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The Editor

Greetings and salutations!

The holiday season is upon us once again. That special time of year when we all slow down, and take the opportunity to gather with friends, family, lovers, and new acquaintances. It's also the perfect time to enjoy some much needed "me time". Perhaps read that novel you've been putting off, take in the latest theatrical release on your list, binge watch that series you've heard so much about, or pamper yourself with a vacay or staycay.

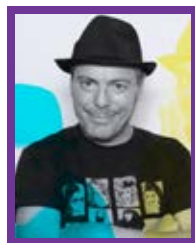
In this issue, we have a couple of holiday ideas that might be of interest as a treat for yourself, or perhaps as a gift for that someone special. Our first feature is titled, **Divas on Stage**, where we take a look at three different Broadway productions that showcase the life stories of three different and unique music icons – **Cher**, **Donna Summer**, and **Tina Turner**. Each lady spent decades in the limelight, and here's your chance to find out more about their journeys. *theBUZZ* had an opportunity to catch up with a couple cast members for exclusive interviews and inside information on these fabulous productions. Tickets make a great gift for the diva on your list, or the diva in you!

Our second feature is on the long-running popular book series, **Boystown**, which has its 9th season releasing this month, just in time for Christmas. Jake Biondi's gay book series features sexy covers, relatable characters, and as much drama as a telenovela. Apparently Biondi is in talks to bring the book series to television, and fans can't wait. Pick up a copy for yourself, or a friend, and bring some heat between the sheets this winter.

Our guest contributor for the Wiggled Out column this month is the darling **Scarlett Bobo**, who tells us all about her European vacation, where she got to party, perform, and propose! Cat Grant had the privilege of chatting with the wonderful French-Canadian actress, **Jordana Lajoie**, who stars in the new holiday-themed film, *A Gingerbread Romance*, out this month on the *Hallmark Channel*. Boyd Kodak caught with photographer, **J. Harry**, to chat about their work capturing the details of everyday people, places and things that not all eyes see. Paul Bellini got the scoop on Buddies in **Bad Times Theatre 40th Anniversary** programming from Festival Director, **Mel Hague**, while Raymond Helkio headed north to discover what's gay and happening in Barrie, Ontario. As always, flip to our back pages to discover all there is to do in the city and beyond, thanks to the hot tips from our Event Editor, Sherry Sylvain.

Thanks for picking us up. Enjoy the read, and Happy Holidays!

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief



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Divas on Stage

Cher, Donna, and Tina

By Bryen Dunn

There seems to be a continuing interest in divas when it comes to musical theatre. Right now, Broadway is bursting with shows that bring life to the stories of some of the most powerful women who have claimed well-deserved fame in the music industry.

The Donna Summer Musical has been on stage for several months now, *The Tina Turner Musical* is heading to Broadway next year, and *The Cher Show* opened on Broadway earlier this month.

The Cher Show

It should come as no surprise that there are actually three different actors portraying Cher in *The Cher Show* production, given that the singing goddess has been performing for six decades now! There's the young ambitious wannabe, the go-for-it glam gal, and the ever-lasting iconic star she remains to this day, played on stage by **Teal Wicks**, **Micaela Diamond**, and **Stephanie J. Block**, respectively.

Just a week into previews, and the show had already been attended by the likes of Tim Gunn (of *Project Runway* fame), celebrity chef Geoffrey Zakarian (who hosted the opening VIP dinner), Chad Michaels (*RuPaul's Drag Race* all-stars winner and Cher impersonator extraordinaire), Marilyn Maye, George Takei, and more.

Tony Award nominee **Michael Berresse** (*Kiss Me, Kate*; *A Chorus Line*) continues in the role(s) he's played in the Chicago run of the production, portraying not only the legendary fashion mastermind, Bob Mackie (who is the costume designer for the show), but also Robert Altman and 'Frank' (a fictional director of *The Sonny and Cher Show*). The show is co-produced by Cher herself, who Berresse describes as, "a bad ass and a straight shooter."

He continues, "She saw the show three times in Chicago, and came backstage to meet and support us, and has continued to push us all, creators and cast alike to be ever better. There is absolutely no one like her and it is a huge honour and responsibility to help tell her story well." The show includes 35 smash hits, six decades of stardom, two rock-star husbands, and enough Bob Mackie gowns to cause a sequins shortage in New York City.

So what's it like working with **Bob Mackie** as part of the production team for the show, and then also having to portray him on stage? Berresse states, "In a word, surreal! Of course it was a bit intimidating at first. It's a huge privilege to work with Bob, and I want so much for him to be celebrated in every way. He is a very large piece of the heart in this production, both creatively and personally. He's not only a legendary icon of American culture, he's an exceptionally kind, humble person who has brought such immense joy, colour, entertainment, and life to the world."

Berresse reflects on his role of playing three different characters. "The multiple characters is actually one of my favourite things about this job. In addition to my Mackie fascination, Robert Altman also happens to be one of my favourite film directors of all time. In addition to the clothes, my Robert Altman costume includes a grey wig, beard, and moustache, as well as a false belly. At one



Michael Berresse as Bob Mackie in *THE CHER SHOW* on Broadway



Photo: Matthew Murphy

Ariana DeBose as Disco Donna

point I exit the Altman scene and have one song to run beneath the stage, completely strip and change into Mackie's blonde wig, turtle neck, jacket, slacks and dance shoes, before coming back up through a trap door in the stage. Thankfully, I have Bob Mackie's perfect designs and Charles LaPointe's brilliant wigs to completely transform me physically from character to character!"

As the only female artist to have Top 10 hits in every decade from the 1960s to 2000s, and for someone who has spent the majority of her life in the public spotlight, it's amazing to see that Cher shows no signs of slowing down even in her twilight years. She recently released a full album of ABBA cover tunes, *Dancing Queen*, shortly after her appearance in the film, *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*. Coincidence an ABBA cover album was released shortly after the film, or that the film title is the same name as her upcoming tour? Not likely.

Dancing Queen was recorded and produced in London and Los Angeles with Cher's longtime collaborator Mark Taylor, who previously produced Cher's late 90s global smash, *Believe*. Cher stated, "I've always liked ABBA and saw the original *Mamma Mia* musical on Broadway three times. After filming *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, I was reminded again of what great and timeless songs they wrote, and started thinking 'why not do an album of their music?' The songs were harder to sing than I imagined, but I'm so happy with how the music came out. I'm really excited for people to hear it. It's a perfect time." Cher was also awarded a *Kennedy Center Honor* earlier this month in Washington DC. Yes, it certainly is the perfect time for all things Cher!

The Cher Show opened December 3, at the Neil Simon Theatre in New York (250 West 52nd Street).
www.thechershowbroadway.com

Cher begins a North American tour in January, which brings her back to Toronto for her ***Here We Go Again Tour, April 22, 2019 at the Scotiabank Arena***. Cher's

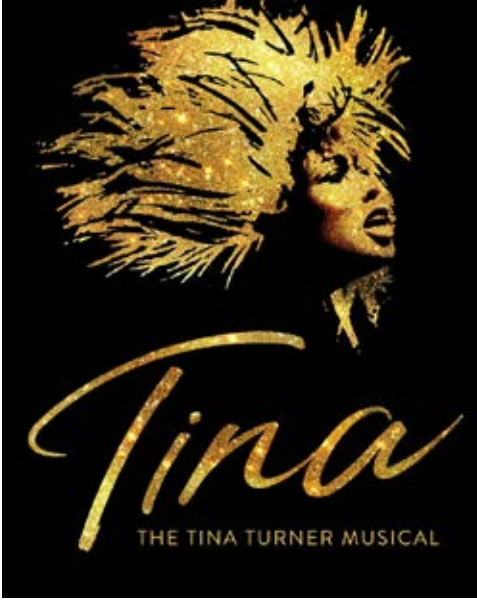
new album "*Dancing Queen*" is available now from Warner Bros. Records. www.cher.com

The Donna Summer Musical

The Donna Summer Musical originally premiered at La Jolla Playhouse in California, before making its way to Broadway in April 2018. With a score featuring more than 20 of Summer's classic hits including *Love to Love You, Baby*, *Bad Girls*, and *Hot Stuff*, this electric experience is a moving tribute to the voice of a generation. As with Cher, there are three actresses who play the role of Summer. They are Tony Award winner **LaChanze** (*The Color Purple*, *Once on This Island*) as "Diva Donna," **Ariana DeBose** (*A Bronx Tale*, *Hamilton*) as "Disco Donna" and **Storm Lever** (*Freaky Friday*) as "Duckling Donna."

Summer was a girl from Boston with a voice from heaven, who shot through the stars from gospel choir to dance floor diva. But what the world didn't know was how Donna Summer risked it all to break through barriers, becoming the icon of an era, and the inspiration for every music diva who followed. After becoming a born-again Christian in the mid 80s, Summer was once quoted as saying, "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve," and allegedly referred to AIDS as, "a punishment for homosexuality." It's something that she truly regretted throughout the remainder of her life, and obviously it didn't sit well with her throngs of gay fans.

As a queer biracial woman having to enact this out onstage, Ariana Debose took time to reflect on the deeply religious background that Summer was brought up in. Debose acknowledged that, everyone can make mistakes and that was one of the things that drew her to this role. "Donna's candor made her feel very comfortable in early interviews, and she said quite a lot. The following interviews were never quite the same as she felt more guarded in what she would say," Debose states, most likely basing this fact on having read and watched many interviews with the singer while preparing to take on this role.



Debose has had previous roles in the musicals *Hairspray*, *Bring It On*, and most recently, *Hamilton*. Summer is also not the first time she's played one of her childhood idols. In 2013, in the production of *Motown The Musical*, she played the role of Mary Wilson, and was the understudy for Diana Ross. "I would listen to groups like *The Supremes* and *The Shirelles* while driving in the car with my grandmother in North Carolina. It was very eye opening and challenging, and I really got to know [Motown founder] Barry Gordy," she says.

Now living in Harlem, Debose gets to play the most iconic time of Donna Summer's life, *Disco Donna*, the period in her career that made her a worldwide dance artist diva. "You meet me in 1975 at the start of Donna's career, when *Love to Love You, Baby* was at the top of the charts. She was at the height of her powers, and I get to give you all her number one hits right through the 80s. The storyline goes beyond music, depicting her life in a non-linear way. The goal is to allow older *Diva Donna* to put the fragments of her life together in order to understand what it all meant. The audience gets to understand the choices that she made and why she made them," she explains.

So is there one thing that she learned about Ms. Summer during her research for the role? "What I thought was interesting was that Donna didn't like to be touched, in light of the fact she was considered a sexual icon with her music," Debose reveals. Debose most definitely is proud to have been given this opportunity to portray such an admired icon on stage, but also acknowledges that, "There was only one Donna Summer!"

The Donna Summer Musical, now playing at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre (205 West 46 Street) through August 2019. The last Broadway show is scheduled for Sunday,

December 30, 2018, and producers have announced a North American tour will kick off Sept. 30, 2019, which includes Canadian dates www.thedonnasummermusical.com

The Tina Turner Musical

One other famous diva that will be having her story told on Broadway next year is none other than **Tina Turner**. Already a smash hit at London's West End, *The Tina Turner Musical* is set to hit Broadway in the fall of 2019. From humble beginnings in Nutbush, Tennessee, to her transformation into the global *Queen of Rock 'n' Roll*, Turner didn't just break the rules, she rewrote them. This stage musical reveals the untold story of a woman who dared to defy the bounds of her age, gender and race.

Tina began her career in the mid-1950s alongside the infamous *Ike Turner and The Kings of Rhythm*, soon catapulting the band to stardom as lead singer of the reformed group, **The Ike and Tina Turner Revue**. She left Ike in 1976 after a tumultuous relationship, and went on to have an even more successful solo career throughout the 80s. As one of the world's best-selling female artists of all time, Turner has won 12 Grammy Awards and her live shows have been seen by millions, with more concert tickets sold than any other solo performer in music history. She has been inducted into the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame*, awarded a star on the *Hollywood Walk of Fame*, and has three singles inducted into the *Grammy Hall of Fame*.

This stage production is presented in association with Turner herself, who commented, "Bringing this musical to life on stage and working with this team has meant so much to me, I feel that it is in many ways a culmination of my career. London audiences have been and continue to be extraordinary. Now, the bright lights of Broadway are calling, and I'm very excited to share this beautiful show with New York audiences next year."

Turner has also recently released her memoir, *Tina Turner: My Love Story* (Simon & Schuster), which combined with the stage production, has allowed Turner to tell her life story with raw honesty and grit.

The Tina Turner Musical – opens Fall 2019. Cast, creative, and venue TBA. www.tinathemusical.com

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community. He has written travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities.



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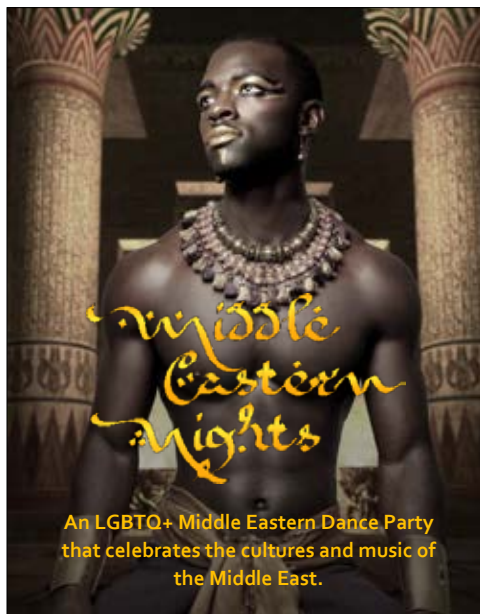
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BOYSTOWN



In Conversation With BOYSTOWN

You may not know him by name, but you will surely recognize a series of books that he has authored called BOYSTOWN. Jake Biondi's gay book series features sexy covers, relatable characters, and as much drama as a telenovela. Biondi has big plans for the series, which was conceived in 2013. Five years later, the author has released eight editions and has no plans of slowing down.

What was your motivation behind creating BOYSTOWN?

I have always been a fan of prime time and daytime soaps: *Dynasty*, *Scandal*, *Days of Our Lives*, *Knots Landing*, *Revenge*. So, I thought it would be fun to create a continuing saga that focused primarily on gay characters. Since I have lived in Chicago's Boystown neighbourhood for over 20 years, it seemed like the perfect setting for my drama. BOYSTOWN's characters reflect the diversity of the real-life neighbourhood, and the stories provide the crazy twists and turns that soap fans expect.

In the early days, what type of feedback did you receive?

To be honest, I started writing BOYSTOWN on a whim. I wrote the first chapter and posted it online to see if anyone would even read it. To my surprise, I started receiving feedback and emails from readers almost immediately. They loved it. They wanted to know what was going to happen next. So, I started writing more quickly, eventually taking the story offline and

publishing it in book form. There are currently eight books in the BOYSTOWN series, with the ninth on the way.

Which characters do you feel most people relate to and why?

Different people seem to connect with different characters. BOYSTOWN's characters are diverse in every sense (sexual orientation, race, age, gender, etc.), so they appeal to an equally diverse audience. I have been surprised by people's connections to certain couples in the series. For example, people immediately connected to Keith and Emmett, so when their relationship became rocky, I received a lot of feedback. In addition, people have strong reactions to Derek and his possible partners. Some readers want him with Joyelle, some readers want him with Cole. BOYSTOWN readers are a passionate bunch.

Do you incorporate any of your personal experiences into the books?

Some of the stories in BOYSTOWN are based off real experiences, but they are exaggerated and taken to the extreme, as in any good serial. BOYSTOWN fans have come to enjoy the series as a sort of roller coaster ride, full of crazy twists and turns.

Which character means the most to you and why?

I think that every character an author creates is a part of them. People always ask me which character is the most like me and I'd have to say that Emmett is. However, I enjoy writing each and every character in the series. Each character has taken on a life of their own, and I think it's the characters

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TOWN

TOWN Creator Jake Biondi

that keep readers coming back to each book. When I take a break from writing, I actually miss these characters. They are all a part of me.

Tell me about the most recent book, and what makes Season 8 different from other seasons?

The eighth BOYSTOWN book is really relationship driven. Several couples find themselves at crossroads, while others are just developing. Both families and marriages are torn apart in this season and some unholy alliances are created as well. The arrival of new character, Victor DelVecchio, forever changes the lives of some BOYSTOWN characters, and of course, the book ends in a series of epic cliffhangers as readers have come to expect.

What is your favourite moment in the season?

I love writing the new character of Victor DelVecchio, who is based around a friend of mine. His scenes are great. And there is a new murder mystery that begins in Season 8 as well.

How has the initial feedback been? Are fans happy with Season 8?

Fans seem to love it and can't wait for Season 9. I'm happy to report that the entire BOYSTOWN series maintains a 5-star rating on Amazon, which is the highest possible reader rating.

When can we expect Season 9 and what can we expect?

BOYSTOWN Season 9 is scheduled to be released at Christmas time; I'm working on it right now. Fans can expect resolutions to the cliffhangers that ended Season 8, as well as some

reconciliations that I know they will love. And the murder mystery that began in Season 8 continues as well.

Where do you see BOYSTOWN going in the next 5-10 years?

I will continue to write BOYSTOWN for as long as readers want me to. I love writing it and I love the characters. In addition, I'm working to bring the BOYSTOWN book series to TV. Some great actors have come forward to express interest in the project and we are currently working with several interested producers to bring the series to the small screen.

Are there any new projects in the pipeline?

In addition to the BOYSTOWN TV series, I'm launching a new book series called MAJESTY. It's a period-piece, and should be pretty exciting.

For more information or to order the BOYSTOWN series, visit BoystownTheSeries.com.

Joey Amato has worked with local and regional publications including *South Florida Gay News* and *OutClique Magazine*.

He was the founder of *UNITE Magazine* in Nashville and Indianapolis. Joey launched *Pride Journeys* in 2017 to feature LGBT friendly travel destinations, and highlight other items of interest to the community. For more information, visit www.pridejourneys.com



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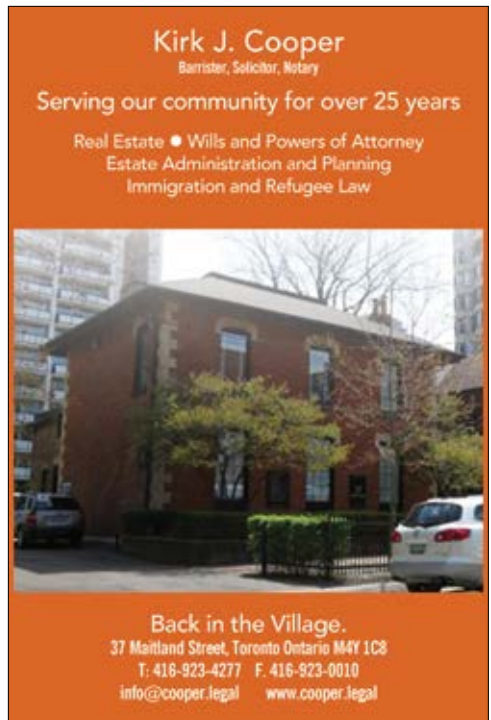


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WIGGED OUT

BY SCARLETT BOBO

What a TRIP

I recently took another run around Europe with a gaggle of my closest friends, Monty, Joey, Mulham, Rula, and my now fiancé, Pete. We had the most wonderful adventures across Amsterdam, Rome, and Barcelona. Shows, dinners, all-nighters, parties, laughs, bus tours and...oh yeah, I GOT ENGAGED!!

It was nothing short of a gosh darn fairy tale, I'll tell you that. We had a lovely day in Amsterdam, sparking a naughty cigarette and stomping the cobblestone around one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Then, we made a little trek out to pick up our MOJO fam to get our trip started!

We had wine and headed for dinner in the pouring rain, and I insisted on going a certain way to pass by this church that I knew, and upon passing with my ring weighing heavily in my chest pocket, I hopped down on one knee and asked Mister Peter Maragos to marry me...and he said yes!! WHO KNEW!??

So on we went as two gay dorks in love across Europe hand-in-hand, prancing about. I had two lovely shows at a couple of my favourite hot spots in Amsterdam, *Amstel 54* and *Queens Head*. I twirled and high-kicked into many Dutch hearts while drinking my weight in tequila.

The drag queens and crowds in Amsterdam are so lovely it's incredible. They even called me a drag artist! WHOA!

You know, there's just something glamorous about getting your heel stuck in multiple cobblestones until your ankle breaks. Being in such an exciting city halfway across the globe, and slamming yourself on new stages is just exhilarating! It completely gave new life and energy back into my soul, which was VERY much needed.

It fuels me to dig my heels into new dirt, slapping smiles on new faces, and seeing how other lives live out in different parts of the world. I can't express the importance of travel, it fills little empty holes you didn't realize were ever there.

I'm so glad I got to experience this trip with some of my besties, to come back with a ring on my finger, and the best fiancé a queen could have by her side.



Photo: Quinton Cruickshanks

All in all I will say I am one lucky queen! I got to spend two beautiful weeks with some of the best people I could think of in some of the most beautiful places in the world. Now I shall get back to my life as the Wicked Witch of Church Street, while I await my return to The Netherlands!

Much love, Be kind to one another.

XoXo, BoBo..

Catch Scarlett Bobo all over Toronto: Monday/ Saturday 930-1130 @ **Church St Garage**, Wednesday 11-2 @ **The Drink**, and Thursdays 8-11 @ **O'Grady's on Church**. Instagram and Twitter - @itsscarlettbo

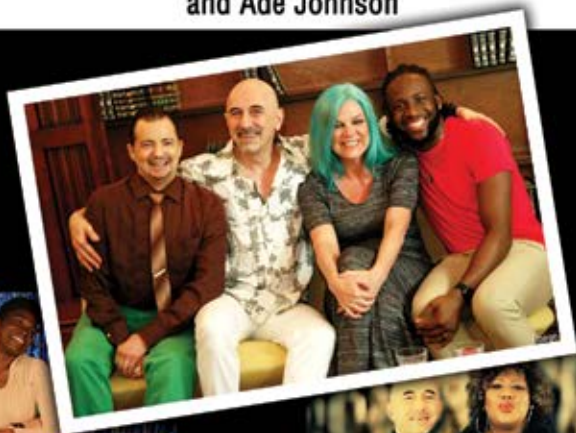


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Jordana Lajoie



Photo: Daniel Esteban



Photo: Daniel Esteban

Jordana Lajoie is a beautiful French-Canadian actress from Montreal. She grew up in a creative family with a mother who worked in immigration law, but who also studied interior design and collected art. As well, her grandfather was a poet, and her father was a gifted artist.

"I love to sketch and paint as well. I am nowhere near as good as my father when it comes to oil painting: that man is next level. I think it's safe to say we're enthusiasts of art in general."

Like many youth, Jordana was fascinated with television, cartoons, and make-believe. "It's a thing that we all share in wanting to be entertained, and on some deeper level wanting to entertain. I'd say being an only child definitely helped me push the boundaries as far as imagination goes."

Jordana took acting lessons, while studying Political Science in university, but was torn between the two very different subjects. "One day, having already applied for law school, I figured why not just try that theatre audition too and see what happens? Much to my family's dismay, it happened."

At the very start of her acting education, Jordana wasn't really giving it her all, as she doubted herself.

"I had this crazy thought that I had entered the game way too late, but luckily good mentors straighten you the f*ck up (pardon my French) if you're being lazy. or if you're not being the white canvas that you're supposed to be. They were my

guides, and to this day I am grateful for these wonderful teachers who weren't babysitting me or praising me for nothing. They were straight when they had to be, and thanks to them, I am a much better actor for it."

Her first role was in a French television series on a show called *Patrice Lemieux 24-7*. "I played the American wife of a French-Canadian NHL player who's had one too many concussions in his career."

Her favourite gig so far was directing a play called *Den of Thieves*. "That's like seven to nine personalities in a small space that you have to manage, so it can definitely be tricky at times, but at the same token it allowed for me to learn so much more about the other side."

Asked what her dream role would be, she declared - Catwoman!

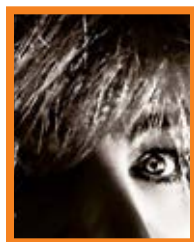
Catch Jordana in her next movie, *A Gingerbread Romance*, coming out on December 16th, on the Hallmark Channel. "I play a French chef who goes by the name Annabelle Renard, and I'm very grateful to have been a part of the ride," she states.

Facebook - @JlajoieOfficial

Instagram - @jordanalajoie

Twitter - @jordanalajoie

Cat Grant is a multimedia artist and a published poet currently writing a book. She also contributes to *Home Life* and *Jingobox*.



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BUDDIES' 40TH ANNIVERSARY



Photo: Tanja Tziana

We're halfway through the 40th Anniversary season of Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, and the little theatre company that could shows no signs of slowing down.

"The space is becoming more valuable," said Mel Hague, Director of the theatre's annual Rhubarb Festival. Having just gone through renovations, the former Toronto Workshop Productions location (where I saw Quentin Crisp perform back in 1979) is better than ever. "When I came out there were some queer bars, but they've all closed down, so Buddies is becoming a more important meeting place," said Hague.

It's also a significant theatre. The season kicked off in September with The Independent Aunties' creation Gertrude and Alice. "Halfway through the run they found out they were nominated for a Governor General's Award," Hague told me. "We aren't in the margins anymore. We're creating nationally recognized works."

Indeed, those of us who love theatre have plenty to enjoy in the coming months. There's Michel Marc Bouchard's *Lilies* with Walter Borden, directed by Cole Alvis; founding father Sky Gilbert's new show, Shakespeare's *Criminal*, which is an opera; Jocelyn Bioh's hilarious *School Girls*; or, *The African Mean Girls Play*, directed by Nina Lee Aquino; Susanna Fournier's *The Scavenger's Daughter* (accompanied by a provocative photo of two naked people in gas masks), directed by Ted Witzel; Johnny Walker's *Shove It Down My Throat* (about a gay guy who fought back), directed by Tom Arthur Davis; Greg Campbell's multi-character one-Greg show *Out* (about coming out in the 70s, complete with wild outfits), directed by Clinton Walker; and finally, in February, the *Rhubarb Festival*. "The theme of this year's Rhubarb is the future. What will Rhubarb-80 look like? One in three Governor General Award winners were in Rhubarb at some point, so this little festival has a huge impact on Canadian culture," Hague explains.

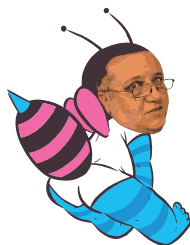
The thing with Buddies is, it's not just a theatre. "There are lots of different ways people come into this building," said Hague. "It's because we have a club and cabaret space. We even have an upcoming art auction so all of a sudden the art world comes in. Drag, comedy, poetry readings. It's a wonderful community meeting space." She's right. I hardly ever go to see plays, but I still find myself at Buddies on a regular basis. It helps that their bartender, Patricia Wilson, is not only a legend, but also one of the nicest people in Toronto. Indeed, the whole staff is great. I often wonder what the local queer scene would be like without Buddies. Probably pretty bleak, actually. Thank God it's thriving.

And it's evolving. "The audience is changing. The art is changing. Rhubarb's audiences, for instance, are young, queer, POC, and straight. It means that a lot more folks are coming to the theatre," declares Hague. "Artistic Director Evelyn Parry and I discussed how this year at Buddies is about looking to the future, not just about celebrating our past. This year has been about confidence."

Be sure to attend the Buddies 40th Birthday Bash on Friday, May 31, 2019.

12 Alexander Street, Toronto
www.buddiesinbadtimes.com

Paul Bellini is an award-winning television comedy writer (*Kids in the Hall*, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*). He also teaches comedy writing at George Brown College in Toronto.



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A KODAK MOMENT J. Harry

BY BOYD KODAK

J. Harry is a Toronto born young-at-heart genderqueer, who is a self taught photographer, an independent dog walker, and pet-sitter extraordinaire.

J. first picked up a camera over 17 years ago, when in the early stages of sobriety. An immediate passion for the art and gift of photography soon transpired. Remarkably, all their photos are taken with and edited on an android phone camera. J. is also a lover of nature, animals, and traveling, capturing the details of everyday people, places and things that not all eyes see. Seeing outside the norm, finding unusual imagery, and thinking outside the box, are common themes in their photos. J. loves challenging one's thoughts and perceptions in both art and life.

Boyd Kodak - Tell us what have you been doing over the last year?

J. Harry - I have taken daily photos of the pets that I care for and of whatever else catches my eye, inspires me, and wakes me up to the moment. I am still dealing with a lot of grief, due to the death of my mother and father, and photography is a form of healing for me.

BK - Sorry to hear, and I'm happy that you found a positive way to heal from your loss. Terrific way to do your work. During that time, which was the one most exciting event for you?

JH - This year I took part in a smallish community Arts & Craft show that my friend, Bara Brown, organized. I displayed my work and also got to meet some wonderful and talented artists. I was also fortunate to travel to San Miguel D'Allende, Mexico last March to photograph its beauty and spend quality time with good friends.

BK - What are you looking forward to next year?

JH - More art shows, more healing through art, meeting more artists, and enjoying each moment, because life is so short.

BK - So true, great plan. Where can we see your work?

JH - You can go to www.flickr.com/photos/jharry_photography, as my website is still a work in progress.

BK - Tell us about your future plans?

JH - Travelling to Scotland, where some of my ancestors are from, breathe in life, keep it simple, appreciate what I have, and always take the opportunity to share my art and love with others.



Photo: Pierre Gautreau

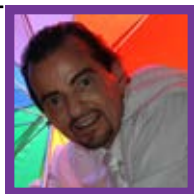


Photo: J. Harry

BK - Please finish the following sentence for us. Life wouldn't be the same without...

JH - ART!

Boyd Kodak is an award-winning trans activist, musician, writer, filmmaker, curator, and festival/entertainment director.



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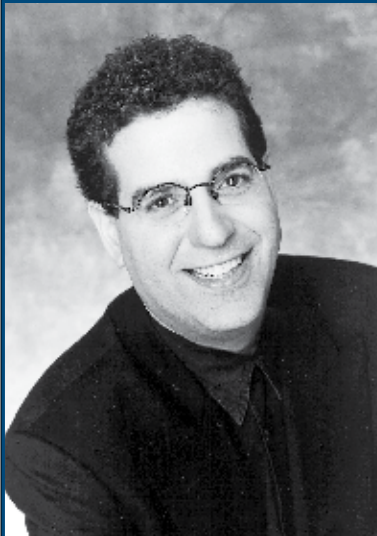
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BEING OUT IN BARRIE



Downtown **Barrie** feels like a small-town fishing village with the crisp air coming off from Lake Simcoe. The clean streets are lined with low-rise buildings and young trees, both indicators of an established community. Barrie has everything a city person could need, that is, without the droves of people and through-the-roof rents. In fact, the cost of living in Barrie has made it an attractive option for LGBT people looking to relocate.

Rents can be significantly less than the those of Toronto, and the overall cost of living is typically as well. Barrie, like many smaller cities, has had its fair share of difficulties for members of the LGBT community, however the city has become one of the more welcoming ones within close proximity to Toronto over the past few years.

The first official **Barrie Pride** formed in September of 2013, and while there was no parade to speak of that year, Barrie became the first City Hall in the province to raise a transgender flag on *Transgender Day of Remembrance*, November 20th, that same year. Five years later the event has blossomed into one of the largest festivals in the city with over ten thousand attendees, including the city's first trans march taking place this past summer, and it now deems itself "*the largest Pride Parade North of Toronto.*"

The city itself hasn't had much in the way of gay bars since the previous spaces, **The Spot** and **Club C'est La Vie**, closed a few years ago, so it was a welcome surprise when *Vanessa Lewis* opened up **Lakeside Upper Deck**, an LGBTQ+ bar right on Dunlop Street, the main artery through the centre of downtown. It's been well received by the people who live there, yet it hasn't been without controversy. Before the grand opening this past September, a homophobic petition originated to try and prevent it from happening.

With the threat of a possible attack on the community, concern grew for the safety of its patrons, but in an ironic twist, the bar opened to line-ups of people, a magnificent drag show, and drama-free all-night dancing, because the petition turned out to be a hoax. While the motives of the petition creator are confusing at best, it received very few actual signatures. More interesting was that the majority of comments left on the petition page were actually a show of solidarity for the gay community, which in many ways should be taken as the silver lining in the cloud.

One block away from Lakeside Upper Deck is **The Foxx Lounge**, and while not a gay establishment, it does host some provocative events, such as Fetish Nights, and Gear Nights, where a five buck cover will get you rope demos, boot blacking, plus an open discussion on BDSM. The themed nights are the brainchild of *Winston Langley* and *David Knott*, owners of **Pups After Dark Gear Shop**, who started the fetish wear company out of their basement two years ago.

Who's up for a weekend getaway?

Lakeside Upper Deck

22 Dunlop St. W, Barrie

Facebook @Lakeside-Upper-Deck

The Foxx Lounge

16 Dunlop St E, Barrie

www.foxxbar.com

Pups After Dark

Facebook @PupsAfterDarkGearShop

Raymond Helkio is an author, director and filmmaker. He graduated from the Ontario College of Art & Design University and is co-founder of The Reading Salon.
www.raymondhelkio.com
www.thereadingsalon.ca





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By Sherry Sylvain

BUZZ Local Picks

Toronto Christmas Market Through Dec. 23

Admission is free of charge on weekdays until Fridays at 5pm. Hundreds of handcrafted products, entertainment, heated mulled wine, beer and hospitality gardens, and of course Santa and the elves.

Distillery District, 55 Mill St., Toronto
www.torontochristmasmarket.com

Holiday Fair in the Square

Dec. 1 to 23; Tues to Thurs: 4pm – 9pm, Fri to Sun: 12pm – 10pm, closed Mon

A charming European-style Christmas market supporting Epilepsy Toronto. Unique shops, artisan crafts, holiday treats, winter carnival, warming fire lounge, Polar Point bar and more.

Nathan Phillips Square, 100 Queen St. W., Toronto
www.fairinthesquare.ca



Zuul: Life of an Armoured Dinosaur

Dec. 15, 2018 to May 20, 2019

The gnarly-faced, horned armoured dinosaur with a sledgehammer-like tail was recently identified as a new species, and now one can't help but wonder: what was life like for Zuul?

Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto
www.rom.on.ca

Hot Docs for the Holidays

Dec. 15, 16, 17 & 22; free

A selection of classic holiday films showing for free – White Christmas, A Christmas Story, Christmas Vacation, It's A Wonderful Life. Accepting non-perishable food donations for the food bank.

Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., Toronto
www.hotdocs.ca

TICOT Drag Brunch

Dec. 16, Jan. 16 & 20, Feb. 10; 1:00pm to 3:30pm

The Imperial Court of Toronto offers a FUNdraising drag brunch on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays of each month with special guest hosts and a bevy of beautiful entertainments. All proceeds go to charity.

Church Street Garage, 477 Church St., Toronto
www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

TICOT Drag Bingo

Dec. 30, Jan. 27; 2:30pm to 5:30pm

Hosted by everyone's second favourite drag queen, Morgan James. All proceeds to the charities of choice of The Imperial Court of Toronto. The venue is open to ALL gender identities for this event.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto
www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

Mughal Magnificence 2019: A New Year's Eve Celebration

Dec. 31, 7:00pm

Lavish Mughal décor sets the backdrop for live entertainment and a DJ playing an East meets West mix of Top 40 tracks. Appetizers and a formal dinner will be served, featuring a South Asian buffet.

Aga Khan Museum, 77 Wynford Dr., Toronto
www.agakhanmuseum.org

GRACE presents a Funksoulicious New Year's Eve

Dec. 31, 9:00pm.; \$25.00

Ring in the new year with the band that will keep you groovin and shakin that ass. Tickets available at The Duke or from any band member. Party favours and champagne at midnight.

The Duke Live, 1225 Queen St. E., Toronto
www.gracemusic.to/

Toronto New Year's Eve

Dec. 31, 10:00pm; Free

Be part of the celebrations to ring in 2019 with music, skating and fireworks on Dec. 31, 2018! Admission is FREE to this alcohol-free event.

Nathan Phillips Square, 100 Queen St. W., Toronto
www.toronto.ca/nps





BUZZPICKS

North American International Motorcycle Supershow

Jan. 4 to 6

With over 500 exhibitors and over 1,000 motorcycles on display, the Motorcycle SUPERSHOW has firmly established itself as the pinnacle of North American motorcycle shows.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.motorcyclesupershow.ca

Regal Beagle Bingo

Jan. 6, Feb. 3; 4:00pm. to 8:00pm

Join Randy Spearhead for an early evening of Bingo. Drink purchase gets you one bingo card (four card maximum). Raffle draws. Proceeds to Reign 32 charities.

The Black Eagle Toronto, 457 Church St., Toronto
www.theimperialcourtofortoronto.com

21C: TSO conducted by Tania Miller with Stewart Goodyear

Jan. 16, 8:00pm

Works by Canadian composers include Dorothy Chang's "North Star" and Dinuk Wijeratne's "First Winter" (both from True North: Symphonic Ballet), and Jocelyn Morlock's "Nostalgia".

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto
www.rcmusic.com

Modern Bride Wedding Show

Jan. 19 & 20; 11:00pm

Featuring leading wedding professionals showcasing the latest in the bridal industry, with a runway fashion event featuring the latest trends.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.modernbrideweddingshow.com

Toronto's Craft Beer, Past and Present

Jan. 26, 6:30pm. to 8:30pm; \$50.00 + tax

A tasting of modern-day Toronto brews includes a flight of five beers and tasty cured treats, including local cheeses and peameal bacon sandwiches. *Vegetarian options available upon request.

The Market Gallery, 95 Front St. E., Toronto
www.themarketkitchen.ca

Black History Month Kick-Off Brunch

Jan. 27, noon to 4:00pm.; \$125.00

Ontario Black History Society Kicks off Black History Month and recognizes the achievements of Black Canadians in community service and more. Four course meal, shoppers market, entertainment.

Metro Toronto Convention Centre, North Building, 255 Front St. W., Toronto
www.blackhistorysociety.ca

Classic Albums Live: Supertramp Breakfast in America

Feb. 1, 8:00pm.

Classic Albums Live and its roster of A-list musicians from across the country perform rock favourites exactly as you remember hearing them, note for note, cut for cut.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto
www.roythomsonhall.com

Alzheimer's Walk for Memories

Feb. 2

Canada's largest life-changing fundraising experience for Alzheimer's Disease. Every year thousands of Walkers come together and challenge themselves to walk and raise vital funds.

Sheraton Centre Hotel, 123 Queen St. W., Toronto
www.alz.to/get-involved/walk-for-memories/

National Geographic Live: Florian Schulz, Photographer

Feb. 3, 4 & 5

Through breathtaking imagery, the National Geographic photographer takes audiences on a legendary journey into the Arctic kingdom—with a special focus on the Arctic Refuge.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto
www.roythomsonhall.com

Maple Blues Awards

Feb. 4, 7:00pm

Annual all-star concert, awards event, and after party celebrating Canada's blues music, hosted by bluesman and actor Raoul Bhaneja.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto
www.rcmusic.com

GTA Home and Reno Show

Feb. 15 to 18, 10:00am

Innovative products and great advice from real pros. Scratch a few things off your to-do list, update the kitchen; all the advice and inspiration you need are waiting for you at the show.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.gtahomeandrenoshow.com/



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Various sites around Niagara Falls, ON
www.wfol.com

Burlington's Lakeside Festival of Lights

Through Jan. 8, 4:30pm to 11:00pm

Share your holiday spirits while strolling through 60 magical lighting displays. The lights are on daily from 4:30 to 11:00; all day and night Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Orthodox Christmas, and NYE.

Spencer Smith Park, 1400 Lakeshore Rd., Burlington
www.burlingtonfestivaloflights.com

Doon By Lantern Light Guided Tours

Fridays and Saturdays through Dec. 21

Tours include a Christmas interpretation in three of the village buildings, a horse drawn wagon ride and a carol singalong in the historic Freeport Church. Please arrive 15 minutes before the tour starts.

Waterloo Region Museum & Doon Heritage Village, 10 Huron Rd., Kitchener
www.waterlooregionmuseum.ca

'Twas the Night Before Christmas

Dec. 15 & 22, 5:00pm to 9:00pm

Enjoy Westfield Heritage by candlelight and feel the warmth of the season through music, food samples, fireworks and a visit from Father Christmas.

Westfield Heritage Village, 1049 Kirkwall Rd., Hamilton
www.westfieldheritage.ca

Christmas Market at Kitchener Market

Dec. 21 & 22

Hand-crafted items from local artisans who create one-of-a-kind goodies that make the best gifts for your loved ones. \$10 lunch specials from the International Food Court.

Kitchener Farmers' Market, 300 King St. E., Kitchener
www.kitchenermarket.ca



A Very Queenie Christmas: Windsor/London

Dec. 21/22, 7:00 pm

Pandora Boxx and Darienne Lake are taking their show on the road with special guests. VIP tickets include a meet and greet session immediately following the show with a photo-op.

Dec 21 - Rock Star Music Hall, 2418 Central Ave., Windsor
Dec 22 - Wolf Performance Hall, 251 Dundas St., London
www.lavenderpromotions.com

Niagara Falls New Year's Eve 2019

Dec. 31, 8:00pm

Canada's largest New Year's Eve celebration. Highlights include two spectacular fireworks displays, food and beverage vendors and a licensed area.

Queen Victoria Park, 6345 Niagara Pkwy, Niagara Falls
www.niagarafallstourism.com/holidays/new-years-eve/

Dancing with the Stars Live

Jan. 6, 8:00pm to 11:00pm

All New Show to Feature Season 27 Dancers: Whitney Carson, Artem Chigvintsev, Gleb Savchenko, Emma Slater, Sasha Farber, Alan Bersten, Jenna Johnson, Brandon Armstrong and more.

Centre In The Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener
www.centreinthesquare.com

Elevation Mont-Tremblant

January 31 to February 3, 2019

Following the success of Elevation Gay Ski Week events at Mammoth Mountain, California and Park City, Utah, the organizers are heading north to the slopes of Mont-Tremblant, Quebec. This inaugural event offers a slew of mountain activities and apres-ski parties.

Book early for this one!
www.tremblantgayskiweek.com

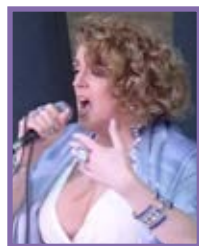
Crack Me Up Comedy

February 2, 8:00pm

Side-splitting nights of comedy and satire from Brampton's very own Crack Me Up Comedy. Each show includes an MC and a variety of local comedians, who ensure you'll be laughing all night.

Rose Theatre
1 Theatre Lane, Brampton
www.brampton.ca/sites/rose-theatre

Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



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