but perhaps not in as explicitly stated a way as it is these days."

So while there is no current deliberate queer programming, Yates might be just the person to bring that content to Bad Dog. For now though, he insists there's still a space for queer audiences there. "I want to encourage the queer community to come out and see shows at Bad Dog," he says. "I do see a culture at that place of inclusion, and I hope that can help foster a queer audience even if the content itself isn't being crafted specifically and solely for queer audiences."





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# WINTER PICKS SPECIAL

**With spectacular shows, countless shopping opportunities, outdoor skating rinks and top-notch restaurants, Toronto transforms into an urban winter wonderland for both locals, and visiting family and friends. The city is Buzzin' with the holiday spirit offering cultural, culinary and magical adventures only a global city like Toronto could.**

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Winterlicious is one of Toronto's favourite culinary celebrations, and the perfect opportunity to explore the great variety of delicious cuisine that the city has to offer. The popular "prix-fixe" program offers three course menus for exceptional value, and there's also a variety of programming including cooking classes and demonstrations, dinner theatre, tastings and pairings, intimate chef dinners and more.

**January 30 to February 12, 2016 [www.facebook.com/LiciousTO](http://www.facebook.com/LiciousTO)**

The National Ballet of Canada's opulent, comical and spellbinding Nutcracker is a refreshingly traditional version of the story, replete with the details of childhood dreams and the appeal of fantasy. It's a ballet gloriously designed and costumed, and brimming with affection for and insight into the passage from childhood to maturity. Bursting with humour, surprise, emotion and, best of all, brilliant choreography, the ballet glides effortlessly from whimsy to bumptious comedy, to awe-inspiring extravaganza, and touching sentiment.

**Dec 12 to Jan 3 - [www.national.ballet.ca/Productions/2015-2016-Season/The-Nutcracker](http://www.national.ballet.ca/Productions/2015-2016-Season/The-Nutcracker)**

## ATTRACTIONS

The Toronto Zoo is the place to be on Boxing Day, where guests can enjoy 50% off admission, and check out the extensive Keeper Talk Program that offers a fun holiday theme and delightful seasonal treats for the Zoo's animals. Plus, if you are looking to warm-up from the cold why not drop by and visit Mstari, Twiga and Kiko in the Zoo's new Indoor Giraffe Exhibit, or one of the Zoo's five indoor and exotic pavilions.

**December 26, 2015 - [www.torontozoo.com](http://www.torontozoo.com)**

Celebrate and take part in the holiday magic at Casa Loma. Enjoy two brand new magic shows created by famed illusionist entertainers Professor Wick, along with duo Incredibrent and Super Sarah. These 30-minute spectacles of illusions and wonder amaze audiences of all ages. The Magical Winterland Nights at Casa Loma take place on select nights in December.

**Until December 31, 2015 - [www.casaloma.ca/events\\_feature4.html](http://www.casaloma.ca/events_feature4.html)**

When it comes to holiday events, Toronto's CN Tower provides a variety of options to mark the season. This holiday season experience a sumptuous sit-down lunch with seasonal themed menu options starting at \$55 at the sky high 360 Fine Restaurant that revolves to offer a magnificent 360-degree view of Toronto's city lights. Be sure to visit the lounge one level below for after dinner cocktails, as well as the Glass Floor and Sky Pod Observation Levels.

**Until December 24, 2015 [www.cntower.ca](http://www.cntower.ca)**

TIFF Bell Lightbox's Andy Warhol exhibition features over 800 artworks and artifacts including his personal Hollywood memorabilia collections, a rarely seen Marilyn Monroe tapestry, episodes of Andy Warhol's television series, and a re-imagined Silver Factory lounge. There's also two film programmes, special guests, and a series of accompanying contemporary art installations including a livestream from Andy Warhol's gravesite.

**Until January 24th, 2016 [www.tiff.net](http://www.tiff.net)**

## GET OUTSIDE

Yonge Dundas Square presents Toronto's first annual Toronto Christmas Festival. This new 10-day festival offers live music, shopping, sleigh ride with Santa Claus, laser light shows and much more.

**December 12 to 21, 2015 - [www.torontochristmasfestival.com](http://www.torontochristmasfestival.com)**

The Bloor-Yorkville area transforms into a magical holiday wonderland for this year's Holiday Magic, with a special performance by July Black. Later in the season the annual IceFest celebrates by transforming this cultural epicentre into a showcase of incredible ice sculptures and live ice carving demonstrations.

**December 21 - Holiday Magic, February 21 - 22, 2016 - IceFest - [www.bloor-yorkville.com](http://www.bloor-yorkville.com)**

Santa will be making two stops at the annual Winterfest on Toronto's Waterfront, for the annual Santa Cruise aboard Mariposa Cruises' Northern Spirit, as well as on their first-ever Santa Brunch Cruise. Pets can also get in on the action for Pet Photos with Santa at PawsWay.

**December 13/14, 20/21 [www.waterfrontbia.com](http://www.waterfrontbia.com)**

The Distillery Historic District hosts its annual Christmas Market, celebrating the traditional sights, sounds and scents of the holiday season.

**Throughout December - [www.torontochristmasmarket.com](http://www.torontochristmasmarket.com)**

**Visit [www.seetorontonow.com](http://www.seetorontonow.com) or @visittoronto on Facebook, and follow @SeeTorontoNow on Instagram and Twitter for an insider's guide to what's hot in the cold this winter in Toronto.**



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# COMMUNITY BUZZPICKS

## Trivia Tuesdays

**Tuesday Evenings @ 9:00 p.m.**

TRIVIA TUESDAY with your hostess: Miss Barbie Jo Bontemps. Take advantage of the drink and food specials and perhaps take home a winning prize!

O'Grady's On Church, 518 Church St., Toronto  
[www.ogradyschurch.ca](http://www.ogradyschurch.ca)

## Dirty Bingo Wednesdays

**Wednesday Evenings @ 9:00 p.m.**

Come on out and watch two bickering drag queens bickering all night long.... and oh ya....they also call out numbers and hand out some dirty prizes. Hosted by Gina Hamilton and her trashy weekly guests.

O'Grady's On Church, 518 Church St., Toronto  
[www.ogradyschurch.ca](http://www.ogradyschurch.ca)

## Men's Chest Contest

**Thursday Evenings**

THURSDAYS ARE PEC-TACULAR! Georgie Girl, Devine Darlin, DJ Mark Falco and Woody's/Sailor Toronto Smirnoff Men's Chest Contest & SHOW. \$300 in cash prizes. Welcome STUDENTS!

Woody's and Sailor, 467 Church St., Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts)

## Roxie Terrain, Kendall, Slam

**Friday Evenings @ 7:00 p.m.**

Roxie Terrain and Adam in the lounge from 7 to 9pm. From 9pm to 1am, it's Kendall with all requests and amazing grooves. SLAM! with DJ Mark Falco in the Cellblock from 10pm to close.

Zipperz/Cellblock, 72 Carlton St., Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/Zipperz/](http://www.facebook.com/Zipperz/)

## Bear Night

**Fridays @ 10:00 p.m.**

Weekly BEAR NIGHT. Great night to meet friendly, furry dudes.

The Lodge, 518A Church St. (above O'Grady's), Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/events/137132363310959/](http://www.facebook.com/events/137132363310959/)

## Exposed/James Quigley/Anthem Saturdays

**Saturday Evenings @ 6:00 p.m.**

Let's hear it for the girls, namely Georgie Girl and Sofonda Cox. Its EXPOSED at 6pm. James Quigley on the piano from 10pm to close. DJ Cory Activate with Anthem Saturdays in the Cellblock 10pm to Close.

Zipperz/Cellblock, 72 Carlton St., Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/Zipperz/](http://www.facebook.com/Zipperz/)

## Sweet Ass Saturdays

**Saturday Evenings**

SMOKING HOT Sofonda Cox hosts The Squirr.org Men's ASS Contest & Show, with DJ Chris Steinbach. \$300 in cash prizes and Toronto's hottest guys. No cover charge.

Woody's and Sailor, 467 Church St., Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts)

## The Lodge Sunday Brunch

**Sundays Noon to 3:00 p.m.**

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The Lodge, 518A Church St. (above O'Grady's), Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/events/902201033195715/](http://www.facebook.com/events/902201033195715/)

## Hollywood Broadway Show

**Sundays @ 6:00**

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Woody's and Sailor, 467 Church St., Toronto No Cover  
[www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts)

## Karaoke Sundays

**Sunday Evenings @ 7:00 p.m.**

Karaoke every Sunday night with your host Mya. Kitchen open until 2am.

O'Grady's On Church, 518 Church St., Toronto  
[www.ogradyschurch.ca](http://www.ogradyschurch.ca)

## Smoking Hot Divas

**Sunday Evenings @ 11:00p.m.**

Woody's Late Show is Smoking Hot, The Brilliant Georgie Girl with guests. DJ Blue Peter spins.

Woody's and Sailor, 467 Church St., Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/WoodysSailorToronto?fref=ts)





# CHARITY BUZZPICKS



## Red Carpet Gala Awards

**December 17 @ 8:30 p.m.**

The 7th ANNUAL RED CARPET GALA Awards/Appreciation Night, recognizing outstanding LGBT community members from the city of London and surrounding areas in Southwestern Ontario. Dance party after. Hosted by Richard Renaud and Co-Host Athena McQueen.

Lavish Nightclub, 238 Dundas St., London, Ontario  
[www.facebook.com/events/857200371054516/](http://www.facebook.com/events/857200371054516/)

Join fellow TICOT members and friends while helping to raise funds for the charities of The Imperial Court of Toronto!

Flash, 463 Church St., Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/events/1717360691864458/](http://www.facebook.com/events/1717360691864458/)



## TICOT Holiday Show

**December 18 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Join The Imperial Court of Toronto for an evening of Friendship, Unity and Nonsense. Raising funds for the charities of Reign XXIX of The Imperial Court of Toronto!

Erotico Lounge, 461 Church St., Toronto  
[www.facebook.com/events/1677631802506187/](http://www.facebook.com/events/1677631802506187/)

## Waterfall Empire Holiday Show

**December 19 @ 9:00 p.m.**

Join the Waterfall Empire for their annual Holiday Show. Donations of unwrapped toys as well as non-perishable food items will be accepted.

Embassy Night Club, 54 King St. E., Hamilton  
[www.facebook.com/events/404389779750213/](http://www.facebook.com/events/404389779750213/)

## TICOT Bingo

**December 27 and January 31 @ 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**



# GENERAL BUZZPICKS

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Energize Centre, 100 Princes' Blvd., Toronto

[www.facebook.com/TorontoBoatShow/?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/TorontoBoatShow/?fref=ts)



## Subspace New Year's Eve

**December 31**

Toronto's Fetish & Kink Communities come together to ring in New Year's Eve. General Admin Advance \$30; at door night of: \$40

The Opera House, 735 Queen St. E., Toronto

[www.facebook.com/events/732590663541507/](http://www.facebook.com/events/732590663541507/)

## 2016 Next Stage Theatre Festival

**January 6 to 17**

Now in its 9th year, the Next Stage Theatre Festival returns with a talented lineup of writers, directors, actors and choreographers who will warm up the winter stages at Factory Theatre.

Factory Theatre, 125 Bathurst St., Toronto

[www.fringetoronto.com/next-stage-festival/](http://www.fringetoronto.com/next-stage-festival/)

## Avalanche Gay Ski Weekend 2016

**January 7 to 10**

A weekend of skiing and non-skiing activities, outdoor entertainment, late night dance parties, and more. Travel and accommodation packages available from Toronto.

Blue Mountain, 108 Jozo Weider Blvd, Collingwood, ON

[www.facebook.com/events/160529347632286/](http://www.facebook.com/events/160529347632286/)

## The Toronto Boat Show

**January 8 to 17**

The Toronto International Boat Show is North America's Largest Indoor Boat Show. Get ready for sprint!

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The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Toronto

[www.facebook.com/events/407862876074280/](http://www.facebook.com/events/407862876074280/)

## Toronto's January Confidential Project

**January 29 @ 7:30 p.m.**

Another group of fearless performers will take the stage and perform a musical in its entirety, having met each other only an hour before and having had no group rehearsal.

Victoria College Chapel, 2nd Floor, 91 Charles St. W., Toronto

[www.facebook.com/events/1509368992711539/](http://www.facebook.com/events/1509368992711539/)

## Queer & Trans Family Event: Love=Family

**February 13 @ 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

Celebrate love, family and diversity at the annual Queer and Trans Family Valentine's event.

The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Toronto

[www.facebook.com/events/874932989241470/](http://www.facebook.com/events/874932989241470/)





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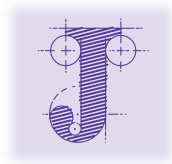
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