

RuPaul · Allyson Lunny · Church-Wellesley BIA · Cassidy Civiero · Sophie Edwards

**Sam Williams**

Hank Williams' Grandson at the Helm  
of 'New Nashville'

**Billy Porter**

Doesn't Hold Back in Liberating Album,  
*Black Mona Lisa*

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Hello Friends!

Did you know that April comes from the Latin word, Aprilis? Thought to be related to the Latin verb ‘aperire’ meaning “to open.” This issue of theBUZZ represents the opening up to one’s self and the world—letting the person you’ve always been and who you’re meant to be, out of that dang box. Or maybe you were already ‘unboxed’—perhaps instead, there were further layers that needed to be uncovered, other parts of you waiting to bloom. Don’t just show everyone your daisies when you’ve also got tulips up your sleeve.

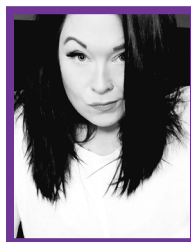
No stranger to being unapologetically himself, in our first feature we have **Sam Williams**, son of Hank Williams Jr. and grandson of Hank Williams. Sam comes from a line of country music pioneers who busted their butts to shape the genre; he’s doing the same as an openly queer musician, making history and creating his own legacy in the process. Our second feature spotlights the one, the only, the inimitable **Billy Porter**. Sean Ban Beaton takes us through his new album, **Black Mona Lisa**. 30 years in the making, it was the first time he felt he was able to fully express himself through music; he calls this 12-track masterpiece his “magnum opus.”

Rolyn Chambers gives *Deep Dish* a lighthearted community-focused spin with eyes on the **Church-Wellesley BIA**. In a special feature of *Wigged Out*, we bow down and praise the queen of all queens, **RuPaul**, who recently released their new book, *The House of Hidden Meanings*. We’ve got the *She Beat* on **Allyson Lunny**, a highly respected associate professor at YorkU. In *Kodak Moment*, Boyd Kodak touches base with experimental filmmaker **Cassidy Civiero**. Sherry Sylvain tells us all about **Transgender Vocal Coaching with Sophie Edwards** in *Beyond the Village*. Don’t forget to check out *BUZZpicks* for events you won’t want to miss!

Be free to be you, be open to tapping into all that you are, and never apologize for how bright your light is meant to shine. I will leave you with one of my favourite quotes, “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Happy reading!

**Mel MacMullin**  
Editor-in-Chief




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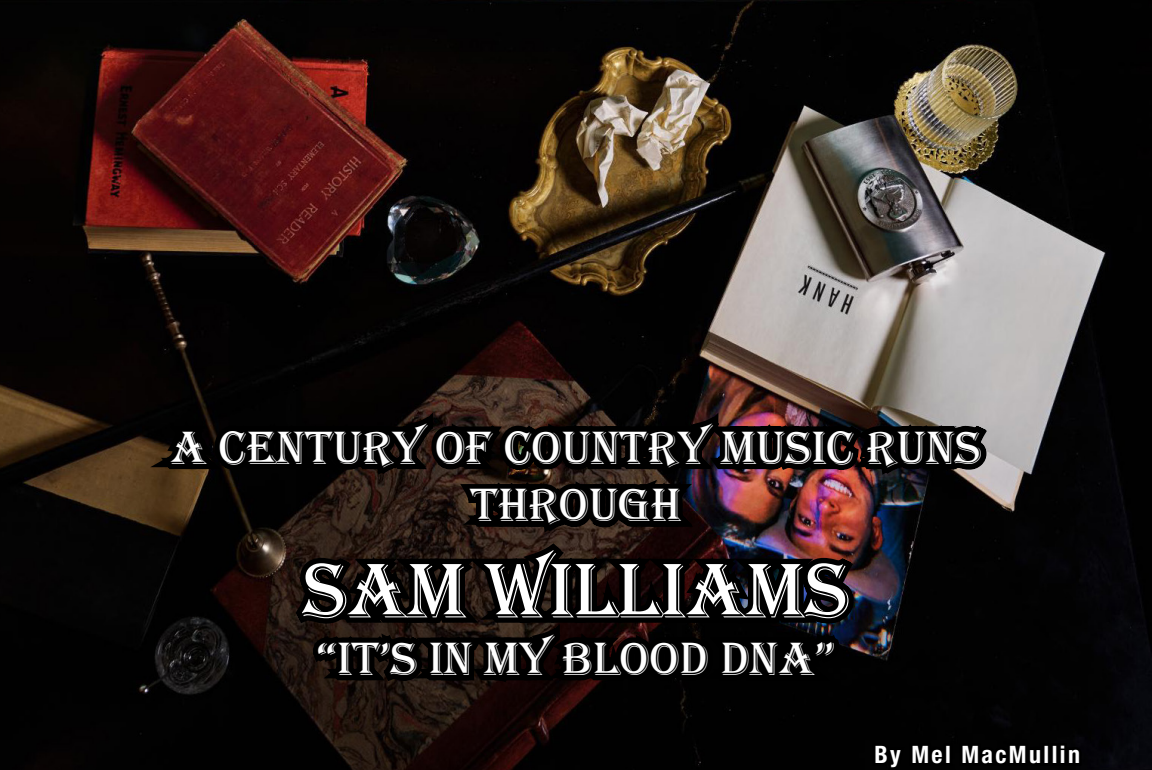
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**A CENTURY OF COUNTRY MUSIC RUNS  
THROUGH  
SAM WILLIAMS  
"IT'S IN MY BLOOD DNA"**

By Mel MacMullin

**“Before unlocking that next door, you first have to go through the one in front of you.”**

**Sam Williams**

Singer-songwriter **Sam Williams** is at the helm of the ‘New Nashville’ movement as the only openly queer male solo artist on a Nashville label. In October of 2022, Williams made 2SLGBTQIA+ country music history by kissing his boyfriend in his music video, *Tilted Crown*.

His lineage... wait for it... stems from well-known country music stars—his grandfather, the legendary Hank Williams, known for *Hey, Good Lookin’*, and his father, one of the first outlaws, Hank Williams Jr. But he’s not looking to follow in their footsteps—while he does feel the family blood “coursing through his veins,” he’s creating a self-made legacy by carving out his own profound path.

Williams, 27, released his 10-track (he wrote 9) debut album, *Glasshouse Children*, in 2021, and his poetic depth backed by powerful vulnerability was apparent from the ‘get-go’. Williams is amid releasing a new album, putting out music from it every month. The first single, a cover of Tammy Wynette’s *‘Til I Can Make It on My Own* feat. Carter Faith came out February 9th.

**How was it like growing up with a family deemed ‘country music royalty’?**

“My grandfather and grandmother were gone decades before I was born. So, I didn’t necessarily grow up amongst country music royalty – just with my dad... and I had a fairly normal childhood. It kind of pushed me away from music for a long time. I was one of those kids that wondered why I was I put in this situation. Thinking about how somebody’s born in Mozambique, how somebody’s born into the royal family in England, and the randomness of that.”

**How would you describe your music writing style?**

“I like alliteration. I like literary devices, like homonyms and homophones. I like references in hip hop music that has more of an entendre referencing something else.

I write down, say, 12 words I think are interesting in a bubble, circle a few and maybe write a note under a few, then start to construct them and think like, how do these go together? What am I trying to say here? I like to take different concepts and put them together in a way that makes somebody want to listen.”

**What influences your music? Did/does your father or grandfather have any influence at all?**

“From my grandfather, absolutely—it would be the authenticity of the songwriting about some of the more uncomfortable things that people don’t know exactly how to voice right. A lot of the rebellion and outlier, left of center comes from both of them.

My dad’s music was unaccepted for a long time in Nashville. In the late ‘70s and early ‘80s the outlaw movement became more recognizable and respected—that was when he hit a stride and left a huge impact that changed the genre. I take a lot of pride and interest in that kind of fearlessness. Inclusivity is very important, especially in music, because voices and words are meant to be heard.”

**Do you think 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and music are as accepted in country music like in other genres?**

“Absolutely not, no... it’s not even comparable to other genres. There’s a boys club in country music of what’s acceptable and what’s not. But country music is becoming more universal. The ‘New Nashville’ is arriving and it’s changing as time goes on.

Masculinity and sexuality intertwine, but masculinity doesn’t define sexuality. I have a lot of masculine parts and feminine parts. But it’s a big problem in country—there’s an effort to change, and some progress has been made. Artists like Jason Aldean who put out their extremely conservative views have more power than people whose voices don’t have that kind of megaphone.”

**How was your ‘coming out’ experience?**

“Coming out for me was not a difficult thing. By being aware that I was different than what I was surrounded by for so long, was very difficult. I was lucky that I had a lot of people around that supported me. My dad has always been supportive. He’s not going to write a song about it and walk me down the aisle, but he’s not one who’s spiteful or treats me differently.”

**Who is Sam Williams? What makes you different?**

“I don’t have a problem saying things that people don’t like, or doing things that people don’t agree with, and I don’t have a problem with being different. It comes with a rebellious spirit and tenacity... and that needs more celebration in country music.

People don’t understand how I can wear a lace suit or dazzled fringe on the Grand Ole Opry, and then give my opinion on country music. But I AM country music, it is IN my blood DNA. Both of my grandparents, my dad, my mom, my sisters, my half-brothers are in music. So, I have



a lot of thoughts about it, and when I have an opinion on something, I'm going to probably say it."

**Give us the scoop on your upcoming new album...**

"It's in three pieces, and each act of the album will be released alone with the full project coming together after the release of all the acts throughout this year and next year. We'll have new music every month for the rest of this year. I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry is on it."

**Tell us about the cover of Tammy Wynette's 'Til I Can Make It on My Own as the first track release?**

"We went after the 'New Nashville' feel with a nod to a famous country song, but a complete reinvention, using classical instruments, shooting a music video with a traditional vibe. Carter Faith and I are not trying to be Tammy Wynette and George Jones. We're just successors in that same position in our careers of accepting every 'no' and chasing every 'yes'. You know, what it was like for Hank Williams between 1943 to '46; hustling to make it happen and not knowing if it will. The point of being an artist is giving your perspective and letting somebody else digest it and make it their own, too."

**You can't spill the beans on what the album will be called?**

"I really can't. Let's just say it's Scarlet. It's so very Scarlet."

**What future projects or plans are in the works?**

"The new Cirque du Soleil production starts in July in Nashville; it's called Songblazers, and I wrote the song Carnival Heart for them."

Hopefully, lots of performances throughout the rest of this year. I don't have a tour to announce right now. But I'm opening for my dad in Birmingham, my first arena bill in America. It's the 'go time' that follows the journey through experience; the pain and trial and error of making music that is real. I'm leaving it up to the listener and fate."

*All photos by Thomas Crabtree.*

Melissa MacMullin is a freelance content writer and journalist for leading publications. A strong distinct queer Canadian voice with pride and purpose. Author. Screenwriter. Performer. Part-time adventurer.



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Photo "Baby Was a Dancer" by Franz Szonyi



# BLACK MONA LISA

THE NEXT CHAPTER OF BILLY PORTER  
IN 12 LIBERATING TRACKS

By Sean Ban Beaton

## Billy Porter's latest album, **Black Mona Lisa**, marks a slight departure from his usual more Broadway/jazz-influenced sound, making way for some slick production and killer beats; and what can we say? It's a bop.

For some, **Billy Porter** is best known for his illustrious theatre career on and off Broadway, winning a Best Actor in a Musical Tony for *Kinky Boots* in 2013, as well as a Grammy for his participation in a cast recording the following year. Others know him for his extensive television career, including his unforgettable portrayal of ballroom emcee Pray Tell in the ground-breaking series, *Pose*, which brought him home an Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series (the only openly gay man to do so). Add that to his directing, songwriting, playwriting, activism, and his flair for attention-grabbing awards show fashion, and you get a sense of the breadth of his talent and staying power.

At the core of all this is Billy Porter's undeniable vocal talent, which is highlighted to great effect on *Black Mona Lisa*. Porter is co-writer on 10/12 of the songs, and this album is being touted as Porter's most personal and creative endeavour to date. Porter elaborates, "So many of the songs on my album have a very similar theme — getting to a place of recognizing your own worth and celebrating yourself. The world will try to tell you who you are, and the world will try to decide if you matter. No outside force or entity gets to decide that."

The album is a full-on club-thumping declaration of being unapologetically out and proud, with all the heart and spectacular vocals you'd expect from a Porter offering.

Here is a quick breakdown of each track:

**1. Break A Sweat** — A bit of sass to start off the album is always welcome, and this punchy house vibe sets the tone, proving that a fun dance track need not be devoid of emotional depth.

**2. Children** — This disco crowd pleaser encourages the youth of today to 'wipe those tears away' and pull through these hard times because the future is in their hands, and we will need them to lead the way. It's a song of empowerment, accompanied by a solid groove, and an opulent video.

**3. Black Mona Lisa** — The title track of the album is a four-on-the-floor banger. Porter says it best, explaining, "Black Mona Lisa, the song, is the pinnacle of everything

on the album. We do not need your tolerance, but we do demand your respect. Knowing your self-worth, your value, being able to stand firmly in your authentic self, those things are worth more than gold, and you will pay me as such."

**4. Stranger Things** — As far as epic anthems go, this poetic neo-soul ballad is as unyielding as they come, delivering a powerful and satiating dose of collective activism. Interesting side note: actor, and Canadian icon Andrea Martin was a co-writer on this track.

**5. Not Ashamed** — Porter is indeed 'Not Ashamed' to say what he needs to say, dress how he wants to dress, or love who he wants to love. "Don't care if they criticize, I'm just trying to live my life," he casually sings over its R&B pop groove. "Y'all ain't gonna stop my shine."

**6. Fashion** — This is a breezy reminder not to fall into the trap of negativity, and to embrace love because love is always in fashion.

**7. Baby Was A Dancer** — A fan favourite, this club track tells the story of a dancer who overcame obstacles to disco her way to legendary status, something any club queen would understand.

**8. More To Learn** — An unexpected texture is added to the album with this track, and even through it has a post-apocalyptic (almost industrial) tone, Porter still manages to extract a positive message of personal growth.

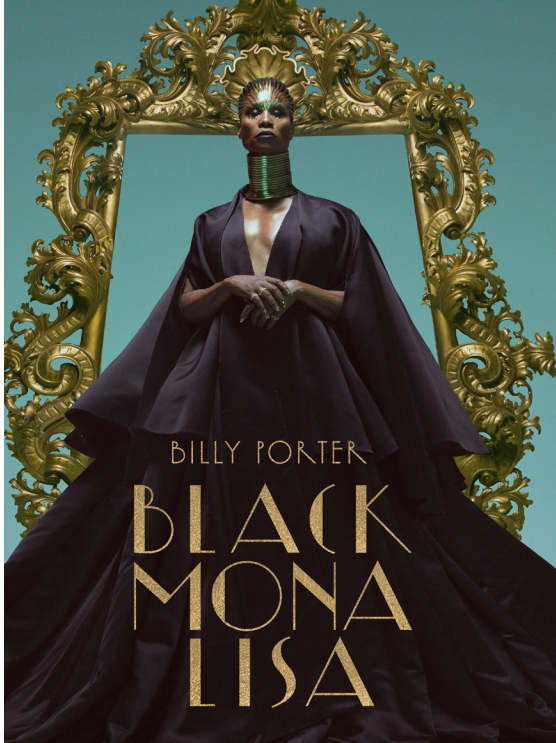
**9. New Shoes** — An infectious bop fit to make Imelda Marcos' jealous. This ballroom prance reminds us that we can get better with age; we just need to find a new perspective in the form of a sick new pair of shoes to step right over life's obstacles.

**10. Funk Is On The One** — With all its bravado on display, this decidedly funk track oozes with cool; a song even George Clinton himself would put on some heels and groove to.

**11. Audacity** — This intimate and soulful ballad balances out the high-octane of the rest of the album, and its paired-down production and heartbreaking lyrics make it equally as impactful. Fans will be anticipating this tender moment where he gets to show off his vocal chops in the raw, and he delivers.

**12. Children (What Time It Is) Feat. Lady Blackbird** — This revamp of the 2nd track includes a collaboration with jazz songstress Lady Blackbird, whose 2018 debut album *Black Acid Soul* has garnered praise from fans and critics alike.

Executive producer and hitmaker to the stars, Justin Tranter, deserves significant credit for the success of the



album as well, saying of his collaboration with Porter, "Billy is one of the great talents of our generation. Helping bring his story to life through music was a true honour. The second we wrote the song Black Mona Lisa I knew we stumbled on one of those magic moments that we live for as songwriters. I'm so excited the world finally gets to hear it."

To promote the album, Porter embarked on **The Black Mona Lisa Tour: Volume 1**. The 25-city U.S. tour wrapped up earlier this year and garnered acclaim from both critics and audiences alike, with The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel describing it as a "rare kind of performance [of] transcendent joy," "stunning," and "one-of-a-kind," and Louisville's LEO Weekly calling the show "spectacular, inspiring, dazzling."

Presuming there's a Black Mona Lisa Tour: Volume 2, here's hoping it makes its way to Toronto.

Sean Ban Beaton is a music creator, performer, and sound editor in Toronto.



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## Church-Wellesley BIA



Under leadership of **George Pratt** as Chair since 2023, the BIA, which has been running since 2002, suddenly seems to be doing much good. With a smart online social media campaign, the public is now starting to see and hear everything that is happening. Pratt, a long-time business owner in Toronto's queer community, has helmed legendary queer venues like Club Colby's, Church On Church, and now Flash and Cock Bar. His decades of dedication to the area overseen by the BIA (running from Gloucester St. to Wood St. and representing 115+ businesses and property owners) are clearly improving the Village which has been marred by vandalism, homeless squatters, open drug use, and park violence over the past few years.

### Goldcocks, if you go down to the Village today, you're in for a big surprise.

The bears might be having a picnic, but thanks to the **Church-Wellesley BIA**, the many Village parks and parkettes available to them might actually be clean. These cleanups (which also include alleyways, sidewalks, and storefronts) are just one item in the BIA's basket of goodies.



To protect the integrity and safety of the Village, Pratt, and the BIA have been holding ongoing meetings with Toronto city officials like Councillor Chris Moise, MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam, and members of the Toronto Police – hopefully leading to a safer community for all.

The BIA has also begun an education program of sorts through their Instagram account (@churchwellesleyvillage). Each week, one historic building in the Village is highlighted and its history revealed. For instance, Goldie, did you know that 475 Church St., home



of Churchmouse & Firkin restaurant, built in 1864, was the Village's first post office? Or that the site of the Black Eagle at 457 Church St. was home to The Melody Room, the first queer bar on Church St. as well as Gayboy, one of Toronto's first gay publications?



By remembering the past, the BIA is creating a better future. Interim Director **Adam Wynne** spearheaded a three-year journey to rename a laneway in the Village to the Henry Box Brown Lane. Brown was an enslaved man from Virginia who escaped by nailing himself into a shipping crate. Following his emancipation in Toronto, Brown dedicated himself to educating people about the injustices of slavery. Adjacent to Henry Box Brown Lane, a horizontal laneway is now named North Star Way, symbolizing the connection to the Underground Railroad and the ongoing struggle for black emancipation. The North Star served as a guiding light for navigation, aiding travellers in determining direction. Additionally, the North

Star and its symbol carry cultural importance for both indigenous and non-indigenous communities across Canada.

But the BIA is also firmly rooted in the present by bringing art to the Village through its managing of the Window Gallery at 558 Church St. This storefront has sat empty for years, so the BIA began inspiring passersby on their way to work, or stumbling home from a night at the bars, with visual stimulation. Further, the BIA has teamed up with Pride Toronto to install a huge mural on top of the



outside of Wellesley TTC station. Just in time for Pride! Plus, several BIA walking tours of the Village are available throughout the year, which colourfully explain its unique history, while also providing some wonderful eye candy in the warmer months. Wear sensible shoes, Goldie. Heels not too high, soles not too low.

Jamaican-born Rolyn Chambers grew up in the suburbs of Mississauga, before attending *Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD University)*. In 2001, he began his *Deep Dish* column with *fab Magazine*, which ran for a full decade, allowing him to interview everyone from clubbers and promoters, to celebrities and politicians. *Deep Dish* has now been resurrected once again here in theBUZZ. Chambers is also the author of, *The Boy Who Brought Down A Bathhouse*, self-published by himself via YumEee! Communications. IG @rahrahrolyn



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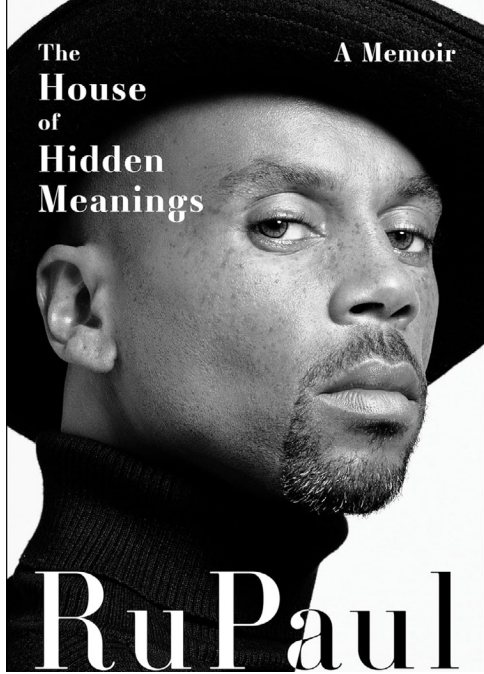
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# WIGGED OUT

## HOUSE OF HIDDEN MEANINGS

by RuPaul



**Life comes in seasons.** There are the seasons where you are driving through a snowstorm, just trying to keep your eye on the road ahead to stay alive. Your ego stands in the doorway of every good idea, keeping them from you. We avoid the pain. We put our blinders on and stay focused on what's right ahead, turning away from the thing we need to see in our periphery, because we know accepting it will force us to question everything we hold so tightly.

But then there are those seasons when the snow globe is being shaken all around you, and you're standing in place, looking up to try to see where the scattered world is all going to fall. When it finally settles, that's when you find yourself in the house of hidden meanings. You study the patterns that keep coming up. You allow them to show you something different, even if it's the thing you've been running from your whole life. You run into the fire, run through the pain, trusting that the only way out is through.

Back at my hotel, I look out the window at a demolition site, a skyscraper that has now been reduced to a pile of rubble. I remember when it was built, forty years ago. Now it is being torn down. Soon, something new will be constructed in its place.

It makes sense: Atlanta taught me this, and life reminds me, again and again.

You have to dismantle the old to make the space for something new.

"Writing this book left me gooped, gagged and stripped raw. I've learned that vulnerability is strength, but so far, all I feel is nervous as hell, yet super excited to share it with y'all. When all is said and done, it's just me, Ru."

*The House of Hidden Meanings, A Memoir* was released by HarperCollins March 5th, 2024.

RuPaul is an actor, musician, television personality, and internationally beloved drag queen; Tony Award-winner and Primetime Emmy Award-winning executive producer of RuPaul's Drag Race. He holds the Guinness World Records title for the most Emmy wins for Outstanding Host of Reality/Competition Program, and of any Black artist in history.



"After two and a half years, it's finally here. My memoir. I'm so excited and so anxious at the same time because I really reveal so much of myself. You know, this world today feels so hostile and [is] such a scary place to be vulnerable. But I did it. So, get ready." — RuPaul (via video announcement).

Now I can see that everything was building toward this. Everything I experienced—the highs, the fears, the joys, the lows, the discoveries—had shaped me into the force I would become. This body, with its supermodel proportions, that had always stood out, that had never been masculine enough for the world? Now it had its purpose. The love of performing that I had honed as a child to make my mother laugh? Now it would take its rightful place on the global stage.

\*\*\*

... I liked the way it sounded—the house of hidden meanings. Or maybe it was because of how I saw myself—as a detective of the universe, searching the house for clues, trying to understand what it all meant.

\*\*\*



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# Allyson Lunny



Christian rights movement, like with Anita Bryant and her crusade that really affected me, motivated me, angered me, and pushed me to the idea of the importance of protecting civil rights.”

Originally, Allyson went to U of T for a BA in Semiotics followed by a BAA in photography at Ryerson/TMU, but as the years unfolded, she realized more than anything she wanted to engage with societal issues at a higher level—even considering getting into law before deciding on becoming an academic. “To affect social change was my motivating drive. The idea of shaping and growing young minds,” she expressed. “I started teaching as a contract sessional instructor in my MA as a mature student in my 30s. The first course I taught was lesbian theory and history at Western, and then I went on to do my second MA and my PhD.”

The most rewarding part of teaching is when she can see the ‘lights’ turn on in students who start to develop their thinking process at an elevated critical level. “Students have written letters and emails over these last 20 years—thoughts and expressions that they’ve shared with me, like what an impact I had on their university career, and how the course they had taken with me really shaped their next step.” Reflecting on her career in length, she summed up in six words, “To know I’ve made a difference.”

When asked about her thoughts on the current climate of the world as someone who teaches hate crime, hate speech, law and sexuality, Allyson relayed, “It’s hard to teach that subject matter, particularly when the world is so agitated around those subjects. Anybody who teaches something that is relevant, current, and social justice-oriented, can’t help but be affected by what’s going on. Those areas seem to be the most under attack, and in a time of precarious transition.”

On the flip side, Allyson motivates her students to make good and progressive changes. “They will be the next generation of lawyers and policymakers, and perhaps police officers and teachers. If they can approach these topics with intelligence, empathy, an open mind, and an open heart, then I think there will be a positive result from that.”

Associate Professor [Allyson Lunny](#) was born and raised in Montreal. In recent years, Allyson has held the prestigious Endowed Chair in Criminology & Criminal Justice at St. Thomas University. In the ‘70s she moved with the Anglo exodus from Quebec to Toronto. She’s been teaching at York University for over two decades now. In 2017, she published a book, [Debating Hate Crime: Language, Legislatures, and the Law in Canada](#).

“Moments in history influenced my life; the civil rights movement, for example, I remember as a kid in the early 60s, watching the police brutality and the racism on TV—that was a defining moment for me. In my teen years, as I was starting to grapple with my sexuality, out came the

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# A KODAK MOMENT

## Cassidy Civiero

BY BOYD KODAK

Photo by Jack Major



**Cassidy Civiero** is an experimental filmmaker who believes anything is possible, both in life and on screen. His latest films, *Return to Nature* and *Ethical Consumption*, were funded by the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund and the Voices With Impact production grant. He is the writer and co-executive producer of the series *You're My Hero*, and the writer and co-creator of the series *Sweet As Sugar*. Cassidy works hard so he can chill hard—with long contemplative walks, baths in the dark, readin' books, emotional journaling, and snuggling up in bed, interspersed between his fearless filmmaking efforts.

**Boyd Kodak** — What have you been doing over the last year?

**Cassidy Civiero** — I've been really focused on my professional life and enjoying my transition after starting testosterone in September 2023. I've also been taking care of my body in a way I never had previously, with a consistent regimen at the gym, sleeping well, and eating in a way that's good for my gut.

**BK** — Congratulations, that's a lot happening, and all towards achieving positive goals. During that time, which was the most exciting event for you?

**CC** — Getting into development on my feature films. Writing and directing long format work has been a dream of mine for a long time! I've found some incredible partners who are supporting me, sharing the load, and challenging me to

step up and create the best work I possibly can. I wake up every day grateful for that.

**BK** — Wonderful, we'll look forward to the outcome. What are you looking forward to next year?

**CC** — Levelling up my gardening game. I've got some wonderful perennials that are not going to let me down, but beyond that I'm always battling weeds and my own flowy nature. I just want to plant whatever, whenever, wherever... and that's not really conducive to a flourishing, diverse range of flowers and vegetables.

**BK** — That's cool, you can grow healthy foods for your improved diet. Where can we see your work?

**CC** — A good place to start is my website, [www.cassidyciviero.com](http://www.cassidyciviero.com)

**BK** — Great, will do! Future plans?

**CC** — I'm at a point in my life where I'm open to anything. I've been pushing for my projects for a long time, and now I feel like I can sit back a bit—keep taking care of my mental health and trust that everything will happen where and when it's meant to.

**BK** — That sounds excellent. Any message you would like to put out there?

**CC** — Healing is a lengthy, messy, confusing process. Trust that process. As long as you are looking inward and being honest with yourself, you're learning something.

**BK** — Very true. Finish the following question for us, "If I could have 3 wishes, they would be..."

**CC** — To transform our relationship to the planet; (to honour earth). To transform systems of public funding, funnelling significantly more support to healthcare, schools, housing, and inclusive programming; (to take care of each other). To have a big birthday party at age 90, surrounded by loved ones, with delicious food, like my Nona just did; (Happy Birthday, Giulia!).

**BK** — Perfect, I hope it all comes true.

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



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## TRANSGENDER VOCAL COACHING WITH SOPHIE B. EDWARDS



Sophie provides her coaching over Zoom, and as a result, has helped English-speaking transwomen from eight different countries. Taking an intuitive approach, she focuses on building greater awareness and understanding of how vocal muscles work, and how to access and control the changes in one's voice. Not many people have paid attention to controlling their voices since they began to speak as infants—however, Sophie advises that with guidance and practice, taking control of your voice, finding out what it can do, and discovering a new way to speak is entirely achievable.

Normally, a client will book a 45-minute session every two weeks. During these sessions, one can begin to understand the mechanics of how their voice and muscles feel as they do various exercises.

Sophie offers her services on a sliding scale, recognizing that there are many who are already facing significant financial disadvantages as transwomen, especially in obtaining employment if their voice doesn't match their presentation.

"Every girl thinks she's uniquely unqualified for voice training! It's true that everyone has a different inherent ability to modify their voice; but everyone can do something. It's like singing in that way. Not everyone is going to be Whitney Houston, but anyone can learn how to sing better than they currently do. In my practice, the only people I avoid working with are people with speech disorders, and that's only because I'm not really qualified to navigate around them—a speech therapist would be better there."

"It's important to have realistic goals as well. You're probably not going to sound like a Disney Princess, but that doesn't mean you can't still find a feminine voice that suits you. But in general, so long as you approach voice training with a positive attitude, you can see improvement."

Contact Sophie via email: [sbedwards5@gmail.com](mailto:sbedwards5@gmail.com).

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



Gender dysphoria is a common issue for transgender women. One thing that can be particularly triggering is that no matter how much effort one has put into presentation, they still get misgendered when they speak, either in person or on the phone.

Speech-Language Pathology Assistant [Sophie Edwards](#) is a professional transgender voice feminization training coach; a transgender woman herself who lives in Toronto with her girlfriend and their five cats, Bean, Ella, Midna, Charlie, and Cinder.

Sophie began her transition in 2018 – she has worked hard to feminize her voice and now offers voice feminization coaching as a service. Clients describe her sessions as digestible, thorough, easy to follow (even if you don't understand the mechanics of voice), and fun. Sophie brings a sense of care, compassion, and a deep, personal understanding of the frustration and hurt that can come from gender dysphoria to her practice.

Sophie (S.B.) Edwards is also a Canadian writer and historian. She is the host of *We Have Always Existed*, a video essay series that explores the rich history of transgender people in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East.



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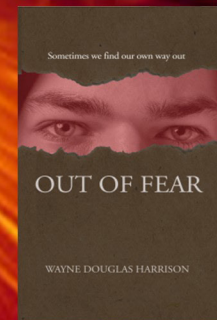
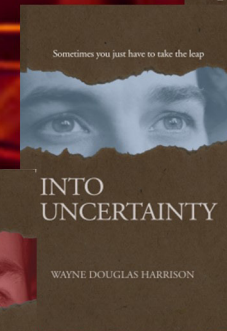
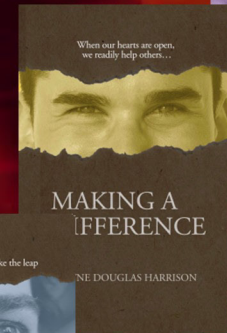
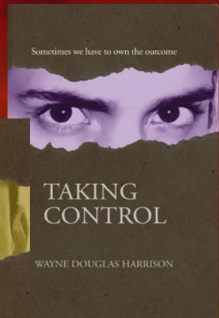
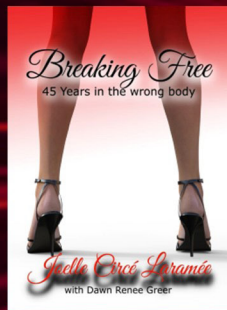
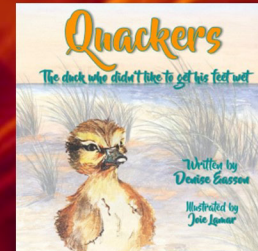
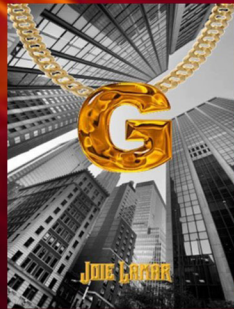
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By Sherry Sylvain



By Sherry Sylvain

## LOCAL PICKS

### C.U. Next Tuesday - Open Stage

**Tuesdays; from 9:00 p.m. to midnight**

Bring your sheet music or pick a song from their song books. Musical theatre & jazz standards encouraged but you may sing what you like.

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

### Open Stage Cabaret

**Tuesdays; from 10:00 p.m.**

An open stage event hosted by a stunning array of leading queens with special guests. DJ Cory Activate. Glorious star-making machinery, and big fun. Arrive early to sign up as a performer.

**Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto**  
[woodystoronto.com](http://woodystoronto.com)

### Hump Night Honeys

**Wednesdays; from 10:00 p.m.**

Hosts Carlotta Carlisle and Katinka Kature welcome an array of special guest stars with DJ Chris Steinbach and Toronto's Sweetest Staff.

**Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto**  
[woodystoronto.com](http://woodystoronto.com)

### Jock Night Thursdays

**Thursdays; from 8:00 p.m.**

Hosted by Morgan James and sponsored by [JockstrapCentral.com](http://JockstrapCentral.com). Meet the newest entertainers, and existing favourites in the field of male striptease. A male-only venue. Located above Flash.

**Cock Bar, 461 Church St., Second Floor, Toronto**  
[www.flashonchurch.com](http://www.flashonchurch.com)

### James Quigley - Piano Bar

**Saturdays; from 7:00 p.m.**

Crazy, interactive, fun, live piano bar show! Bring your charts, lead sheets, or choose from the on-site list of options and sing your heart out. No cover.

**Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto**  
[jamesthemusician.com](http://jamesthemusician.com)

### Hollywoody to Broadway Show

**Sundays; from 6:00 p.m.**

Hilarious host Georgie Girl welcomes a selection of guest performers every Sunday evening to serve up your favourite hits of stage and screen, and more.

**Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto**  
[woodystoronto.com](http://woodystoronto.com)

### Legends Job Fair

**April 20, 21**

Legends Music has many food & beverage positions available. Want to work with them? Come on down to their job fair. Apply at [legends.net/careers](http://legends.net/careers), and search for Budweiser Stage in the Job Openings tab.

**Budweiser Stage, 909 Lakeshore Blvd. W., Toronto**  
[www.legends.net/careers](http://www.legends.net/careers)



### Reality Gays: "If You Can Dream It" Tour

**April 21; 7:00 p.m.**

Jake Anthony and Matt Marr are two Southern Queens who absolutely love TLC's 90 Day Fiancé. If you've been looking for your gay BFFs to dish this show... well, you're welcome.

**The Opera House, 735 Queen St. E., Toronto**  
[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)



### Greater Toronto Art

**Through July 28; check website for gallery hours**

Presenting 25 artists, duos, and collectives, this is a project that challenges the notion of individualism and focuses instead on the 'interconnectedness' of individuals within a larger social fabric.

**Museum Of Contemporary Art Toronto, 158 Sterling Rd., Toronto**  
[moca.ca](http://moca.ca)

### All Things Equal: The Life and Trials of Ruth Bader Ginsberg

**April 26; 8:00 p.m.**

Supreme Court Justice "RBG" welcomes a friend of the family to her cozy chambers to convey, over the course of ninety fascinating and often funny minutes, a sense of her life and its many trials: losing her mother the day before she graduated as valedictorian of her high school... being one of only nine young women studying law at Harvard, fighting for women's rights in the 1970s, and taking courageous stands for human rights as a voice of reason.

**Living Arts Centre, 4141 Living Arts Drive, Mississauga**  
[livingartscentre.eventue.net](http://livingartscentre.eventue.net)

### Bring On The Flowers - Jock Auction and Drag Show

**April 26; 9:00 p.m.**

Hosted by Empress 35 Rachele Valois and Emperor 35 David Valois. They have four sexy models for you to bid on live and to have the chance to win the jockstrap they are wearing – plus, a raffle for an additional chance to win one of their jockstraps. Sponsored by Jockstrap Central. There will also be a curated drag show.

**The Well, 487 Church St., Toronto**  
[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### TICOT Charity Brunch

**April 28, May 26; 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Play bingo for great prizes while raising funds for the TICOT charities of choice, and enjoy great entertainment, too.

**The Well, 487 Church St., Toronto**  
[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### Stars On Ice

**May 3; 7:30 p.m.**

Straight from the World Championships, Canada's own Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier, Madeline Schizas, and Deanna Stellato-Dudek & Maxime Deschamps in a star-studded cast featuring Elvis Stojko, Patrick Chan, Keegan Messing, and more.

**Scotiabank Arena, 40 Bay St., Toronto**  
[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)

### Kansas

**May 4; 8:30 p.m.**

With a legendary career spanning five decades, Kansas has firmly established itself as one of America's iconic classic rock bands. This "garage band" released their debut album in 1974 and have gone on to sell more than 30 million albums worldwide.

**Massey Hall, 15 Shuter St., Toronto**  
[masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/kansas](http://masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/kansas)

### Bravo Niagara - Hayato Sumino's Canadian Solo Debut

**May 9; 7:30 p.m.**

In addition to performing concerts in Japan and abroad, he also writes, arranges, and performs his own music under the name of "Cateen" on YouTube, with over 1.2 million subscribers and 150 million views (and counting).

**Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, 6 Garamond Ct., Toronto**  
[www.bravoniagara.org/hayato-sumino](http://www.bravoniagara.org/hayato-sumino)

### TICOT Charity Bingo

**May 12, June 9; 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Join TICOT for an afternoon of fun and friendship. Proceeds go to the Reign 37 Charities of Choice.

**Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto**  
[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### Colin Stetson - Toronto Jazz Fest

**May 16; 8:00 p.m.**

Colin Stetson was born and raised in Michigan, spending a decade in San Francisco and Brooklyn honing his formidable talents as a horn player, before eventually settling in Montreal in 2007. Over the years he has worked extensively, live and in studio, with a wide range of bands and musicians.

**The Axis Club, 722 College St., Toronto**  
[admitone.com/events/colin-stetson-toronto-9279374](http://admitone.com/events/colin-stetson-toronto-9279374)



### SOS - The ABBA Experience

**June 22; 7:00 p.m.**

Delighting audiences and playing to sold-out shows everywhere, SOS - The ABBA Experience recreates the music of ABBA almost note for note from the original albums with no backing tracks.

**The Opera House, 735 Queen St. E., Toronto**  
[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)





By Sherry Sylvain



By Sherry Sylvain

## ROAD TRIPS

### Drag Show Bingo

April 21; 6:00 p.m.

Welcome to their most fun drag night! They are excited to bring to you a live, intimate, fun night of Drag Show Bingo! Drag, bingo, and prizes in an interactive environment.

Brass Monkey Local, 67 St. Paul St., St. Catharines

[www.tickettailor.com/events/troyboyentertainment/1189167](http://www.tickettailor.com/events/troyboyentertainment/1189167)

### Jann Arden and Rick Mercer: The Will They or Won't They Tour

April 27; 8:00 p.m.

This national tour features two of Canada's most notable voices in a free-wheeling, unscripted, unrehearsed, and unrestrained discussion that will have audiences cheering.

Centre In The Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener  
[centreinthesquare.com/event](http://centreinthesquare.com/event)



## ETSY Spring Market

May 4; 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Proudly presented by The Scented Market, join in at the Etsy Waterloo Region Spring Market, featuring 75+ local artisans. Admission: \$2, cash only at the door, but 16 and under are free. Pick up a raffle card at the door, purchase 3 items, and enter to win a prize.

Waterloo-Rim Park, 2001 University Ave. E., Waterloo  
[www.facebook.com/Etsywaterlooregion](http://www.facebook.com/Etsywaterlooregion)

## Stars On Ice

May 5; 4:00 p.m.

Straight from the World Championships, Canada's own Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier, Madeline Schizas, and Deanna Stellato-Dudek & Maxime Deschamps in a star-studded cast featuring Elvis Stojko, Patrick Chan, Keegan Messing, and more.

Budweiser Gardens, 99 Dundas St., London  
[budweisergardens.venue.net](http://budweisergardens.venue.net)



## Spring Durham Craft Beer Festival

May 11

A sampling event of Ontario craft beers, ciders, and local distillers. Durham's original Craft Beer Festival since 2013, has moved to an indoor location to shelter you from the elements.

Children's Arena, 155 Arena St., Oshawa  
[www.oshawatourism.com/event-details/durham-craft-beer-festival](http://www.oshawatourism.com/event-details/durham-craft-beer-festival)

## Queen: It's A Kinda Magic

May 11; 7:30 p.m.

Painstaking attention has been paid to all the music – the iconic voice of Mercury, the amazing guitar solos of May and the groundbreaking Rock harmonies. And with state-of-the-art sound and lighting and authentic costumes, this is as close as you'll ever get to the real thing.

Pickering Casino Resort, 888 Durham Live Ave., Pickering  
[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)



## DJ Dallas - Mega Pride Launch Party

May 25; 8:00 p.m.

Inviting all the world to join The Tri-Cities (Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo) as they launch Pride week '24. DJ Dallas invites you to come, wear your rainbow colours, and bring your fabulous energy.

The Cambridge Newfoundland Club, 1500 Dunbar Rd., Cambridge  
[musicandfriendsdanceparties@hotmail.com](mailto:musicandfriendsdanceparties@hotmail.com)



## Jimbo's Drag Circus World Tour

May 30; 8:00 p.m.

The weirdest show on earth starring the many outrageous characters of Jimbo's twisted imagination – from RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars 8 and season one of Canada's Drag Race.

Algonquin Commons Theatre, 1385 Woodroffe Ave., Ottawa  
[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)

## Jimbo's Drag Circus World Tour

May 31; 8:00 p.m.

The weirdest show on earth starring the many outrageous characters of Jimbo's twisted imagination – from RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars 8 and Season One of Canada's Drag Race.

Centre In The Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener  
[kwtickets.venue.net](http://kwtickets.venue.net)

Events Editor, 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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