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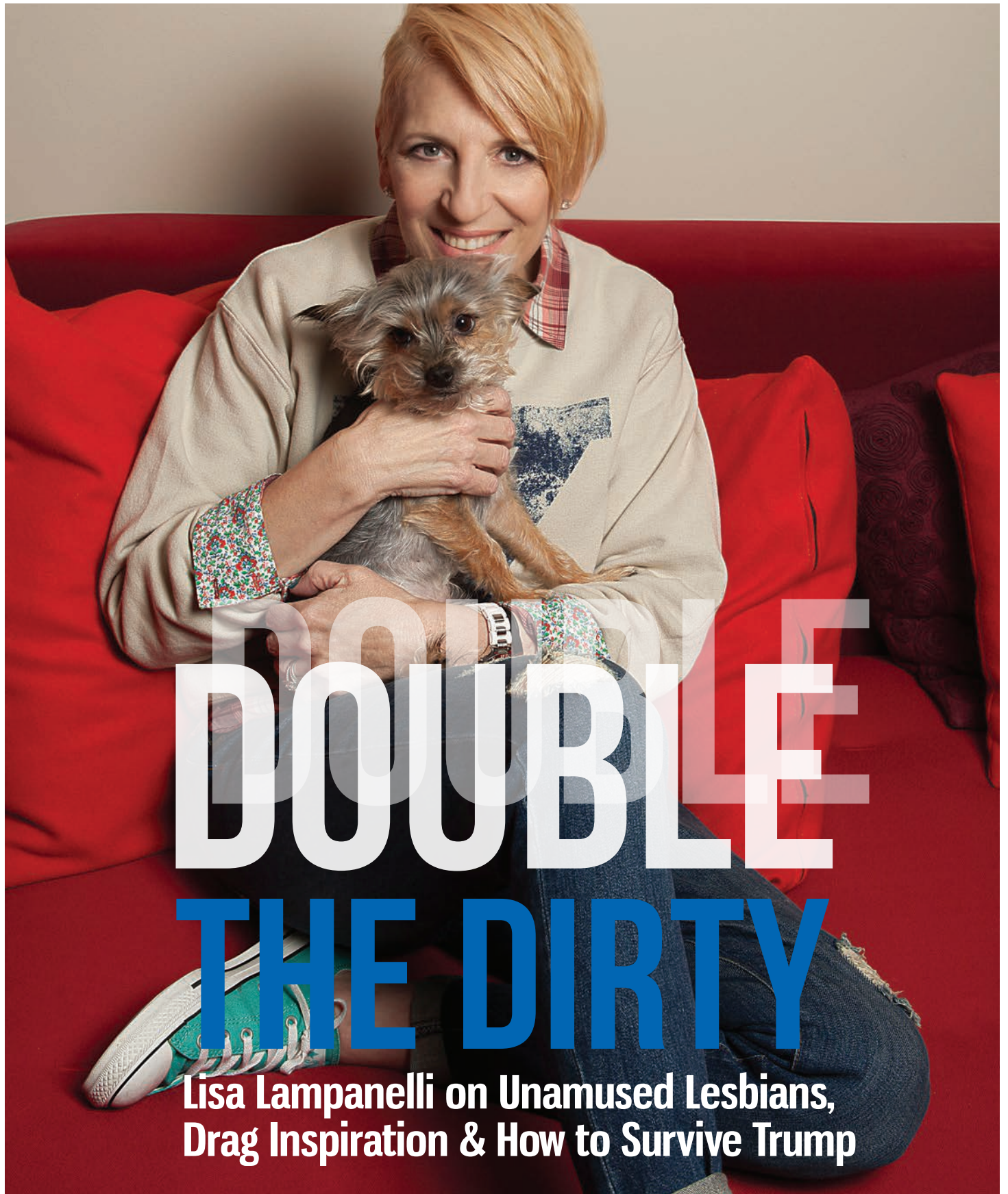
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Lisa Lampanelli on Unamused Lesbians,
Drag Inspiration & How to Survive Trump

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NEWS

Ferndale Mayor Dave Coulter Shares What He's Excited About in 2017

Mayor Dave Coulter is ready to take on 2017. In an exclusive interview with Patch, the mayor shared what he's excited to see in Ferndale in the New Year along with his own personal New Year's resolution.

As far as what's at the forefront of Ferndale's agenda for 2017? Breaking ground on a downtown parking deck. Coulter told Patch "Maintaining our economic prosperity is always important and a huge project to help us do that is going to be our new parking deck downtown. We have had a parking shortage for a number of years and the city and the Downtown Development Authority are working together to finally break ground this year on a development project. It's taken us a while to get to this point and it's going to happen this year."

As for when the shovels will hit the ground? Coulter says "Our time frame right now is late spring. It's more important to do it right than to do it fast. We'll do our best to stick to the schedule."

Another key Ferndale initiative for 2017? Continuing to build trust between the people and police of Ferndale. Coulter explains "A challenge that is not unique to Ferndale but communities across the country are facing is the relationship between our residents and our police departments. It has changed over the years and we've seen examples in other cities where that relationship has broken down. One of our focuses this year will be on our brand new community policing model which we kicked off last year but will continue to make great strides this year. A community policing model is a fancy way of saying we want to strengthen the relationship between our residents and visitors and our police officers."

That's the ultimate goal to increase the trust."

Sgt. Barron Brown of the Ferndale Police Department will play an integral part in boosting trust. Coulter says "Sgt. Barron



Brown was the first major part of our community police initiative. He will spearhead more initiatives designed to increase the trust between the city and our police."

As for Coulter's personal resolution for 2017? A very necessary work-life balance. Coulter shares "My personal goal will be to try to have a better work-life balance so that I remember to include things like exercising, and taking some personal time to recharge the batteries. I have a tendency to be a workaholic and I'm going to work on that balance this year."

He is a certifiable workaholic. In addition to serving as the mayor of Ferndale, Coulter also has a full-time job at the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation, where he helps give away money to programs that help sick kids. Coulter says, "A lot of people don't realize that I have a full-time day job. There's an expectation as mayor that you're available 24 hours a day to respond to people. I try to be as responsive as I can. I don't work in city hall during the day. Fortunately, we have a great city manager, April Lynch, who handles that. I really enjoy my job during the day and at night as mayor. It's a very rewarding thing I get to do."

The mayor will be enjoying a little personal time this Christmas. Christmas is Coulter's favorite holiday, and he is ready for the Christmas countdown, "My house is decorated, the tree is up and I love to entertain and have people over and celebrate Christmas with me."

Join LGBT Detroit for HTJ Community Meeting

BY BTL STAFF

LGBT Detroit announced it will open up the Hotter Than July planning process to the community on Jan. 25 at 6 p.m. This year's HTJ theme is "I Am Because We Are."

"To strive to make this year's celebration better, we are expanding community involvement," said Curtis Lipscomb, executive director for LGBT Detroit. "Therefore, the input and resources of volunteers are a major impact to the success of the event."

This is LGBT Detroit's first meeting of 2017

at the Community Health Awareness Group at 1300 W. Fort St. in Detroit.

The organization welcomes presentations, proposals, and ideas that will build the LGBTQA+ movement.

"We pride ourselves on creating safe, brave spaces for our community members to be heard and visible," said Charlie Dickerson, program coordinator for LGBT Detroit. "So grab your pen, paper, and resources, and be ready to share with us how you will support in making this July the hottest it's ever been."

For more information, visit LGBT Detroit on its Facebook page www.facebook.com/lgbtdetroit.

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Gospel Singer Gay Bashes, Gets Dropped from 'The Ellen Show'

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Ironically, the hoopla all surrounds a song called "I See a Victory." The song, from the film "Hidden Figures," was recorded by gospel singer Kim Burrell and Pharrell "Happy" Williams.

The two were scheduled to perform the song on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" Thursday, Jan. 5. But that was before video of Burrell recently preaching a blatantly anti-gay message surfaced on the web. The video was first posted to YouTube on Dec. 30 and quickly went viral.

"That perverted homosexual spirit, and the spirit of delusion and confusion, it has deceived many men and women," Burrell told the congregation at her Love & Liberty Fellowship Church in Houston, Texas. "You as a man, you open your mouth and take a man's penis in your face — you are perverted. You are a woman and will shake your face in another's woman's breast — you are perverted ... it has come into our church and it has embarrassed the kingdom of God."

As a clip of the sermon made the rounds of social media, reaction was swift. Williams was among the first to tweet a response. It did not mention Burrell specifically but was obviously directed at her comments.

"I condemn hate speech of any kind," Williams tweeted on New Year's Eve. "There is no room in this world for any kind of prejudice. My greatest hope is for inclusion and love for all humanity in 2017 and beyond."

Janelle Monae, who stars in the film, retweeted Williams and added a lengthy statement on Instagram.

"I shouldn't even have to post this as you guys should already know where I stand but if you do not please know I unequivocally repudiate ANY AND ALL hateful comments against the LGBTQ community," the statement read in part. "In addition, I feel we all belong to the same community, a shared community called humanity. And today and tomorrow and the next day I will continue to stand with other like-minded people who condemn any and all statements and actions that would seek to deny the basic humanity of our fellow brothers and sisters."

Soon social media carried the controversy to all corners of the globe and a call for action rang out. Thousands of people signed Change.org petitions calling on Williams to refuse to perform with Burrell and asking DeGeneres to cancel her appearance on the show all together.

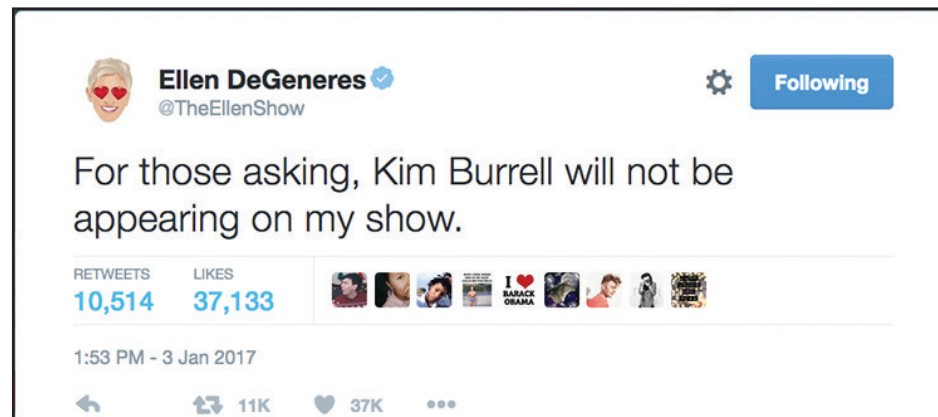
It didn't take long for DeGeneres to respond. "For those who are asking, Kim Burrell will not be appearing on my show," she tweeted on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

The message was succinct and pleasing to many — except, of course, for Burrell. She posted a video to Facebook Live trying to explain her way out of the situation. But she did not express any remorse for the statements she made.

"I never said all gays were going to hell," Burrell said in the video. "I never said 'LGBT' ... I said 'SIN.' To every person who is dealing with the homosexual spirit, that has it, I love you and God loves you but God hates the sin in you and me — anything that is against the nature of God. I make no excuses or apologies.



Kim Burrell and Pharrell "Happy" Williams.



My love is as pure as it comes."

But Burrell's love was not strong enough to keep her from losing her radio show in the wake of the scandal. Her show, called "Bridging the Gap," was broadcast on Texas Southern University's KTSU radio station. The station pulled the plug on the show last Wednesday, the day before Burrell was originally scheduled to appear on "Ellen."

"The Kim Burrell show is no longer airing as part of KTSU Radio programming," the station said in a statement.

Local LGBT Figures Applaud DeGeneres' Decision

Last Thursday's show went on without Burrell and off without a hitch. The song from the film did not get sung but instead Williams and Ellen had a nice little sit down to talk about the film — and about diversity and inclusion. Social media appeared to have worked for once as it was designed to and a positive end result came about.

Roland Smith of Farmington Hills said he

"It's interesting that Kim would even appear on Ellen's show given her beliefs," Schultz said. "I guess she don't mind going on a lesbian's show if there's something in it for her."

Rev. Roland Stringfellow of Metropolitan Community Church-Detroit applauded DeGeneres for refusing to allow herself or her show to be used in such a manner. He also had said that the whole "love the sinner, hate the sin" song and dance is a smokescreen designed to allow people to put down gays and lesbians in the name of God.

"When people use that line — and they love to use it — they really don't mean it," Stringfellow explained. "This whole concept of trying to love me but hate my sin ... how then does someone who is condemning show any form of love or compassion or understanding? And I think that's the takeaway. It's not even so much around you accepting me, but do you even recognize my common humanity and what I have in connection with you? Often times they do not.

"They see us as outsiders and enemies and people worthy of condemnation," Stringfellow continued. "Clearly that is the stance she took with her sermon: trying to be godly. What she ended up doing was simply turning away so many people ... I don't believe God was pleased at all by a message such as that, not only by Kim Burrell but by any minister who would chose to condemn whole communities in their sermon."

Rev. Dr. Selma Massey of Whosoever Ministry in Detroit saw it much the same way.

"Unfortunately, Ms. Burrell has not bothered to read the entire Bible, which says that no one can curse whom God has blessed," Massey said. "Also, clearly she has not read the fine print in the Bible that says, 'Judge not lest ye be judged.' Judging is a sin so she would be condemning herself."

There are some, of course, who feel that DeGeneres should have let Burrell come on her show, that her appearance could have produced a teachable moment. But Sarah Reed of Farmington said she believed the TV host had schooled her by not letting her on her show.

"Ellen has been such a force behind the LGBTQ community for so long," said Reed. "To have Kim on her show and just ask her why she did it would have been a slap on the wrist. Something needed to be taken away from Kim that would leave a mental mark. I believe that Pharrell and Ellen both acted in the best way possible. She needs to be left with a sting as big as or greater than the one she gave us. She needs to understand that freedom of speech, although completely her right, can have consequences that might have prolonged effects."

felt compelled to send DeGeneres an email asking her not to let Burrell on her show.

"I'm just so happy," Smith said of DeGeneres' decision. "I am convinced it was the right thing to do. I commend Ellen. I think the mere fact that she said that Kim Burrell is not welcome on her show sends a message. She did the right thing.

"How dare Kim Burrell call me a pervert and then expect to go on 'The Ellen Show,' who is a widely accepted lesbian woman, and then preach her hate," Smith continued. "That's very hypocritical of her."

Bill Schultz of Grosse Pointe agreed.

Detroit Minister to Give Benediction at Trump Inauguration

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

DETROIT – When reality TV star Donald Trump is sworn in Jan. 20 as the nation’s 45th president, a high-profile Detroit minister will share the dais with him. Bishop Wayne T. Jackson, pastor of Great Faith Ministries International, a church that preaches prosperity gospel, has been tapped to give the benediction at the inauguration ceremony.

At first glance the selection is not surprising and is something of an obvious quid pro quo.

Jackson, who owns a television station called the Impact Network and lives in a sprawling 39,000 square-home in Palmer Woods — reportedly one of the largest mansions in Detroit — invited Trump to appear at his church in September of 2016 while Trump was campaigning in the state.

It was one of Trump’s first direct appeals to African-American voters and it possibly contributed to Trump’s shocking win in the state.

For his turn in the national spotlight, Jackson told WDIV-TV his benediction will be a message of “love, unity, togetherness and healing.”

“It is a mind blowing experience to be giving the benediction after everything is said and done,” Jackson said of his role in the inaugural proceedings. “I’m pretty much the last voice.”

Other faith leaders taking part in the ceremony include Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Catholic archbishop of New York; the Rev. Franklin Graham of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center; the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference; and Pastor Paula White of the New Destiny Christian Center.

“Since the first inaugural ceremony, our leaders have paid tribute to the blessings of liberty that have been bestowed upon our country and its people,” inaugural committee Chairman Tom Barrack said in a statement. “I am pleased to announce that a diverse set of faith leaders will offer readings and prayers at the swearing-in of President-elect Trump and honor the vital role religious faith plays in our multicultural, vibrant nation.”

Local Faith Leader Responds

Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow, senior minister and teacher of Metropolitan Community Church-Detroit, said he is

“Bishop Jackson’s participation in the inauguration says that he supports the platform of Donald Trump, which has been anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant; just anti-, anti-, anti-.”

- Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow, senior minister and teacher of Metropolitan Community Church-Detroit

disappointed by Jackson’s decision to be a part of the inauguration.

“In the larger scheme of things, I guess it’s really not that surprising that Bishop Jackson is speaking,” said Stringfellow. “Even within the civil rights movement there were so many other ministers who stood against the movement. They were more in favor of ‘let’s go along to get along.’ Clearly we are on a trajectory as a nation toward greater respect and inclusion for people. Bishop Jackson’s participation in the inauguration says that he supports the platform of Donald Trump, which has been anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant; just anti-, anti-, anti-.”

Though Jackson was careful in September to say he was not endorsing Trump, Stringfellow said his participation in the inauguration ceremony clearly shows his support for the president-elect.

“If Bishop Jackson feels that his participation doesn’t show agreement with Trump’s policies, I would beg to differ,” Stringfellow said. “It gives a sign of approval from a religious leader that this is something that religion approves of and I believe historical Christian teaching does not. The tactics that Donald Trump has used have definitely flown in the face of showing love and compassion to the stranger and the least of these.”

Trump, of course, has a long and complicated history with the African-American community dating back to the 1970s when he was sued for housing discrimination by the U.S. Department of Justice. More recently, while debating Hillary Clinton, Trump called for cities across the country to expand stop-and-frisk policies to combat crime. The stop-and-frisk policy has long come under fire for being a form of racial profiling unfairly targeting black and Latino men.



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Week 2	<p>CLARINET CONCERTO Leonard Slatkin, conductor Kimberly Kaloyanides Kennedy, violin Hai-Xin Wu, violin Johanna Yarbrough, horn Ralph Skiano, clarinet Fri., Jan. 27 at 10:45 a.m. & 8 p.m. Overture to <i>La Clemenza del Tito</i> Concertone Horn Concerto No. 3 Clarinet Concerto</p>	<p>SYMPHONY 40 Leonard Slatkin, conductor Robert Williams, bassoon David Everson, horn Sat., Jan. 28 at 8 p.m. Sun., Jan. 29 at 3 p.m. Overture to <i>Così fan Tutte</i> Bassoon Concerto Horn Concerto No. 4 Symphony No. 40</p>
Week 3	<p>“NACHTMUSIK” Leonard Slatkin, conductor Thu., Feb. 2 at 7:30 p.m. Fri., Feb. 3 at 10:45 a.m. <i>Eine kleine Nachtmusik</i> Symphony No. 35, “Haffner” Overture to <i>The Abduction from the Seraglio</i> Symphony No. 36, “Linz”</p>	<p>JUPITER SYMPHONY Leonard Slatkin, conductor Sharon Sparrow, flute Yolanda Kondonassis, harp Fri., Feb. 3 at 8 p.m. Sat., Feb. 4 at 8 p.m. Symphony No. 38, “Prague” Concerto for Flute and Harp Symphony No. 41, “Jupiter”</p>

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Former State Senator Buzz Thomas Joins EQMI Board

DETROIT – As the LGBT and allied communities of Michigan continue to build the path towards expanding statewide nondiscrimination laws, Equality Michigan and Equality Michigan Action Network announced Friday the addition of three new members to the board of directors who will strengthen that work.



Buzz Thomas

EQMI added former state senator Buzz Thomas, a public affairs professional with more than 20 years of experience. He is known for his vast network of government relationships according to the press release.

Thomas spent 14 years in the Michigan Legislature, including serving as Democratic Floor Leader in the Senate and as Democratic Leader in the House. He was Co-Chairman of the 2008 Michigan Presidential campaign of Barack Obama.

In 2013 he founded and Co-Chaired Turnaround Detroit, the Super PAC credited with electing Mike Duggan Detroit's mayor.

"The political fight for LGBT rights is more important than ever and I'm honored to join an organization that is leading that work in Michigan," said Thomas. "I look forward to using my experience at navigating the rough and tumble world of policy and politics to help make equality under the law a reality."

EQMI also added David Worthams, Policy Director for the Michigan Bankers Association and Kalamazoo County Road Commissioner, and Ronald Moore, retired corporate and nonprofit executive.

Worthams is a legislative and public policy specialist with more than 15 years' experience in the legislative arena. He has served as a Constituent Relations Director for former Congressman Nick Smith, as a policy advisor to former Michigan Speakers' Rick Johnson and Craig DeRoche, as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Michigan State Sen. Jud Gilbert, and as a Legislative Associate for the Michigan Municipal League. Since 2013 he has served on the Kalamazoo County Road Commission and was appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder in the same year to the Michigan Board of Real Estate Appraisers.

Moore joins the board of the Equality Michigan Action Network with over 30 years of experience as an executive at Hewlett Packard and Safe House. His wealth of expertise in nonprofit management comes from both his executive experience and his board leadership for 10 organizations including Georgia Equality, Out and Equal and the Equality Federation. He is a founding member of Faith Leaders of African Descent, which is dedicated to fighting homophobia among places of worship for LGBTQ African-Americans.

"I know from my decades of leading this work with various groups all across the country that it takes a strong organization to accomplish something as significant as updating nondiscrimination laws," said Moore, who now lives in Detroit. "Thankfully, Equality Michigan is serious about building the strength to get this work done and I'm flattered that they asked for my help. I am so happy to be back home to help make this a reality."

Currently serving on the Equality Michigan board is: Dave Wait, chair; Michael Rowady, vice chair; Sean Rhaesa, secretary; Dr. Mira Krishnan, treasurer; Jim Murray, member-at-large; Joy Geng, member; Seth Davis, member; and S. Kerene Moore, member.

Currently serving on the Equality Michigan Action Network Board is: State Sen. Rebekah Warren, chair; Gary Reed, vice chair; Rhaesa, secretary; Krishnan, treasurer; Tim Atkinson, member-at-large; Clif Levin, member; and Chuck Otis, member.



Women will be protesting all across the country Jan. 21.

Women's March On Lansing Jan. 21

BY BTL STAFF

Speak up against hate and intolerance on Jan. 21 during the Women's March on Lansing, the sister event to the Women's March on Washington the same day.

The goal of this march from 1-3 p.m. on the State Capitol steps is to be all inclusive. It will be a peaceful demonstration in opposition to the wave of hate crimes and violence, and threats of official discrimination that have proliferated following the election. Allies from any religion, of any race, of all sexual orientations and genders, and of all abilities will stand together as a united front. Sexism, bigotry, racism, hate, or intolerance will not be accepted from the elected officials in attendance.

This includes speakers Gretchen Whitmer, Gubernatorial Candidate and Michigan Senate Democratic Leader; Lavonia Perryman, Former Chair of the Michigan Democratic Party Black Caucus, Women's Vote Director Michigan Together, and Women of Color 4Hillary Advisory Roundtable; Dizzy Warren, Executive Director of Enroll Michigan; Gretchen Driskell, Former Democratic member of the Michigan House of Representatives; Lisa Brown, Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds, and Former Michigan State Representative; and Barb Byrum, Igham County Clerk, and Former Michigan State Representative. Planned Parenthood Patient Advocate

Jessica Lumbreras will also address attendees.

The Sistrum Women's Choir will perform and the Women Organize Michigan Summit will immediately follow the march at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church where a warming center and child care will be available during the event.

The women rallying are for a Michigan that respects and protects all its citizens, that celebrates diversity and nurtures the human potential in everyone. This includes:

- Amending the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity
- Passing the stalled legislation that would allow no-reason absentee voting
- Changing the way Michigan electoral college votes are awarded from winner-take-all to a proportional allotment. Every vote should count.
- Creating automatic voter-registration tied to state id and driver's license renewal
- Increasing funding and support to our public schools, particularly schools in low-income areas.
- Promote evidence-based practices for Restorative Justice and Behavioral Intervention in schools, and reform / eliminate use of suspension and expulsion to help children learn and grow and to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Welcoming and promoting immigration and refugee resettlement in Michigan

- Justice for Flint and other communities of color that have been victimized by emergency management and governmental neglect and abuse, both in the courts and through providing resources

- Non-partisan redistricting to end the gerrymandered stranglehold of extreme conservatives on state government

- Raising the minimum wage to be a living wage (where 40hrs is well above poverty threshold) and linking minimum wage to cost of living/poverty threshold to ensure it stays that way.

- Protecting and strengthening women's reproductive rights and access to women's health services. Making sure contraception and abortion stay safe and legal, and become more accessible in the state.

- Supporting and encouraging Sanctuary Cities, legislative action that makes Michigan a Sanctuary State

- Criminal justice reform to reduce sentences for nonviolent offenses, and to promote rehabilitation (education, job training and placement, mental health) services both during and after incarceration to end the revolving door.

Support the event by donating online www.gofundme.com/march-on-lansing-1212017. Please register here for the summit here: www.eventbrite.com/e/women-organize-michigan-summit-lansing-tickets-29463596410

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C & N PARTY RENTALS

Connecticut Drops Mississippi Charity from Campaign

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP)—A Mississippi-based charity has been disqualified from receiving donations through the Connecticut state employee annual charitable giving campaign.

Comptroller Kevin Lembo says the Connecticut State Employees' Campaign has notified the American Family Association it was removed after the group refused to provide a copy of its required non-discrimination policy.

State regulations mandate charities that participate in the annual giving campaign have a stated policy of non-discrimination.

A state employee recently asked Lembo's office why the group, known for conducting anti-LGBT boycotts, was among 700 charities that workers can donate to through payroll deductions. That prompted Lembo to investigate the group's practices.

The association says it was approved last spring by the state as a charity. It recently issued an action alert to supporters, claiming Lembo wants the group to "discard Christian beliefs."

Activist Launches 'We Won't Go Back' Equality Movement

LOS ANGELES — Jared Milrad, an award-winning actor, writer, filmmaker, lawyer and activist, has launched We Won't Go Back, a people's movement for Americans of all backgrounds fighting to protect the country's highest ideals of inclusivity, equality, justice and opportunity.

The movement's website provides unique resources for supporters to increase democratic engagement, including more than a dozen prominent nonprofit organizations in need of donations, ways to contact Members of Congress, and a survey that prioritizes the top social issues of participants for future engagement.

"Nov. 8, 2016 was a turning point for our nation," said Milrad. "Millions of Americans are deeply troubled and even frightened by the results, and many wonder if America still has a place for them. We Won't Go Back proves definitely that it does, while providing a crucial space for people of all backgrounds to actively build a more inclusive, hopeful future."

Causes featured on the site include women's rights, immigration reform, LGBTQ rights, climate change, civil liberties, gun safety, animal protection, and many others. A promotional video featuring diverse Americans and influencers is available for viewing online. Connect with likeminded people on the We Won't Go Back Facebook (www.facebook.com/WeWontGoBack) page.

KGLRC Mentorship Program Provides Positive Role Models for LGBTQ Youth

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

As the executive director of the Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, Jay Maddock said he frequently hears from LGBTQ youth that "they don't have positive role models or they don't know adults who can relate to their experiences as an LGBTQ adolescent."

In response, the KGLRC established the Triangle Mentorship Program to help meet the needs of those young people. Maddock said the program, established in 2011, pairs an LGBTQ youth with an LGBTQ adult to provide them with support, resources and a connection to the community.

"What we've seen from youth participating in the program is an increased sense of self-worth, increased confidence and an overall increased positive outlook of their future," he said.

As the director of programs, Michael Cleggs Jr. is responsible for matching mentors and mentees who meet monthly with one another and quarterly with other groups in the program. Enrollment forms are accepted anytime throughout the year.

Since the program began, Maddock said there have been more than 100 participants, most of whom maintain their mentor/mentee relationship for several years.

Like Jonathan Elyea and Manny Tsang. The pair met in 2013 and still hang out today at their leisure. While they have visited places together such as the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, the Renaissance Fair, and self-defense class, their go-to spot is the Grand Traverse Pie Company.

"Talking to Jon provides stability in my life," said Tsang, 16, a self-proclaimed introvert who met Elyea during a time when he said things were "rocky" and he lacked "order."

While in the eighth grade, Tsang admits he wasn't the most socially adept person.

"He was a tough nut to crack. It took a while at first, but I was familiar with Manny's behavior and can totally relate," said Elyea, a 38-year-old graduate from Western Michigan University who lives with his husband, Dave, in Kalamazoo.

"In the same way where I'm not quick



Mentor Jonathan Elyea and mentee Manny Tsang met in 2013 by way of the KGLRC Triangle Mentorship Program. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Elyea

to open up to people I don't know, Manny wasn't either. I understood that it would take time and I didn't really know what to expect," he said, pointing to their hometown of Portage where the population is less diverse.

"Things have gotten a lot better, but it's shocking how little people know about the LGBTQ community."

The pair has successfully navigated the mentorship experience on their own.

"When I was in high school in the '90s, it was like the Dark Ages. There was no internet resource for things if you wanted LGBTQ information. You had to seek it out," said Elyea, who has some older mentors of his own.

"My husband and I hang out with a lot of gay seniors. Aside from being fascinating, it really enriches your life."

Which is what Tsang is quickly learning by spending time with Elyea.

"It's not just about being gay and living, but it's also about being an adult. Just having somebody who understands the problems of being gay in high school that you can talk to about it and relate to," he said.

In his junior year at Portage Northern High School, Tsang said it's "still hard being a gay teen. I stick out. I'm not really the average gay person. I'm kind of friendless and lonely."

The high school offers a gay-straight alliance, but Tsang said it's "not his scene" and his relationship with Elyea has helped make high school "survivable" at this point.

Elyea makes it clear that "we're not dealing with crises. We're just talking about life and where we're at. Manny has a good head on his shoulders. He is way ahead of where I was at his age. My life was different from what Manny is experiencing, but we're here for each other."

Interested LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ adults can email Cleggs at michael@kglrc.org for a registration form. The KGLRC is located at 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo. Visit the center [online](http://www.kglrc.org) www.kglrc.org for more information.



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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Bambi, Roosevelt, JFK, Trump

I recall a New Yorker cartoon that appeared years ago. Picture, if you will: two or three animals are gathered in a sunlit forest. A cute rabbit looks up to a chirpy bird and asks, “Where were you when Bambi’s mother died?”

It’s a lighthearted way of dealing with memory and mortality, gently posing a question we often ask: “Where were you when so-and-so-big-name died (got run over by a car, was kidnapped, held for ransom, was outed as GOP gay)?”

I was 6 when my mom took me to see Walt Disney’s “Bambi.” Like hundreds of kids, I cried during the forest fire animation but was reassured that it was only make-believe.

“Bambi’s mom is safe in Heaven,” she whispered, and I felt secure knowing that there were happy endings in my storybook kingdom. Content, I finished my popcorn treat.

I was 9 when President Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs, Georgia, April, 1945, weeks before World War II ended. Miss Goodall, our patriotic music teacher, made the sad announcement. We sang “God Bless America.”

“I’ll bet Hitler’s happy,” I ventured sagely that night at the dinner table.

“Yes, Charles Jr. But not for very long,” smiled my dad.

When Princess Diana died in 1997 I was staying with friends in Chicago. I joined the queue of mourners signing a British Embassy Memorial Book. Princess Di was the epitome of glamour, a fairy tale princess neglected by an inattentive, media charming Prince Charles.

Her AIDS volunteering and compassion set her apart as someone regally special. “What will become of William and Harry?” I wondered. (They turned out reasonably OK.)

Now 50-plus years later I recall President John F. Kennedy’s assassination. At the time I was working at Wayne State University, returning from lunch to hear unthinkable news.

Coworkers located a portable TV set, and we huddled in shock, watching stark black-

and-white history unfold moment by tragic moment.

Two days later I witnessed in disbelief as Jack Ruby stepped out of a police-cordoned crowd, pistol blasting Lee Harvey Oswald in the stomach.

“Oh, my God. I can’t believe it,” I shouted, shaken, sickened by what I saw. Alone in my off-campus apartment.

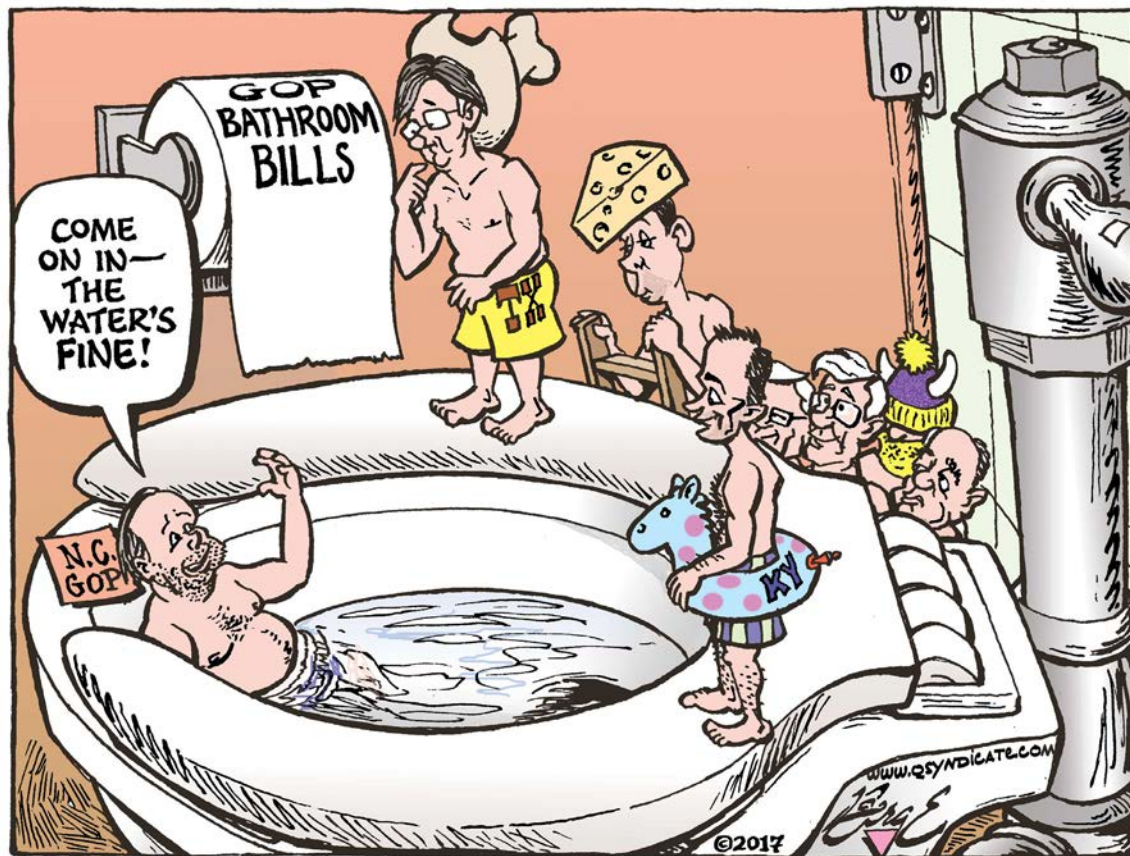
A year after the assassination I sat next to an Army sergeant named Larry at Detroit’s Woodward Bar. He was on leave, stayed the night with me and I gave him my mailing address, promptly forgetting about it. Sobering up the next day.

When Larry was soon discharged, we saw each other often, eventually moving in together. In the course of getting to know Larry, who was very militarily don’t ask/don’t tell, I learned that he’d been in the Kennedy funeral as an Honor Guard.

He’d accompanied and rifle saluted our Beloved President for Arlington burial. A gay sentinel to history. It was in the forest of yesterday. Nov. 22, 1963. The evil onset of long, brutally chilling winters of lies, cover-ups, accusations, eliminations of many, many possible key witnesses.

Speaking of chilling brutal winters: where might you be hiding in life’s petrified political forest when Donald Trump’s sworn in next week? (Who knows? Perhaps as president pro tem.)

Charles@pridesource.com



Viewpoint



The Rising Cost of Hate Speech

OPINION BY JASON A. MICHAEL

By now, many of you have heard about the Kim Burrell scandal and her canceled appearance on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show.” (And if you haven’t, I wrote about it in this very issue and would be happy to fill you in if you visit [INSERT LINK HERE](#)).

As soon as I heard about Burrell’s homophobic rant I took to Twitter and tweeted both Ellen and Pharrell Williams, who had been scheduled to perform a duet with Burrell on Ellen’s show. Then I took to Facebook and asked everyone I knew to do the same. I signed a Change.org petition to similar effect and passed the link on to my friends.

People from all across the country did the same and, thankfully, Ellen listened. She tweeted simply

that Burrell would not be appearing on her show. She offered no additional commentary and released no other statement on the matter.

Now, that was seriously fine with me. It was an appropriate ending to an unfortunate incident. Ellen could now go back to the business of producing a quality television show and Burrell could back to well, quite frankly, I don’t care what she went back to so long as she was gone from my sight.

Others, however, disagreed.

On my Facebook threads, certain friends said they wished Ellen had gone ahead and had Burrell on the show so she could have confronted her. And Huffington Post contributor Jarrett Hill wrote an entire commentary on what he called “the missed opportunity to talk.” He felt that Ellen could have created a safe space for dialogue that could eventually change hearts and minds.

You simply cannot have a meaningful conversation with someone who calls gays and lesbians “perverted.” Those are not the words of someone wishing to have a positive exchange on the topic and possibly be enlightened. Those words amount to only one thing: hate speech.

But I see things differently. I believe the time for talking is done. You simply cannot have a meaningful conversation with someone who calls gays and lesbians “perverted.” Those are not the words of someone wishing to have a positive exchange on the topic and possibly be enlightened. Those words amount to only one thing: hate speech. And it should not be tolerated. Not on Ellen’s show. Not on any television program. Not anywhere in the country.

The time for that kind of talking is over. If you cannot speak to me respectfully then you cannot speak to me at all. You don’t get that privilege. If you’re going to call me names, you’d be better off keeping that nonsense to yourself.

This is 2017, and there will be consequences.

Just ask poor Kim Burrell. Not only did she get dropped from Ellen’s show, but her radio show was canceled as well. And, again, I say this is as it should be. Kim Burrell is clearly not interested in meaningful dialogue. Quite the opposite, she’s content to use her Bible as a weapon and wield it against gay men and women who are not only part of the rich fabric of this country but, I suspect, also among the members of her own church.

I think Ellen’s decision to cancel Burrell’s appearance spoke volumes. It said, “I will not let you bully my community.” It said, “I will not give you a platform from which to spew hate.” That’s no longer acceptable. Not even in the name of God.

The whole “love the sinner, hate the sin”

justification has been debunked as nonsense. You cannot hate my homosexuality yet still love me. It isn’t possible. The two are intrinsically intertwined. You cannot separate one from another because were I not homosexual, I would not be the person that I am.

So make no mistake: if you are attacking my homosexuality, then you are attacking me. And there’s no love involved in that. Frankly, I don’t care if you love me. Maybe that’s an important distinction to people like Kim Burrell, ministers who must claim to love people even as they cut them down to size for their sins. But keep your love. You can have it. All I ask for – scratch that – all I demand is your respect. You can do the decent thing and give it to me freely. Or you can take the long road like Ms. Burrell and wait for the consequences. But be sure now, there will be consequences.

If you attack us, we will attack back. If you dare denounce our moral turpitude, we will come after your livelihood. We will no longer be your patsies. Preaching our demise will no longer fill your collection plates. There are too many of us now. Too many who’ve come too far to turn back.

This is 2017, and we will no longer debate our equality. Instead we will demand you recognize it. That, to me, is the message Ellen sent by disinviting Burrell to her show. Her statement was brief. But she said a mouthful.

Jason A. Michael is a Essence magazine bestselling author and has been a contributing writer to Between The Lines since 1999.

Creep of the Week

Gordon Klingenschmitt

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

Something truly terrible happened in Minnesota. An elementary school teacher and his husband were busted for having sex with underage teenagers and filming it. Once they knew they were caught, they fled and killed themselves.



My takeaway: the whole story is sick and sordid and sad and I

hope that all of the kids these guys hurt get the help and care they deserve and need. As for the abusers, at the risk of sounding insensitive, (string of expletives deleted).

Of course, some see it differently. Professional homophobe Gordon Klingenschmitt’s take is, “See! This is why gays shouldn’t be teachers!”

It is, of course, a ridiculous argument. But then, Klingenschmitt is a ridiculous man.

It’s important to note, though it will surely surprise and disappoint Klingenschmitt and his followers, the vast majority of LGBTQ people aren’t pedophiles. They aren’t child molesters and never will be. Full stop. This is, of course, true for all humans, regardless of sexual orientation, but I feel the need to make the distinction since LGBTQ people have had to contend with the pedophile accusation since forever in large part because there are folks who forget that they are, in fact, human.

It is also important to note that the majority of child sexual abuse victims are girls who are abused by men who identify as heterosexual. Does this in any way diminish the severity of abuse when it is committed by a man against a boy? No, of course not. But it would be just as illogical to point at a specifically heinous case and declare it evidence that heterosexual men shouldn’t be teachers. Or you could point to the various cases where heterosexual women teachers had sex with their underage students and declare het ladies unfit for the classroom. And then you’d essentially have no one left to teach at all.

But, of course, Klingenschmitt has a long history of being hatefully anti-LGBTQ and so he wasted no time once a case “proved” he’d been right all along.

It is also important to note that the majority of child sexual abuse victims are girls who are abused by men who identify as heterosexual.

“These two men were deceived on so many levels,” Klingenschmitt said during his Jan. 9 online program which he kicked off by putting the word “husband” in scare quotes because of how gays aren’t really married and all.

“Who is to blame for this spiritually?” Klingenschmitt asked, describing the gay men as people “who don’t know Christ, who are lost in their homosexual sin.”

Klingenschmitt is deliberately equating the sin of abuse with sexual orientation as if they are one in the same. They aren’t. Can’t repeat that enough.

“As a culture now, the demonic spirit of homosexuality has taken over and redefined marriage,” Klingenschmitt continued, “to tell these boys that it’s OK.”

It is not clear to me who Klingenschmitt is referring to as “these boys.” Surely he doesn’t mean the two adult abusers. But it also doesn’t make sense the other way around. Is he saying that because of marriage equality the boys who were abused were taught to think abuse is OK? Just because marriage is legal for gay men doesn’t mean that abuse is. There’s a really big difference.

But not to Klingenschmitt who claimed that “the demonic spirit of deception” took over whoever hired this gay teacher in the first place. “If anything, they should have been disqualified immediately because of their immorality,” he said, which is something even Ronald Reagan disagreed with during his California governor days.

“This is evil upon evil,” Klingenschmitt said. “It is our laws as a society that need to be changed to prevent and protect children from this kind of abuse in the future.”

And he’s right! Sexual abuse is some evil shit. And there are definitely laws and aspects of society that need a-changin’! Except what he would like is to see marriage equality erased, which would not protect children at all. But it would hurt gay people, which seems to be his ultimate goal.

Michigan Non Profit Resource

Have You Experienced Discrimination?

If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, intimidation, harassment or violence because of sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity,

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report@equalitymi.org or call 1-866-962-1147

Equality Michigan is working with state legislators to update the Ethnic Intimidation Act to include proper protections for the gay and transgender community.

To get involved in the movement for better hate crimes law, contact policy@equalitymi.org.

Hundreds more resources can be found at
www.PrideSource.com

It Will be Raining Men (and Women) for a Great Cause Jan. 16

Detroit Concert for a Cure to Feature Cast of 'Phantom' and Others

BY JENN MCKEE

This year's Detroit Concert for a Cure - happening on Monday, Jan. 16 at 7 p.m. at Ferndale's The Loving Touch - could also be called "Phantom, After Hours."

Why? Because individual cast members from the touring production of "Phantom of the Opera" (playing at the Detroit Opera House Jan. 11-22) will be performing non-Phantom songs, cabaret-style, on what would otherwise be their day off.

Proceeds from the Detroit Concert for a Cure show benefit Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and Ferndale Schools' orchestras; local drag queen Sabin will emcee (and a surprise guest performer or two may also show up); there will be a silent auction and a cash bar; and Nashville-based Mackinac will perform during the afterglow.

"I saw him perform once before, and he's great," said show organizer Brad Harder of Mackinac (also known as Steven Mullan). "He's a singer/songwriter from Michigan who relocated to Nashville, and he's always working on neat projects. ... It's nice, because after the benefit show, cast members will get a chance to mingle with people in the audience during the after-party."

Though not an annual event, the Detroit Concert for a Cure has previously featured performers from touring companies of shows like "In the Heights" and "Shrek: The Musical." Harder estimates this to be the sixth iteration of the benefit, and it sprang, in part, from his experience as a company manager for touring productions, as well as his work as part of the Broadway and off-Broadway communities.

"There was something I thought was lacking," said Harder. "Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS usually raises money



Attendees can expect to see "Phantom" cast members belting ballads, rock songs, Broadway standards, and more.

through direct appeals to the audience, offering posters signed by the cast and things like that, and that's great. But I thought that a benefit concert would get the local community more involved, and allow them a chance to see these performers singing different kinds of music. I thought it would be nice to bring that



Michigan-born, Nashville-based Steven Mullan, who records under the name Mackinac, will be among the performers in the Detroit Concert for a Cure. Photo courtesy of Steven Mullan

to the area."

When planning DCC, Harder submits the paperwork needed to clear cast members' participation in the performance; makes arrangements for a venue; sets up ticket sales (tickets cost \$25, available at Woodward Avenue Brewery box office, 22646 Woodward Avenue in Ferndale, or at the door on the night of the show.); and organizes a pre-show afternoon rehearsal before the event.

But he's not the only person investing time and effort, of course. "They could do so many other things on their day off," said Harder of "Phantom"'s volunteer cast members. "They could be going to the gym, or out to eat, or just relaxing, but they've decided to work on their day off for free. ... For many company members, Broadway Cares is near and dear to their hearts."

Broadway Cares helps not just individuals within the performing arts community whose lives are being impacted by HIV/AIDS, but it also provides grants for AIDS and family service organizations across the country.

"Numerous organizations in Michigan benefit from Broadway Cares," said Harder. "The main purpose of Broadway Cares is to give back. ... It touches so many people's lives."

Harder has presented DCC at The Loving Touch two times before, and the venue's casual atmosphere, paired with its 400-person capacity, makes it ideal.

"The layout of The Loving Touch is great," said Harder. "You can stand up front near the stage, you can mingle, there are seats, ... you don't have to sit for the whole show, you can just go to the bar whenever you want a drink - it's a nice, intimate venue for this type of thing."

Attendees can expect to see "Phantom" cast members belting ballads, rock songs, Broadway standards, and more.

"It's a complete mixture," said Harder. "There will be a performance of 'It's Raining Men' by three men from the cast, and there will be emotional moments, too. ... It's great to see these performers in their element outside of the show. ... It's hard to connect with performers you see on a stage. Usually, after you see a show, you go your way, and the performers go back to their hotel. So this is a good chance for the performers and audience members to meet and talk."

Broadway Cares helps not just individuals within the performing arts community whose lives are being impacted by HIV/AIDS, but it also provides grants for AIDS and family service organizations across the state and the country.

PERFORMING

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Trump's First 100 Days: How Bad Could It Get?

BY LISA KEEN

The most pro-gay Republican presidential candidate in history will take office as President of the United States on January 20, and yet the LGBT community has much to be anxious about.

While Donald Trump used his campaign pulpit to urge the American people to stand in “solidarity” with the LGBT community following the Orlando nightclub massacre, his picks for key administration roles have been people with a history of standing solidly against that community.

No matter what Trump might do as president to signal his unique level of comfort with LGBT people compared to his Republican conservative base, the departure of President Obama, indisputably the most pro-gay president in history, will stand in stark contrast to what many LGBT people fear will become an inevitable string of disappointing inactions (at best) and hostile attacks (at worst).

And the hopes for a better tomorrow for LGBT people – hopes that Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton made abundantly clear she supported – are replaced now with the uneasy feeling that anti-LGBT legislation will breeze through a Republican-dominated Congress and be signed as part of some “deal” President Trump might feel compelled to make to demonstrate his solidarity with his rabid right base and a certain admired foreign leader.

So, what exactly should the LGBT community be braced to see? Here’s a look at the most likely events in Trump’s first 100 days:

The Executive Branch

Contractor discrimination: President Obama signed an executive order in July 2014 that prohibits contractors doing business with the federal government from discriminating based on sexual orientation or gender identity. It also added gender identity to a previously existing Executive Order 13087 that prohibits discrimination against federal employees based on sexual orientation. Trump could rescind both executive orders or, in the alternative, amend the existing order to grant a request (that Obama rejected) from a group of religious leaders who urged the non-discrimination policy include a “robust religious exemption.”

Hospital Memorandum: President Obama issued a memorandum April 15, 2010, calling for an end to discrimination against LGBT



President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump shake hands following their meeting in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Thursday, Nov. 10. AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

people by hospital visitation policies that limit visitors to immediate family members. The directive applies to hospitals receiving federal funds through Medicare and Medicaid. Many same-sex couples now have the benefit of marriage to protect those visitation rights, but not all same-sex couples with close, long-term relationships do.

Trump's pick for Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, was a leading supporter of a 2004 ballot campaign against marriage equality in Michigan, and her family has given millions to anti-LGBT causes and groups.

Education discrimination: In May 2016, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice issued a “Dear Colleague” letter advising schools that discrimination against transgender students violates a federal law

against sex discrimination. The Trump administration could issue a new letter with its own interpretation of the reach of Title IX. And Trump’s pick for Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, was a leading supporter of a 2004 ballot campaign against marriage equality in Michigan, and her family has given millions to anti-LGBT causes and groups.

Health discrimination: In May last year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued regulations stating that the Affordable Care Act’s prohibition on sex discrimination in health coverage and care includes a prohibition on discrimination based on gender identity. The Trump HHS could issue its own interpretation of the ACA’s sex discrimination. Trump’s nominee for Secretary of HHS, Tom Price, has a long history of hostility toward the LGBT community. Plus Trump has already made clear that he would like to repeal the ACA.

The Republican-led Congress

Nullifying executive orders: Even if President Trump chooses not to rescind any of President Obama’s executive orders or memoranda, Congress could pass legislation to nullify any or all of them, and one Trump ally, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, predicted last month that Trump would rescind 70 percent of President Obama’s executive orders. So a Trump veto on such action by Congress seems unlikely.

First Amendment Defense Act: This bill was introduced to Congress shortly before the Supreme Court’s ruling that said state bans on marriage for same-sex couples are unconstitutional. The FADA is part of the effort to circumvent laws that prohibit discrimination against same-sex couples. It would allow a person or business discriminating against LGBT people to defend themselves by claiming the discrimination is an exercise of the person or business’s

FADA is part of the effort to circumvent laws that prohibit discrimination against same-sex couples. It would allow a person or business discriminating against LGBT people to defend themselves by claiming the discrimination is an exercise of the person or business's religious beliefs.

religious beliefs. It seeks to prohibit the federal government from taking any adverse action against a person who "acts in accordance with a religious belief or moral conviction that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman." Senator Ted Cruz Trump said last month he thinks the prospects are "bright" for passing the bill now, so if the Republican-led Congress passes it, Trump will likely sign it.

Johnson Amendment repeal: The Johnson Amendment is a law that ensures taxpayer money is not used to subsidize partisan political activity. Trump has said he wants the Johnson Amendment repealed because it prevents clergy from speaking about politics from the pulpit. A bill to repeal the Johnson Amendment was introduced January 3.

In the Courts

The Supreme Court nominee: The most long-standing influence Trump could have on the LGBT community is through his choice or choices to fill U.S. Supreme Court seats. He released lists of potential nominees last year, and they all look decidedly conservative and some have a history of hostility toward equal rights for LGBT people. He will almost certainly make his first choice within the first 100 days, to fill the seat vacated by the death of right-wing Justice Antonin Scalia last February. Replacing one right-wing justice with another right-wing justice may not tip the court's balance, but it will re-establishes a necessary foursome that can accept conservative appeals for review. And a second Trump opportunity to nominate a justice will almost certainly bend the arc of the moral universe at the high court away from justice for the LGBT community.

The most long-standing influence Trump could have on the LGBT community is through his choice or choices to fill U.S. Supreme Court seats.

The North Carolina challenge: Under the Obama administration, the Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against North Carolina's anti-LGBT law HB2. Trump has said such matters should be left to the states. Trump's nominee for Attorney General, Senator Jeff Sessions, has a long and consistent history of acting against the best interest of LGBT citizens. If confirmed by the Senate, it seems likely Sessions, with the support of Trump, will withdraw the U.S.'s lawsuit against the North Carolina law. It also seems likely the Trump DOJ will weigh in on the side of North Carolina should the Supreme Court eventually review the constitutionality of HB2 as other lawsuits against it continue. And a similar law is now proceeding through the Texas legislature.

The Title IX showdown: In the spring, the Supreme Court will hear arguments in a case, *Gloucester v. Grimm*, to decide whether Title IX's prohibition on sex discrimination in schools should be read to include a prohibition on gender identity discrimination. Under the Obama administration, the Department of Justice supported the transgender student's claim that Title IX protects his right to use a bathroom of the gender with which he identifies. Under the Trump administration, a DOJ led by Sessions will almost certainly take sides with the Gloucester school district. The good news is that it seems most unlikely Trump can nominate and have confirmed a new right-wing Supreme Court justice in time to join in whatever ruling the court makes in the case this year. A tie vote will leave the federal appeals court ruling below - in favor of the transgender student - intact.



In the days following Trump's win, protesters across the country gathered and demonstrated, like the crowd above in NYC near Trump Tower. A mass demonstration is planned in Washington, DC the day after the inauguration on Jan. 21 with sister marches in cities across the US.



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DOUBLE THE DIRTY

'Queen of Mean' Lisa Lampanelli on Unamused Lesbians, Drag Inspiration & How to Survive Trump

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

If you know her racy sense of humor, you practically expect Lisa Lampanelli to hurl a slur at you when she calls. Once, she wanted to know "if this was the same cornholer I talked to the last time," and because she's Lisa Lampanelli, I took that as a compliment.

Known for her stereotype-mocking comedy routines and hilariously foul roasts (during 2011's Comedy Central roast of Donald Trump, Lampanelli called the now-president a "bloated, stinky douche"), the 55-year-old Connecticut native acknowledges that her interview persona is either a version of her exaggerated stand-up self or the "real" Lisa.

Both showed up to my recent candid talk with Lampanelli, who spoke about Oprah's bread obsession, why she "would" perform at Trump's inauguration and how drag icon Miss Coco Peru inspired her to consider becoming a motivational speaker. And about those dual personalities: "It's like I'm becoming two people merging into one, so enjoy the double-ended dildo interview."

Hey, Lisa. Took you long enough. Three minutes late.

Listen, bitch, you're lucky I wasn't 12 months late. Wuz up?

You tell me. You're heading to Detroit, and you're here so often, I feel like you must have a place in town.

Well, you know what, I will say the more ghetto the town, the more comfortable I am.

So then, why do you perform in Ann Arbor?

Uh, because I feel like those rich, white people need to be educated about the minorities 'cause they never meet them in person. Aren't I nice? I'm the best.

Explain to me how you decide who you'll be during an

interview, because I've only ever been on the receiving end of crass, stand-up Lisa, but I've also read interviews with you where you come across much softer.

Yes, it's like, you kind of have to combine them for an interview, usually because that's who we (comedians) are anyway. Sometimes you just wanna have fun, and then you interject some serious stuff, or you wanna be serious and you interject some fun stuff. So it's kind of like, whatever mood I'm in. Like your interview today is based probably a lot on the fact that the guy before you was not a dick.

When did you first feel like you'd made it in the gay community?

It sort of built. I remember being able to make fun of everybody and have them not get mad, except the occasional guy or girl who has no sense of humor. I never felt until recently like the lesbians understood me, but in the last 10 years, which for me is recent, I'm like, "Oh, they get it, they don't hate me." Because it used to be, when I started, I had played a few places that lesbians were not happy, honey.

Why do you think it took longer for the lesbians to come around?

Oh, because those bitches used to take themselves too seriously. Couldn't stand it! I'm like, "Listen!"

What changed?

They stopped being a bunch of clams with no sense of humor. I mean, honestly. I almost feel like the younger lesbians coming up kind of were like, "This is cool; she doesn't mean anything she says." You know, I'm sure there are plenty of people out there who hate my act, and it's fine, and they're allowed to, but I can no longer say the lesbians don't have a sense of humor – they do!

How does the current political climate and racial tension in the country affect your comedy?

I push more because I think my push has always been in the direction of making fun as love, so I think it's like going, if I sort of stop pushing hard, people could go, "She has some hate or prejudice behind it now." It's like putting up a light between how I say it and how true racists or homophobes



say it. They see such a difference between me saying horrible things and those people saying horrible things. Thankfully my audience gets it and understands why.

What's scary are the people who may not get the difference between real bigots and a comedian who's mocking bigots.

I'm lucky that I really don't get any feedback like that. I really don't have people coming up after shows saying, "Thanks for those faggot jokes." I'm lucky people get it on the level it's intended. Also if they don't, like Cher says, she only answers to two people: herself and God. And I can look in the mirror and say, "I'm just answering to me because I get me."

From what I've read, your act these days is more self-reflective.

I mean, I'll be just more vulnerable on stage, meaning I'll tell you real stuff from my life. A lot of the past life was over-exaggerated sexual stuff that either just didn't happen or were funny stories that I blew out of proportion for humor's sake. Now, I just tell the truth behind my divorce (from Jimmy Cannizzaro in 2014), behind my weight loss, behind the struggle to keep it off, behind the self-help journey I've gone on. So yeah, I just tell the truth more.

So, wait. You *didn't* have sex with all those black men like you claimed?

Well, I mean, I had a black boyfriend, and we dated for three-and-a-half years, which I thought was pretty good! He cheated on me with another white bitch, so I cut him loose.

Wanda Sykes was recently booed at one of her shows for calling Donald Trump a "racist, sexist, homophobic president." She shouted expletives at them and gave them the middle finger.

By the way, who's coming to see her not believing that?

Exactly. How would you have handled Trump hecklers at your show?

I do a whole Trump roast now. I'll be doing it when I come down there. I wrote this really funny Trump roast – an updated one for Howard Stern – and I'm doing even more Trump jokes. But I get away with that kind of roast humor all the time. Nobody gets mad, even Trump supporters, if I say something serious about Trump, which I hardly ever do because I don't talk politics much. Not my thing. Once people booed something and I go, "Oh, shut up. I'm a comedian, not a senator. Shut the fuck up." And they shut up.

I have no political agenda, and I think they know Wanda really has that strong belief, so maybe that's why they booed, and it's fine. But people know I'm not, like, all serious about stuff, so that's probably why I don't get a hard time.

INFO

Lisa Lampanelli

8 p.m. Feb. 17
Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel
>> soundboarddetroit.com

You say you stay out of politics.

I don't care.

Do you not care that Trump is the President of the United States?

I mean, what am I gonna do? No – really. What exactly am I gonna do? I still will donate to the charities I want to that have nothing to do with him, I'll still do shows or appearances for the charities I like, I'll still sign petitions for women's rights and various charities and different causes that have clearly opposing views. But what am I gonna do? Am I gonna get him un-elected? Am I gonna sit here and cry and go on my swooning couch? Nothing's bugged me more than my friends after the election going, "I couldn't get out of bed for a week." Really? How about you go online and create a charity and get some petitions out there? How about that instead of lying on your swooning couch?

I have a friend who created an entire – after one day of mourning this little homo created a website where you go to donate time to different charities that Trump doesn't support, and I'm like, "You did the right thing." Take action. For some reason we have been saddled with this president and we have to figure out what to do despite it. Maybe it's to make people more united. But whatever's gonna happen is gonna happen.

Look, if I'm dead tomorrow because of a nuclear bomb – what, did I worry about it the day before? No, I had game night and dinner with my mom and my friends and went out on a nice note because we didn't stop our lives. I can't cry about this.

You've crossed paths with Donald Trump several times. You roasted him on Comedy Central, and you competed in the fifth season of the "Celebrity Apprentice" in 2012. Would you perform at his inauguration?

Absolutely, but only if I could roast him. You understand, there's a fine line of what I would do. Like, if they asked me to be the White House Correspondents' Dinner host to perform, I'd be like, "in a second," because I could reaaaally do a good roast on him and that's the best, so it would be a way of sticking it to him a little bit and it'd be fine. I would absolutely have a clear conscious about making fun of Trump. I always do.

Maybe that's your "in" for his cabinet.

I wanna be the minister of gay affairs! You

See Lisa, page 24

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Between the Lines

'Firepower' a Lesson in Binding Emotional Wounds

BY TANYA GAZDIK

Stories about brothers are as old as Cain and Abel. The relationship of the brothers who are featured in the Detroit Repertory Theatre's "Firepower" is nowhere near as contentious but every bit as complicated.

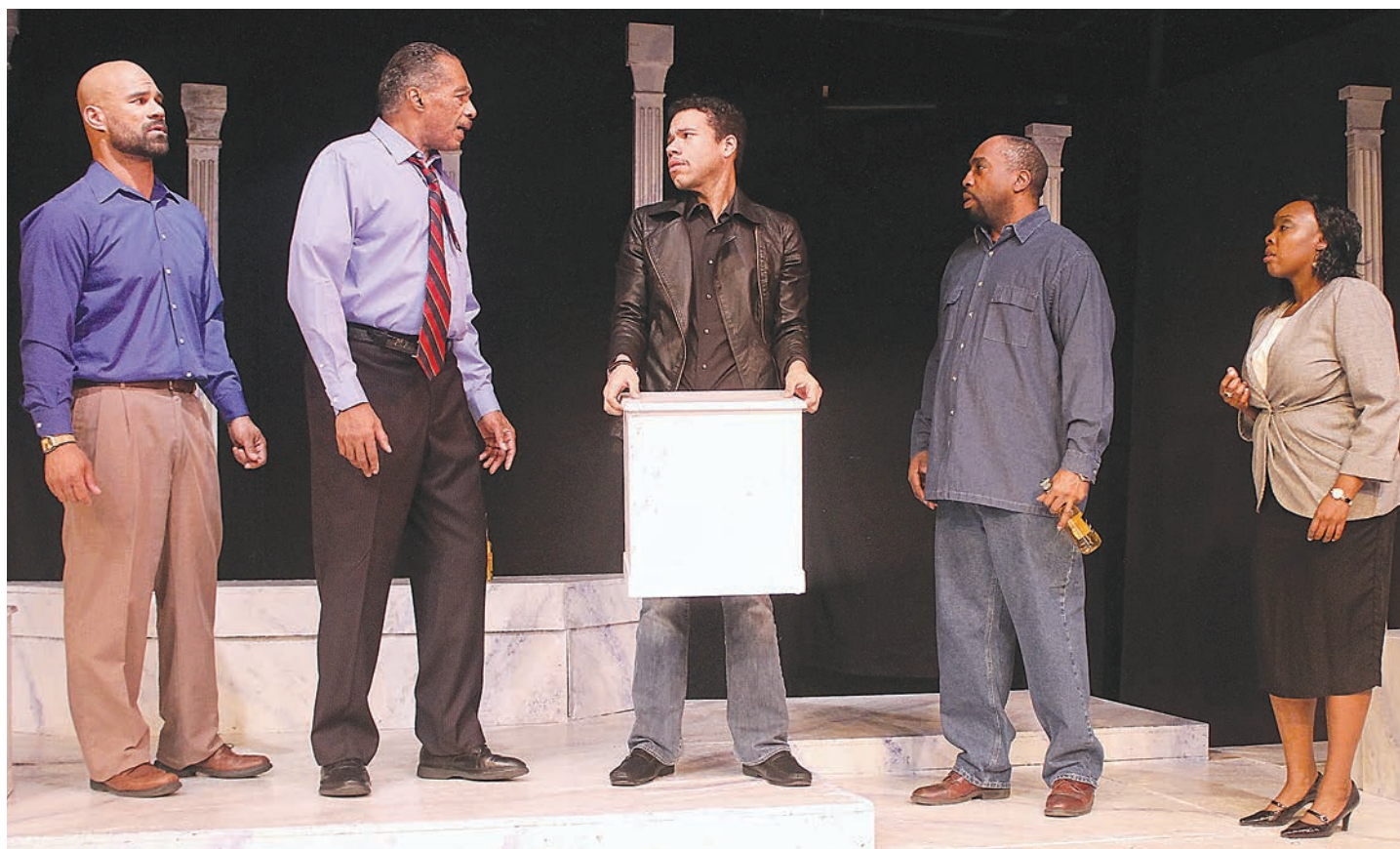
While big brother Eddie (William Bryson) and T.C. (Jonathan West) on the surface appear to be polar opposites, it turns out they have much in common. Each has secrets they have carried for decades and long to unload.

Written by Kermit Frazier and directed by Lynch Travis, the Detroit Repertory's production is the play's world premiere.

The show opens with T.C. and his partner, Neil Russell (Daniel Johnson), preparing for a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit T.C.'s father, the ailing patriarch George Montgomery (David Glover.) Neil is frustrated because T.C. won't commit to revealing to his family that he is gay and that Neil is his long-time boyfriend.

West expertly conveys the intense conflicts his character is struggling with. By finally coming out of the closet, which would be a relief and would definitely please Neil, T.C. worries about incurring the wrath of his conservative politician father and losing his standing as the "good son."

Eddie, on the other hand, already has incurred his father's wrath by choosing to be estranged from the family for decades, to the extent that he was unreachable after his mother's death the previous year. But the prodigal son has returned and along with reuniting with his family, he revives a romance with his high-school sweetheart Joanne Wells (Casaundra Freeman). The irony is that despite their chasm, Eddie, like his father, was a star football player. But his harsh and critical father is angry that he squandered his talents, washing out of the NFL. George's anger actually is much more deeply rooted even as he boasts of the "firepower" he possessed as a quarterback, but it's a convenient excuse for him to lash out and be hurtful to his long-suffering son.



From left; T.C. (Jonathan West), the gay son of George Montgomery (David Luther Glover) with Neil (Dan Johnson), T.C.'s longtime partner, who pushes T.C. to come out to his politically conservative father. The black sheep of the family, Eddie (William Bryson), has known his little brother is gay since they were kids and confronts Neil, warning him not to hurt his little brother – or else. Photo courtesy Detroit Rep.

Tying the subplots together is Liz Hall (Jennifer Cole), father George's much younger fiancée. The sons are surprisingly unconcerned about her motivations, maybe because having her in the picture means they don't have to expend as much energy taking care of their father, whose anger is rooted in part by denying his failing health. Although she is half George's age, Liz often is the voice of reason, smoothing out the wrinkles in their relationship.

The set, designed and constructed by Harry Wetzel, is simple and austere, consisting of white pillars as the backdrop while white marble-like cubes serve as chairs and tables. The classical Greek-theater is effective because it doesn't detract from the very complicated relationships and lengthy dialogue. Although it is set in 1989, the show just as easily could be set in the current day, other than an amusing reference to the yet-to-be-invented erectile dysfunction drugs. One of the props, a first-generation cordless phone that is as big as a shoebox, is right on the money.

Sound design is from Burr Huntington. Upbeat music bridges the scene changes and keeps the energy moving. But it often feels more like it's from the '70s than the late '80s. Sandra Glover's costume designs also appear to slightly predate 1989, with

the women wearing blouses with puffed shoulders and wrap dresses. These miscues don't detract from the show since the focus is on relationships.

The political subplot is key. George is a first-term DC city councilman, trying

timing during the play's opening night, and there were minor gaffes which likely will be smoothed out in subsequent performances. "Firepower" has an enormous amount of dialogue; there aren't many pauses or periods of silence. But given the several complicated

Frazier weaves politics into the story since it turns out that in order to win passage of a housing law, George likely must make some concessions that negatively impact the LGBTQ community and dial up the tension between him and his gay son T.C.

to prove himself to the rest of the council and Mayor Marion Barry. His rambling, politically-themed speeches, mixed in with his and Liz's somewhat distracting recitations of the history of the city's mainly African-American Anacostia neighborhood, go on a bit longer than necessary as the audience awaits more interactions among the characters. But Frazier weaves politics into the story since it turns out that in order to win passage of a housing law, George likely must make some concessions that negatively impact the LGBTQ community and dial up the tension between him and his gay son T.C.

Actors were still working on dialogue and

storylines that need to get wrapped up by the end, it's understandable.

Although the play has many humorous moments, it concludes somewhat abruptly on a solemn note and leaves the audience longing for a bit more. But real life isn't neat and tidy and doesn't get wrapped up in a box with a bow on top, so in a way this ending is perfectly appropriate.

This review originally appeared at www.encoremichigan.com, a web-based publication focused on Michigan's professional theater community.

PERFORMING

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'Georgia McBride' and the Craft of Drag at The Ringwald

BY TANYA GAZDIK

FERNDALE – It might not come as a surprise that The Ringwald is staging a show about drag queens.

But *The Legend of Georgia McBride* by Matthew Lopez is not strictly camp. Yes, there are many laughs. But there also are some very serious and poignant moments that, dare I say, might cause the audience to shed an involuntary tear or two?

Here's the plot in a nutshell: Casey is young, broke, and his landlord's threatening to evict him just as he has learned his wife is going to have a baby. To make matters even more desperate, Casey is fired from his gig as an Elvis impersonator at Cleo's, a run-down bar in run-down Panama City, Florida. When Eddie, the bar owner, brings in a drag show to replace his act, Casey finds that he has a lot to learn about show business, walking in heels and most important, himself.

The one-hour, 40-minute show has no intermission but time doesn't, shall we say, drag. The pace is spot-on and the time just sails by.

Brandy Joe Plambeck directs a cast that includes Joe Bailey, Meredith Deighton, Vince Kelley, Richard Payton and Nick Yocum.

There's never any doubt that Casey/Georgia McBride (Yocum) is straight, but he nevertheless must bravely struggle through a transformation from terror born of economic desperation to confidence and proficiency as he learns and then embraces the craft that is drag. (And the money isn't bad, either.)

Yocum's convincing transition is guided with patience and wit by Miss Tracy Mills (Kelley), who's forced to bring Casey into the drag-queen realm on the fly, teaching him during a crash course in lip-synching Edith Piaf's "Padam Padam" that the key to lip-synching is repeating the words "watermelon motherf***er." She also can be credited with helping him come up with his stage name Georgia McBride - inspired by the state in which his mother was born and the last name of the first girl he kissed.

Bailey, who plays Eddie, the owner of Cleo's, is the glue that binds the club's progression from fading to fabulous. He's by turns funny and dour, at one point berating the audience at Cleo's (in actuality the Ringwald playgoers) for not clapping along to the music. Although Casey's wife Jo (Deighton) isn't a lot of fun for much of the show - going from whining to pregnant to shocked and angered by learning her husband's job at Cleo's isn't



PERFORMING

The Legend of Georgia McBride

The Ringwald presents the Michigan premiere of *The Legend of Georgia McBride* by Matthew Lopez runs through Jan. 30. The Ringwald Theatre is located at 22742 Woodward Ave. in Ferndale. Call 248-545-5545 for ticket information.

that of bartender - by the end, she finally seems comfortable in her own skin.

Payton truly gets to show his acting range and proficiency, alternating between the alcoholic Remy, a demanding diva of a drag queen, to Jason, Casey's good ol' boy neighbor and landlord, who at times sounds like Jimmy Stewart filtered through Florida's Panhandle. His speech as Remy to Casey about what it means to live as a drag queen, not just perform as one, is heartfelt.

Props, as it were, to scenic designer Steven Carpenter for making the absolute most of the Ringwald's small stage. He manages to combine Casey/Jo's apartment, the backstage of Cleo's, and the front of the curtain at Cleo's into one split stage. Lighting design by Brandy Joe Plambeck allows all three to coexist in one space without requiring what would have been cumbersome and time-consuming set changes.

Vince Kelley (costume design) and Michael Ameloot (auxiliary costumes) do a smashing job with the plethora of costumes. Besides each of the characters, there are a dozen costumes for the drag queen performances, each one more perfect than the last.

You don't have to be gay or a drag enthusiast to appreciate the sentiments at the heart of this play, where making a living crosses paths with making, or remaking, a life.

This review originally appeared at www.encoremichigan.com, a web-based publication focused on Michigan's professional theater community.



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Happenings

Editor's Pick

FIA and FPL Partner to Present MLK Day Activities



The Flint Institute of Arts, in partnership with the Flint Public Library, will present a celebratory program of the life and work of Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. on Jan. 16 with free, family-friendly activities and events in

both spaces. The joint program begins at the library at 2 p.m. followed by a reception at the museum at 4 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. Additionally, the FIA Art School will host a free family activity at 4 p.m. In conjunction with the MLK holiday, FIA galleries will be open and free of charge for all visitors throughout the day. For more information about the festivities, please call the FPL, 1026 East Kearsley Street, at 810-232-7111 or the FIA, 1120 East Kearsley Street at 810-234-1695. Visit FIA online at www.flintarts.org.

OUTINGS

Thursday, Jan. 12

JTCC Pizza House Fundraiser Mention JTCC while placing your order anytime for delivery and online orders. Jim Toy Community Center, 618 Church St., Ann Arbor. 734-995-5095. www.pizzahouse.com

Agential Cuts: Consciousness, Trauma, and Identity 7 p.m. A photography and collage exhibit featuring the work of artist, Bree Gant. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org

Friday, Jan. 13

Pride Night f/ Katya 9 p.m. Main Room: DJ Jace. Red Room: DJ DigiMark. Cover: \$5-10. Free before 10 p.m. Necto, 516 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. www.necto.com

Saturday, Jan. 14

TGMI Port Huron Social Club 1 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Transgender Michigan, 1519 Military St., Port Huron. www.transgendermichigan.org

Youth Leadership Program Interviews 5 p.m. Interviews open to youth ages 13-20. The program begins Jan. 17 at 4:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. lreyes@goaffirmations.org www.goaffirmations.org

Motor City Bears 6:30 p.m. A gay male, social and fund raising activity group for Bears and admirers, established in 1994. Meet and greet starts at 5:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Sunday, Jan. 15

PFLAG Ann Arbor 2 p.m. Ann Arbor meeting for Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Free to attend. PFLAG Ann Arbor, 306 N Division St, Ann Arbor. 724-741-0659. info@pflagaa.org pflagaa.org

Thursday, Jan. 19

Detroit Elders 5 p.m. Attendance is free. SAGE Metro Detroit, 4750 Woodward, Detroit. 313-833-1300 ext. 15. <https://sagemetrodetroit.org>

Friday, Jan. 20

No Name-Calling Week It is an

important opportunity to show allyship to LGBTQ students, particularly transgender and gender nonconforming students, as well as LGBTQ students of color. GLSEN, Detroit. www.glsen.org/nonamecallingweek

Come on In, Come on Out - Safe and Sound with Out Loud 8 p.m. Out Loud Chorus explores the concepts of safety and finding a home and is our response to the Pulse shootings. Songs include: Come to My Garden, Rather Be, Somewhere Only We Know, Earth Song and Would You Harbor Me. Tickets are \$15 in advance/\$18 at door, \$12 for seniors & students (65+). Free for children under 4 and unemployed people. Out Loud is sponsored in part by the Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs and the NEA. Our Saturday night performance is sponsored by the WCC Out-Space Club. Paul Haebig directs the chorus. Brendan Jacklin accompanies us on piano, Tamara Perkuhn plays drums and Edie Herrold rounds out the trio on bass. Out Loud Chorus, 4800 E. Huron River Dr., Ann Arbor. 734-265-0740. outloudchorus@gmail.com www.olonline.org

Saturday, Jan. 21

Women's March on Washington Bus leaves Lansing 1/20 at 8:45 p.m. Returns 1/22 at 9 a.m. Roundtrip cost is \$135. Email to reserve a spot on the bus. Lesbian Connection, Washington. lansinglesbiansL2L@gmail.com

Smart Recovery 10 a.m. Smart Recovery offers people with any type of addiction a place to learn how to

change unwanted behaviors through cognitive based methods. This is a non-12 step program, led by Smart Recovery trainers, and does not require abstinence. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Alcoholics Anonymous Brownbaggers 1:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Men's Discussion Group 6 p.m. Group for gay, bisexual and transgender men ages 18 and up. This group frequently offers holiday parties and outings such as movie nights in addition to regular meetings. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Sunday, Jan. 22

Drag Queen Bingo 11 a.m. Tickets: \$20-\$30. Reservations required. 18+ Five15, 515 S. Washington Ave., Royal Oak. 248-515-2551. www.five15.net

PFLAG Monthly Meeting 2 p.m. Entry from parking lot behind church. Every third Sunday. PFLAG Ann Arbor, 306 N. Division at Catherine Street, Ann Arbor. 734-741-0659. info@pflagaa.org www.pflagaa.org

The Legend of Georgia McBride 3 p.m. Tickets: \$10-20. The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. 2485455545. www.theringwald.com

Monday, Jan. 23

Alcoholics Anonymous 5:45 Serenity 5:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

FIM Support 7 p.m. Support is limited to transmasculine, AFAB people. FIM Detroit, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. fimdetroit@gmail.com

Sexual Addicts Anonymous 7 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Factory Monday 9 p.m. Goth-industrial night. Main room: DJ Void6 hosted by MC Yoda. Red Room: DJ Madisi. Tickets: \$1-3. Necto, 516 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. www.necto.com

MUSIC & MORE

Majestic Detroit "Title Fight with Petal, Koji and Shortly" Tickets: \$17. Magic Stick, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Jan. 13. 313-833-9700. www.majesticdetroit.com

Meijer Corporation "Collage Concert" Tickets: \$12 with student ID or \$26-32. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Jan. 14. 734-761-1800. www.music.umich.edu

Necto "Two Friends" Tickets: \$10-15. NECTO, 516 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. 9 p.m. Jan. 12. www.necto.com

Olympia Entertainment "Faith Evans wsg Ginuwine" Tickets: \$48-65. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. Jan. 13. 800-745-3000. www.olympiaentertainment.com

Out Loud Chorus "OLC Winter Concert" Come On In, Come On Out: Safe & Sound with Out Loud. Towsley Auditorium in the Morris Lawrence Building at WCC, 4800 E. Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor. Jan. 20 - Jan. 21. 734-265-0740. www.olonline.org

Other

Penny Stamps Speaker Series "Joe Sacco: Galvanizing Social Justice Through Comics" Free admission. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 5:10 p.m. Jan. 19. www.stamps.umich.edu



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See Happenings, page 22

Penny Stamps Speaker Series
 "Meredith Monk: Pioneering Performance"
 Free admission. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 5:10 p.m. Jan. 17. www.stamps.umich.edu

Penny Stamps Speaker Series "Robert Platt: Profuge" Free admission. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 5:10 p.m. Jan. 12. www.stamps.umich.edu

THEATER

The Phantom of the Opera tour benefit concert All funds raised will benefit Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and Ferndale Schools Orchestras. For ages 18 and over. Tickets: \$25. Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, The Loving Touch, 22634 Woodward Avenue, Ferndale. 7 p.m. Jan. 16. 248-820-5596. www.ticketweb.com/t3/sale/SaleEventDetail?eventId=7010235&pl=lovingtouch&dispatch=loadSelectionData

Civic/Community Theater

In the Next Room, or, The Vibrator Play Tickets: \$17-22. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. Jan. 19 - Jan. 22. 734-763-3333. www.a2ct.org

Romeo & Juliet Tickets: \$12-20. Slipstream Theatre Initiative, Slipstream Theatre, 460 Hilton Road, Ferndale. Jan. 7 - Jan. 29. 313-986-9156. www.

slipstreamti.com

Professional

A Bright Room Called Day . The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. 8 p.m. Jan. 19. 248-545-5545. www.theringwald.com

Firepower by Kermit Frazier Tickets: \$17-20. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through March 12. 313-868-1347. www.detroitreptheatre.com

Phantom of the Opera Tickets: \$35-130. Broadway in Detroit, Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. Jan. 11 - Jan. 22. 313-237-SING. www.broadwayindetroit.com

Riot Grrrl 90s Tickets: \$10. Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff, Hamtramck. Jan. 13 - Jan. 28. 313-365-4948. www.planetant.com

ART 'N' AROUND

Detroit Institute of Arts "Bitter/Sweet: Coffee, Tea & Chocolate" What is your ritual for drinking coffee, tea or chocolate? Take a picture and share it on Instagram. It's all part of the Detroit Institute of Arts' exhibit - the first of its kind at the museum to engage all five senses. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Jan. 1 - March 5. 313-833-7900. http://www.dia.org



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Saturday, January 21 ❖ 8 pm

Info & tickets: olonline.org

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► Lisa

Continued from p.19

totally need me to be in there making sure you faggots can get married even though I don't know why you'd want to.

You wanna get married again, don't you?

Nooo. I was. And honestly, I don't even think about dating or men because I've been working so hard on myself. When I got a divorce, I was like, "I'm free of being with somebody who isn't my spiritual equal." So I never even think about that. It's weird, but such a gift. I'm so happy all the time. It lifted this weird pressure off of me to be myself.

You seem very fulfilled by your work too. In 2015, you premiered your first play, "Stuffed." As someone who has dealt with food issues throughout her life, can we please talk about Oprah's "I love bread" Weight Watchers campaign?

I am so angry with her. And I'll tell you why I'm angry with her. First of all, it's idiotic. It's the dumbest thing. The biggest joy in her life is bread? Then, bitch, you've been preaching wrong for all these years, and you tricked us. Because I thought her biggest joy was helping people; I thought her biggest joy was about self-improvement. I would've taken anything except the name of a food, so I was like, "Dude, show us some enlightenment here." I just can't stand the un-self-awareness of her putting that out there, but it's her journey. It's none of my business. I don't like to watch that one, ever. I always flip right by it. I'm like, "ack!" I'd rather watch those poor dogs with the one eye from the "Angel" ads and I hate those.

My thing is, how can anyone be that obsessed with bread and keep the weight off.

'Cause she's not keeping any weight off.

How are you finding the theater work you're doing fulfilling in a way that standup isn't?

Just because it's emotional, because you can have emotional moments and humor in a play, and it was more of a conversation. It was challenging to write dialogue instead of monologue, and having four actors as an



ensemble was really cool too, because working every day with other people was fun, especially if you cast a bunch of great people like these were. I just loved having a place to go that was super warm in spirit, and I was like, "Aw, man, six months of my year I'm gonna spend doing plays, for sure."

I heard that a drag queen inspired you to move into humorous motivational speaking.

Oh, Coco Peru! The best, best, best. She does this routine, and there is such a real great sort of emotional and spiritual element to it that you don't see usually with drag queens. When I saw that, I said, "I am definitely going to make sure more of that vulnerability is in my act." I frickin' love her. It's like, you never know what you're gonna learn when you go and see something, and that was the last thing I expected from a drag performer. I'm so glad I went to that.

What can we expect from you in the new year?

I wanna write about different issues with women. I don't want to just stick to the food one. I also wanna do one about these four women – the same four characters and their love relationship. I wanna do another play about them and anger, and them and grief, and then maybe test the waters and start seeing what's out there as far as what I wanna talk about if I were ever going to do a motivational (speaking) thing. Gonna have to see in my gut what feels right, but I think the plays are a bridge to really doing that.

I love that you – insult comic – have now become this emblem of empowerment not just for women but men.

It was funny how gay men really responded to the play, because I think gay men, unfortunately, have just as big of a problem with body image as women do. So, I'm so lucky that they really responded to the show, because, man, who doesn't have a problem with the way they look? It's just so hard. It's nice that they would actually come to me and be like, "I went through that too," which I'm pretty grateful for.

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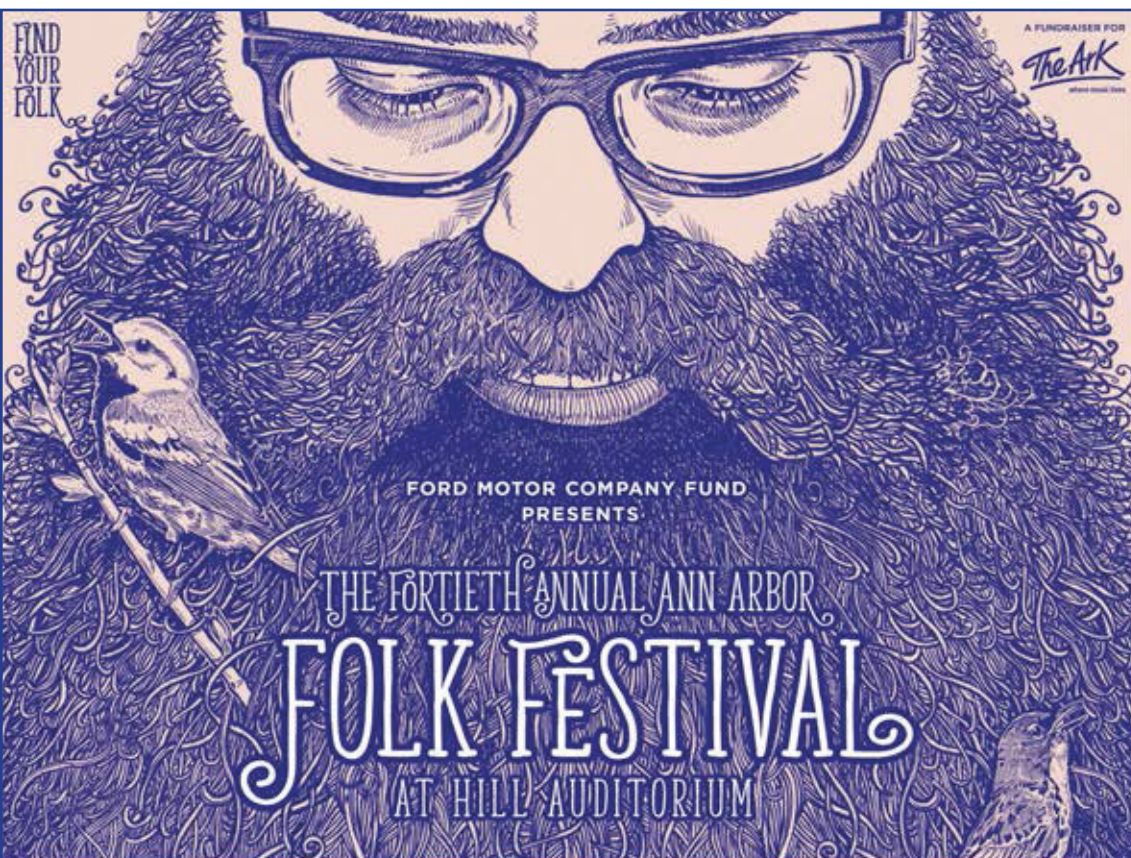
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Showtime's 'Billions' Will Feature Non-Binary Gender Identifying Character

Asia Kate Dillon Represents Non-Binary People for the First Time On Mainstream TV

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

While Asia Kate Dillon – who uses the singular pronoun “they” for identification – is as private as one can be about their personal life as a famous actor, they recognizes the importance of sharing with the public that they identify as non-binary (as a gender other than exclusively male or female.)

“I feel a particular responsibility to portray members of my community on stage and on screen, not only as fully fleshed-out characters who are integral to the plot, but as characters whose gender identity is just one of many parts that make up the whole person,” said Dillon, who joins the “Billions” cast on Showtime as Taylor, a new intern at Axe Capital, the hedge fund run by billionaire Bobby “Axe” Axelrod (Damian Lewis).

The show, which premieres Feb. 19, will feature “fresh, exciting energy,” courtesy of Dillon’s character, who also self-identifies as gender non-conforming. The show is believed to be a first for mainstream television. The co-creators and executive producers Brian Koppelman and David Levien told the Huffington Post that the decision to add a gender non-binary character to the show was simply “an organic process” as opposed to an intentional “social justice” statement.

Prior to “Billions,” Dillon appeared on Netflix’s comedies “Master of None” and “Orange is the New Black,” in which Dillon plays Brandy Epps, an inmate at Litchfield Penitentiary. The performer, writer and director residing in New York City discussed with Between The Lines how they feel about

their groundbreaking role and the importance of being authentic on and off the stage and screen.

You’re making history as one of the first non-binary gender identifying actors to be cast on mainstream TV. What does that mean to you?

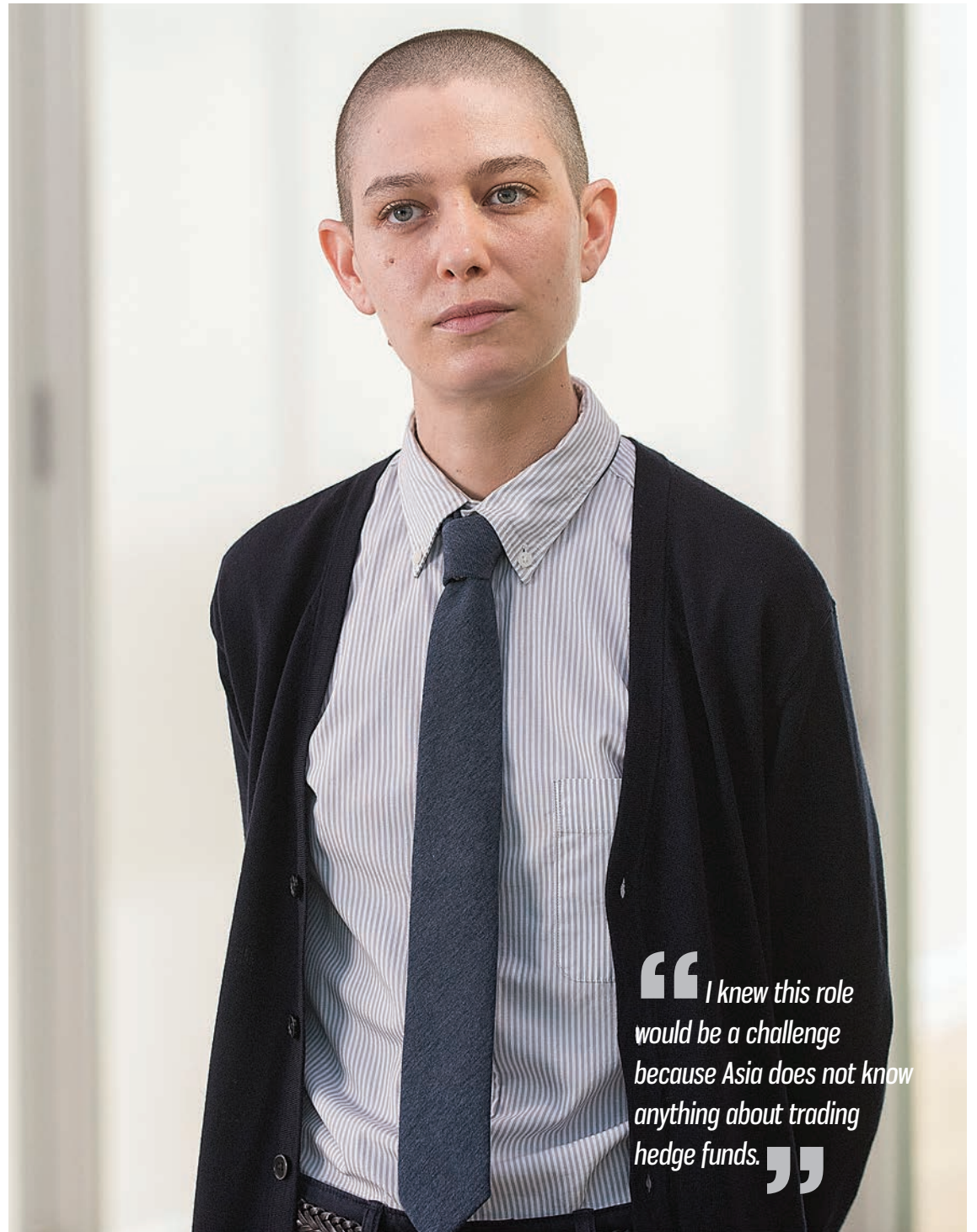
It means visibility. Like you said, in the time we’re in right now, in particular, it’s increasingly important – both visibility and education. I’m proud to be a part of the growing movement of visibility for nonbinary and gender nonconforming folks.

What attracted you to Taylor’s character?

Their intelligence, their ability to cut right to the chase and the fullness of their character on the page.

You told the Huffington Post that it was a “delicious” opportunity learning to navigate power politics in the world of New York high finance. What does that mean?

I knew this role would be a challenge because Asia does not know anything about trading hedge funds. I was able to learn something totally new, which I’m always looking for. I researched initially for my audition and was trying to memorize my lines and one particular speech had a lot of jargon that I didn’t understand. I couldn’t memorize my lines so I looked it up, understood what it meant and the words stuck. In addition to doing our own research, though, if something still doesn’t quite make sense there is a wonderful fellow, a Wall Street consultant named Turney Duff available, for us to ask.



“I knew this role would be a challenge because Asia does not know anything about trading hedge funds.”

Asia Kate Dillon is cast as Taylor in the second season of “Billions,” airing Feb. 19 on Showtime.

When did you know that identifying as non-binary was right for you?

When I got the sides for my “Billions” audition in the spring of 2016 and it said the character of Taylor was nonbinary I looked up the word. Everything clicked for me. I knew from that moment

on that nonbinary was my gender identity.

What has been your experience coming out as non-binary?

Every journey has its struggle, but for the most part I have been surrounded by love and support and

acceptance and understanding and communication. I have friends who have not had that same experience, whether it’s coming out as a different gender identity or sexual orientation. My story matters and all I’m offering is the visibility of another experience.

In a recent post on Instagram, you pointed to your idols, such as David Bowie and Prince, who died in 2016. When people like them leave us, you said it's up to us to face the truth and become each other's idols. How will you embrace that role?

I will strive to embrace my role with humility and grace. Building a public platform has always been important to me, not just as a performer, writer and director but for myself as an activist and caretaker. The point in that post is yes, certainly I am in a very unique position. What I hoped to convey is that we are all in a unique position to be not only our own idols, but each other's as well. And by idol I simply mean, someone who helps lead us toward finding our common humanity. We are the ones we have been waiting for, and if I am among those leading the charge, then I am honored and grateful.

Tell me something fun about yourself that the general public doesn't know about you.

The first thing that comes to mind is that I know how to swing dance. I'm very good at swing dancing. I did it every day for many years but realized I don't want to be a professional swing dancer. I love doing it as much as I can.

The roles you play are not always true to who you are, such as your character Brandy Epps, on "OITNB." Was it a challenge to play the role of a white supremacist?

Challenging is the right word. I always look for a challenge in a job. This role, being the complete opposite of who I am, was a great challenge. I found that, you know, my job as an actor is to research, prepare and inhabit

my character. When I'm done, I leave that character at work. Just like every other acting job I've had, I show up and play the part and leave. It certainly gave me a lot of insight into where white supremacist and neo-Nazis are coming from – a place of fear, not a place of love. This helped frame the way I talk about it when curating and directing "US," a social justice theater piece to drive the Black Lives Matter conversation forward.

Have you ever been misunderstood because of the way you present yourself?

As someone who was assigned female at birth I've had a pretty easy time, although I've certainly had my struggles. I think it's important to mention that there are no safe spaces for non-binary people, especially those of color, who were assigned male at birth. And as the murder of trans women especially is on the rise, non-binary, gender nonconforming and trans visibility, education and support are increasingly more important. To people who see me on the outside, I look hard. I have short hair and tattoos. They meet me and I am, if I may, intelligent, well-spoken – that isn't to say or to make the assumption that someone that falls within that stereotype would be violent or dumb. It's just that I offer a juxtaposition to all of that in the way I present myself. I don't often feel misunderstood, but I am the first person a lot of people have encountered like me. This leads to open conversation and understanding and acceptance.

Season One of "Billions" is available on Showtime now. Season Two premieres Feb. 19 at 10 p.m. ET/PT. Follow Dillon on Twitter @AsiaKateDillon.



Damian Lewis plays Bobby "Axe" Axelrod, seen here in a scene from season two with Asia Kate Dillon. Photo courtesy of Showtime

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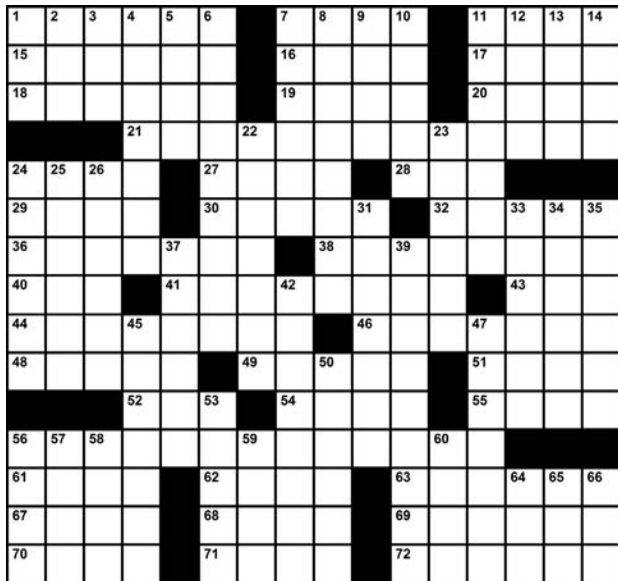
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Q Puzzle



- 41 With 56-Across, 1984 song of 12-Down
 43 Doo-wop syllable
 44 1939 Cukor movie
 46 Tom Courtenay movie, with "The"
 48 Cursive curlicue
 49 Spacey in "Beyond the Sea"
 51 David Bowie's "___ Today, Gone Tomorrow"
 52 Beatty of _Roseanne_
 54 Get better
 55 Piggied out (on)
 56 See 41-Across
 61 Word on a map of Israel
 62 "Gay Cosmos" author Eighner
 63 "Divine" director John
 67 Actor Auberjonois
 68 It can bear fruit
 69 Sibling offspring
 70 Title for Uncle Remus's bear
 71 States further
 72 Walked like a man
- 10 Gin diluter
 11 Skin art
 12 George Michael (1963-2016) and Andrew Ridgeley
 13 Early movie dog
 14 In order (to)
 22 Showed gratitude, after getting an Oscar
 23 Frida's wrap
 24 Lets in
 25 Calm down
 26 Whitman or Wolfe
 31 Ranking Mauresmo, e.g.
 33 Longed for
 34 Stick
 35 Came close to
 37 Broadway deal
 39 Rejections
 42 Bewitched
 45 Sway
 47 Sue Wicks or Robert Mapplethorpe
 50 Gets more mileage out of
 53 Greek triangle
 56 Streisand nickname
 57 "If ___ I Would Leave You"
 58 Just dandy
 59 Barbecue site
 60 Rate at which you come
 64 "The Name of the Rose" author
 65 Carpet color at the Oscars
 66 Away from NNW

Remembering George

Across

- 1 Word that can take "homo" as a prefix
 7 Bottomless
 11 Christmas poem opener
 15 Reign of ___
 16 Stick it in milk
 17 Phrase of discovery
 18 Flowing, for Bernstein
 19 Optimist's phrase
 20 "See ya," in Soho
 21 1984 song of 12-Down that

- ironically describes Dec. 25, 2016 for George Michael
 24 "It's the End of the World ___ Know It"
 27 Queens ballpark
 28 Corp. bigshot
 29 English actress Diana
 30 Bottom
 32 Antony or Caesar
 36 Wet one's lips, e.g.
 38 Reserved
 40 Hairy member of the Addams family

Down

- 1 Tammy Faye's old club
 2 Part of a giggle
 3 URL ending
 4 Lacking support?
 5 Sappho's "I"
 6 Bridge support
 7 Capote's "Other ____, Other Rooms"
 8 Obsolete word
 9 Seal in the juices, to Traci Des Jardins

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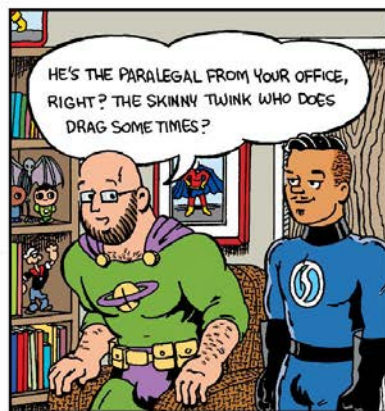
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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Why we're actually glad 'Sex and the City 3' is happening

It's official. The ladies have signed on. There will now be a third "Sex and the City" film. We don't know what it's going to be about. But we're happy, and here's why: the second one was godawful. If you have not yet admitted that to yourself, now is your opportunity. Bloated, tone-deaf, unfunny and glib, the second movie managed to turn off longtime fans – who often comfort-watch the TV series and first film – and give ammunition to those inclined to hate the franchise just for existing. But another shot at restoring the good name of this beloved foursome is very welcome. It'll be a chance to see the brunching, shopping New Yorkers bring heart and soul, not merely style, to middle-age life, something we know can and should be a part of these stories. All it needs is to be handled with care and intelligence, a script that matters, and direction that understands why we loved them in the first place. We're all counting on you "SATC3": don't fuck it up.

The Good Wife' spinoff delivers a lesbian lead

CBS's "The Good Wife" has a spinoff series on the way. It's called "The Good Fight," and will star "Game of Thrones" actor Rose Leslie as Maia, the goddaughter of "Wife" regular Diane (Christine Baranski). Maia will get caught up in a financial scam, one that also affects Diane, and will then have to re-think/jump-start her career. She will also be lesbian, with a regular girlfriend, although CBS declines to comment on that narrative move. It's a terrific hook, and we can't wait to see a lesbian take the lead and simply live her life, rather than be a novelty supporting character. The ensemble cast will include other "Good Wife" actors like Gary Cole, Cush Jumbo and Sarah Steele, alongside newly cast Delroy Lindo ("Chicago Code"), Paul Guilfoyle ("CSI"), Bernadette Peters ("Smash"), Justin Bartha ("The Normal Heart") and Erica Tazel ("Justified"). Get your all-lady watching party set for Sunday, Feb. 19.

Kristin Wiig and Will Ferrell sing for the screen

There is an odd and fascinating book you should read; it's called "Everything's Coming Up Profits: The Golden Age of Industrial Musicals," from Steve Young and Mike Murphy. It's about the history of corporate America employing Broadway song and dance people to perform in industrial shows at corporate conventions. These shows would motivate the salespeople

and push new products, and the Broadway actors would sing their hearts out about air conditioners, sometimes playing the role of the air conditioner. Better yet, some of these shows were recorded and still exist. And now that uniquely weird American story is going to be a movie musical itself. To be produced by Marc Platt ("La La Land"), the film will star Kristin Wiig and Will Ferrell, with a script from Steven Levenson ("Masters of Sex"), and music from Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman ("Hairspray," Broadway's upcoming "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"). We want – no, "need" – to see Kristin Wiig singing the role of a refrigerator, in a love duet with Will Ferrell as a stand-alone freezer. Not that we want anything rushed into production, but please rush this into production and take our ticket money yesterday.



Reba McEntire. Photo: KathClick

Reba McEntire: She's the sheriff

Marc Cherry, gay creator of "Desperate Housewives," has a new series in the works. It has no name, but it has a star in country music legend Reba McEntire. Described as a "Southern Gothic soap opera," the dramatic series is set immediately following a suspected terrorist act at a 4th of July parade in a small Kentucky town. And when the FBI sends a hot-shot Middle Eastern agent to investigate the aftermath, the local sheriff (McEntire) joins him in digging for clues and discovering local secrets. That's everything we know about it for the moment, but we're going to keep an eye on how this develops because it sounds like a strange, "Twin Peaks"-style situation in the making. Also because even though we never watched Reba's sitcom and never will, we loved her in "Tremors" and we want material worthy of her status. Cherry should be able to provide that.

Romeo San Vicente slays Reba's version of "Fancy" at karaoke.



Dr. Paul Benson's

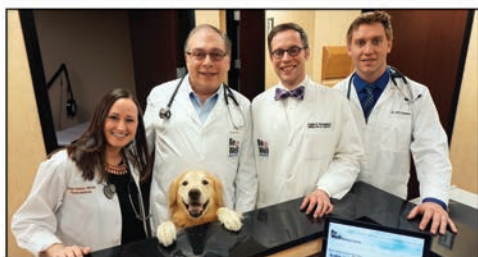
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