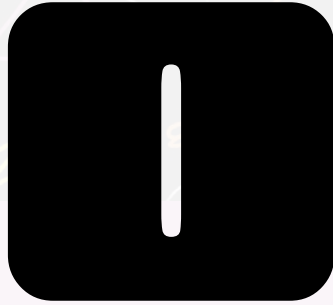


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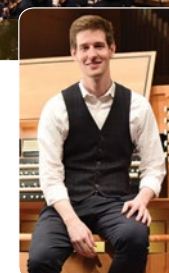
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EDITOR'S NOTE  EMILY MILLS

SO LONG, FAREWELL, I'LL BE AROUND

AFTER NEARLY SEVEN YEARS on the job, this will be my final editor's letter for *Our Lives*. I am incredibly excited to have accepted a new gig in Madison supporting environmental and conservation work statewide, and will have just started that position when this issue hits your mailboxes and newsstands.

The transition is, of course, very bittersweet. My time with *Our Lives* has been indescribably impactful, and I'll be forever grateful to Patrick for taking a chance on me, and for his support and friendship. I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the enormous amount of blood, sweat, and tears he puts into making this publication not only tick, but endure and thrive in a time when so much media—particularly LGBTQ media—has gone under. I've learned a lot through our time as collaborators, and appreciated that we both did our best to hold each other and the magazine accountable to ever-higher standards and responsibility, and answerable and connected to more and more of our diverse community. I learned how

to accept the knocks with grace (most of the time), and to always be committed to listening and doing better.

I'm beyond grateful to each and every person I've had the chance to work with and/or meet via my job here. It's been an absolute privilege and pleasure to get to know so many of the amazing humans who make up our wild and wonderful LGBTQ community not just in Madison, but statewide. My eyes have been continually opened to greater insight, experience, knowledge, and the love that exists in so many corners and subcultures and circles I never knew existed before. It's been a ride, sometimes bumpy and stressful as hell, other times transcendently joyous. I'm grateful for it all.

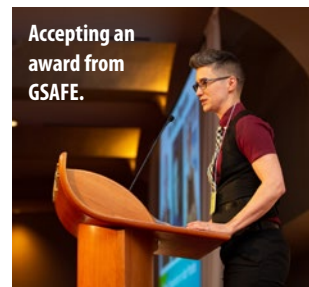
To those of you who directly contributed to the magazine in any way, all my thanks. To those of you who

subscribed, shared with friends, picked us up off newsstands, spoke out when we were vandalized and showed your support in any way, I can't tell you how much it means. Please don't stop! Patrick and *Our Lives* will need all the more support during this time of change, and I can say that some really exciting plans are in the works for the future of the publication. Stay tuned!

It feels somehow fitting that my final issue as editor is our Arts & Entertainment-themed edition. The first article I ever wrote for *Our Lives* was a profile of various LGBTQ-identified musicians in the city, and it's gratifying to see that the list of bands, DJs, and visual, performing, and literary arts folks in the community has only continued to grow and change during the intervening years. The arts make all of our lives more colorful, more meaningful, and serve as a crucial form of community development. Keep looking for ways to directly support those artists and arts facilitators who bring such good into our lives.

You haven't seen the last of me in these pages, though. I'll be tackling freelance reporting work for *Our Lives* for the foreseeable future. This community is an indelible part of me, and I hope to continue being even a small, positive force within in.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you. And take care of each other. ■



Accepting an award from GSAA.

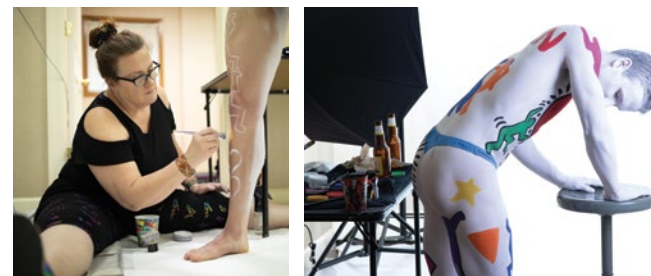


With Publisher Patrick Farabaugh during Pride.

CONTRIBUTORS 



DAWN MARIE HARMS-SVANOE is primarily a self-taught bodypainter who was featured on Season 2 of the bodypainting reality competition, *Skin Wars*. While she did not win, Dawn was on the winning team. She has called Madison home for 23 years, and has worked for MMSD as a Special Education Assistant for 20 of them. Dawn got her start as a costumer working for the original owners of *Clownin' Around*, where she first started face painting and playing with makeup. During that time she met many members of the Madison drag scene and was brought on as a live performer. Dawn started bodypainting in 2004. She also works in other mediums, including costuming/custom headpieces, mehendi, window/mural painting, canvas, pyrography, and haunt set design. She was honored to create the cover's Keith Haring-inspired bodypainting.



RITA MAE REESE is a recipient of a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award, a Stegner fellowship in fiction, a "Discovery"/The Nation award, and a Pamaunok Poetry Prize, among other awards. Her first book, *The Alphabet Conspiracy*, was published by Arktoi Books. Her second book, *The Book of Hulga*, speculates on a Flannery O'Connor character inspired by Simone Weil. It was selected by Denise Duhamel for the Felix Pollak Prize in 2016. She designs lesbian poet trading cards for Headmistress Press and is the Director of Literary Arts at Arts + Literature Laboratory in Madison, WI. Follow her @ritamaeese or visit her at ritamaeese.com.

LAURA DIERBECK is a Milwaukee-based photographer with a passion for adventure imagery. For a year she honed her photo skills while living out of her Jeep and traveling the American West. Upon returning, she opened up her freelance photo business and has had the opportunity to work with the best creative minds in the Midwest. She lives with her girlfriend and adorable puppy in Milwaukee's funky Riverwest neighborhood. lauradierbeck.com.

DAWN MARIE HARMS-SVANOE PHOTOS BY SPENCER MICKA.

2016 National & Regional award winner NARI basement under 30k
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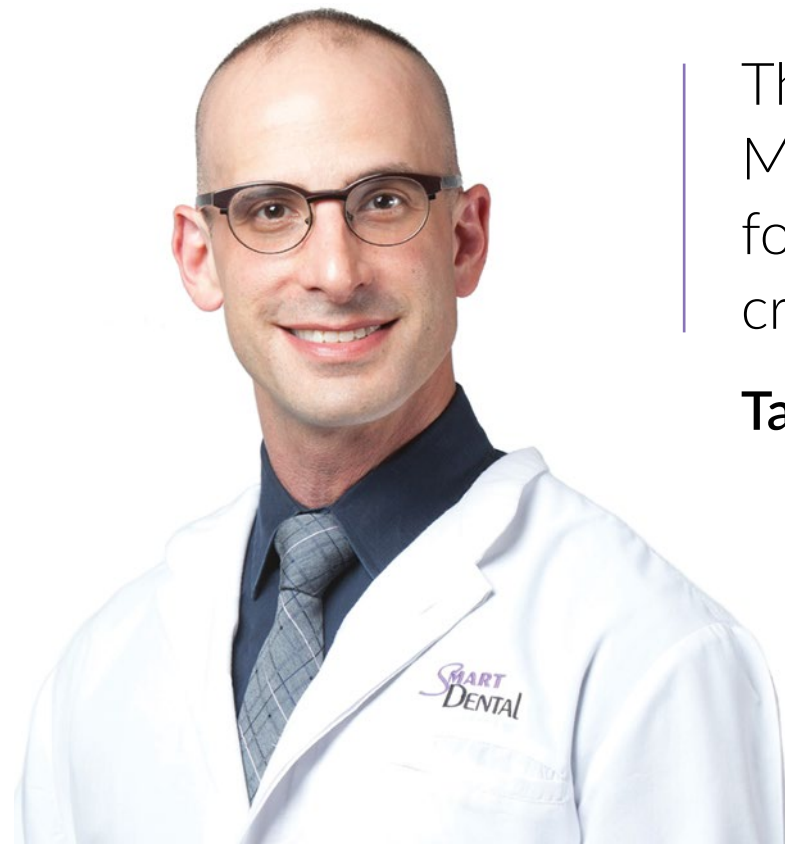


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Madison Mayor Satya
Rhodes-Conway at the GSAFE
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Early Days

Madison Mayor **Satya Rhodes-Conway** reflects on her first 100 days in office,
the joy of Pride month, and the work ahead..

LOCAL POLITICS GOVERNMENT PRIDE

THERE'S NO REAL PREPARATION for the 24-hour job of being mayor. Satya Rhodes-Conway hasn't let that faze her, though. Instead, she jumped in feet-first to the work that goes into managing and guiding the machinations of the City of Madison.

"Do I even have a personal life?" she laughs, only half joking, when asked how the job has impacted her day-to-day. Rhodes-Conway ranks her self-care balance as "pretty OK" at the moment, noting the importance of fueling herself so she can do the work well. She also admits that her partner, Amy, might have more honest input on how that effort toward balance is going.

It's been a busy few months since her swearing-in back in April, and that's not even including the surprise of "MG&E blowing up." The fire and explosion at two transmission substa-

tions in July that turned off power to thousands of residents was, Rhodes-Conway says, quite an educational experience.

She also had the opportunity to travel to New York City for World Pride, and to attend LPAC's Levity & Justice For All event, where she was given the Champion of Change award. It capped off a busy Pride month for the mayor, who enthusiastically made the rounds to various city, community, and business events centered around LGBTQ people here in the Madison area, including raising the rainbow flag over the City-County building and recognizing the anniversary of marriage equality in Wisconsin.

"It's been really meaningful to me, personally, to celebrate Pride in this role," says Rhodes-Conway. "Mostly, I want to say thank you to the LGBTQ community, because I felt really sup-



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ported. People come up to me on the street and at events to thank me and tell me how excited they are. I really feel that support from the community, and I really appreciate it.”

BUILDING THE TEAM

The mayor has mostly been busy putting together her team and getting the ball rolling on major initiatives that were outlined in her campaign: housing, transit, planning for climate change, and equity.

Putting together a strong team is perhaps the most important part of a new administration, says Rhodes-Conway, something that was emphasized when she attended the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative kick-off along with 40 other mayors from around the

“People are going to ask you about what did you do, what policy did you pass, what did you build?” she reflects. “But no, the most important thing is building a strong team, because if you have the strong team, they will pass good policy, and they will build things, and they will get more things underway, and then you have more people working toward the same goals.”

world. The year-long program offers education and professional development for city leaders, with a focus on equipping them with the tools and expertise to effectively lead complex cities.

“People are going to ask you about what did you do, what policy did you pass, what did you build?” she reflects. “But no, the most important thing is building a strong team, because if you have the strong team, they will pass good policy, and they will build things, and they will get more things underway, and then you have more people working toward the same goals.”

Rhodes-Conway has spent considerable time working to put together a team of deputy mayors that represent that philosophy, including Linda Vakunta of Project 1808 and Leslie Orrantia, who formerly worked as a communications official at UW.

“In choosing my core team, it’s really about philosophical alignment,” she says. “Do you get equity? Do you understand why I care so much about sustainability? Are there some core values that we can lean on? I’m looking for diversity, but I don’t mean that just in the sense of race, ethnicity, and gender, but also diversity of thought, diversity of experience and back-

ground, and knowing what my priorities are. I’m looking for people who can advance those.”

For appointments to city committees, too, there’s a certain amount of seeking shared values and philosophical agreement, though Rhodes-Conway says she focuses on determining how that person can help a particular body.

“Whether or not they necessarily agree with me on anything...do they have the skills that can help this body do the work it needs to do?” she says. “Also just as important, do they bring a diverse perspective to this body, whether through their lived experience, their training, their work...can they bring something that nobody else on this body has? To have a greater diversity of experience, which implies that then also we’ve got diversity in terms of gender and race and ethnicity and age and geography.”

LAY OF THE LAND

Another large part of the first 100 days in office has been getting to know and build working relationships with the heads of city departments, alders, and other community stakeholders. Rhodes-Conway has visited every aldermanic district, and she’s met with dozens of area business leaders, 60 community groups, seven area mayors, and countless others.

All of the input gathered helps direct and drive the priorities already laid out by her office, which were developed by listening to the community in the first place. Rhodes-Conway is determined to make sure that the various committees that help push various initiatives and projects are reflective of the communities they serve, too.

“It’s still very hard sometimes,” she says. “There are some committees that everyone applies to be on and there are some committees that nobody applies for! I think we’re doing a pretty good job with appointments, but we are having to do a lot of active recruitment.”

Rhodes-Conway says she makes a point to encourage the people she meets with to recommend folks they know who might be good for a committee or other job.

“I’m just increasingly aware that I don’t know everybody, and my networks are what they are, so where are the points in my networks that are well-connected to other networks and can spread that and help me find people that I don’t know?” she muses.

ON THE MONEY

She and other city staff are also gearing up to tackle the budget in the year ahead, a daunting process at any time but made especially difficult given constraints placed on cities by

the Republican-controlled state legislature. To get through it and keep focus, Rhodes-Conway says, the key is to determine the core function of the city and what the most important things for it to do—that no one else can do—are going to be.

“Next year’s operating budget is going to be really, really challenging,” she admits. “We know going in that there’s going to be a substantial gap, just between our cost to continue and what we know we can raise in revenue. Like \$11 million dollars. It heavily relates to state constraints. But it also relates to our insurance costs, salary costs, debt service that we’re paying. A lot of the operating budget is relatively fixed.”

Bus Rapid Transit continues to be a major point of focus, though much of the funding will have to come from federal grants. The money will go toward building capacity to store new buses, as well as to support the infrastructure of the routes themselves.

Rhodes-Conway is excited at the prospect,

though, and feels like it’s closer than ever to becoming a reality. With buses on the major arteries running every 10–15 minutes, and service ideally connecting Madison to neighboring cities and towns like Sun Prairie and Middleton, the impact on people’s lives would be immeasurable.

TAKING IT ALL IN

In the end, 100 days is just a drop in the bucket in the working life of a city mayor. Rhodes-Conway is energized for the work ahead, and happy to tackle the unexpected twists and turns of the job as they come.

“There are definitely moments when I think, oh this is surreal,” she says. “But actually, people keep asking me what’s surprising or unexpected, and I sort of feel like the answer is ‘everything and nothing.’ Everything is different, everything is a little unexpected, but also it’s just the job. Every day is different. So you just know that there’s going to be something every day that you didn’t expect.” —Emily Mills



LGBTQ Organizations Update

News | Awards | Staff & Board Changes
Calls to Action | Events

Reported by **Emily Mills**

Stay up-to-date with area LGBTQ+ and allied organizations and non-profits, be informed, and get involved.

NEWS

Important notes about area LGBTQ groups.

AIDS RESOURCE CENTER OF WISCONSIN

New this year, the ARCW is announcing that there will be not just one, but three Honorary Co-Chairs for this year’s AIDS Walk Wisconsin & 5K Run. Nationally recognized HIV activists **Cleve Jones**, **Naina Khanna**, and **Mondo Guerra** will all serve as Honorary Co-Chairs to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the largest HIV fundraising event in Wisconsin. AIDS Walk Wisconsin & 5K Run will take place on Saturday, October 5 at the Summerfest Grounds in Milwaukee.

Cleve Jones is a human rights activist, lecturer, and author of *When We Rise*. Mentored by pioneer LGBT activist Harvey Milk, Jones co-founded the San Francisco AIDS Foundation in 1983 and founded The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, one of the world’s largest community art projects. A longtime survivor of HIV, Jones continues to speak and write about the HIV epidemic, and works as an organizer for the hospitality workers’ union, UNITE HERE.

Naina Khanna is a national speaker, trainer, and advocate who has worked in the HIV field since 2005 following her HIV diagnosis in 2002. Khanna is currently Executive Director at Positive Women’s Network, and serves on the Board of Directors for AIDS United, the National Steering Committee for the US People Living with HIV Caucus, as a member of the Women’s HIV Research Initiative, and served on President Obama’s Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS.

Mondo Guerra is a Mexican-American fashion designer who finished as runner-up on Season 8 of Project Runway, and later won the series’ first season of Project Runway All Stars. After coming out as HIV positive on the show, Guerra has become a spokesperson for two national HIV campaigns. Guerra has designed clothing to help advance the conversation about the HIV epidemic, and speaks to audiences about HIV stigma and “AIDS phobia” within the gay community.

FORGE

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MICHAEL'S FROZEN CUSTARD ON MONROE STREET TO CLOSE AFTER OWNER'S SPOUSE DENIED VISA

The husband of Michael's Frozen Custard owner **Michael Dix** is the latest victim of the Trump Administration's ongoing crackdown against immigrants.

Sergio De La O Hernandez has been running the day-to-day operations at the local chain's Monroe Street location since the two were married in 2015. Hernandez had already been living in the United States for over 30 years, having arrived without documentation to seek work. He has lived in Wisconsin ever since, has no criminal record, and has a college-age daughter living in the country.

When Hernandez returned to Mexico in August for a visa interview, he was denied that and re-entry to the U.S. Dix had sponsored Hernandez so that he could obtain legal status. After the request was denied, the couple filed a waiver to excuse the years Hernandez spent in the U.S. without authorization and to show there would be undue hardship for Dix if Hernandez could not return. Their attorney, Jessica Slind, said that waiver was denied Aug. 14, and she plans to file an appeal within the 30-day time frame.

Meanwhile, Dix has said that he intends to stay with Hernandez in Mexico and that the Monroe Street location of the business, which has seen significant decline since Hernandez was forced to leave, will close Sept. 9. The custard and burger joint has been a fixture in the near west side neighborhood for 33 years.

"My separation from Sergio has been extremely painful for both of us and has been disastrous for my business," Dix said in a statement.

"His hardship waiver should have been approved," Slin told the *Wisconsin Examiner*, "We were shocked. I've submitted cases far less compelling than this and got approvals. So for this case be denied, I was not prepared for that."

Slin also cites concerns for Dix's physical and mental health, which have been delicate especially since he began having to travel back and forth from the U.S. to Mexico to see his husband. There are also concerns about their safety as they're forced to remain in a country where the environment for LGBTQ people is especially dangerous.

Meanwhile, residents of the Monroe Street neighborhood are shocked by the decision to bar Hernandez from returning to his home and the impending closure of the business.

"They were good neighbors," longtime neighbor Janine Frank told the *Wisconsin Examiner*. "I hope it makes people think about how immigration affects all of us."

chapters on finding health care and mental health care, accessing restrooms, updating identity documents, crisis resources, coming out, online resources, and resources for providers. The guide is available for free at forge-wi.org/resources/guide/trans-in-wisconsin-guide.

together for four days of community building and leadership development. The group is excited to graduate another cohort of exceptional young leaders. Thank you to everyone who made sure every student who wanted to participate could by making a donation to the Send an Activist to Camp campaign.

GSAFE The organization was recently honored to receive the National Education Association's Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights. GSAFE was one of 12 individuals and organizations recognized at an awards event in Houston, Texas in early July.

GSAFE held its 20th annual Leadership Training Institute in mid-August. Forty high school youth leaders from around the state came

MADISON'S TEKEMA BALENTINE WINS MISS BLACK USA



Madison native **TeKema Balentine**, Miss Black Wisconsin 2019, took the national crown at the competition in early August. The *Madisonian* will now serve as Miss Black USA 2019.

Balentine, 25, is pursuing a nursing degree at Madison College while also serving as an assistant track and field coach at her alma mater, East High School. She competed against 32 other contestants in multiple categories, including personal interview, personal fitness, talent, evening gown, and on-stage question.

"The first person I should thank is my partner, Megan Bentley. She organized all of my appearances; contacted every local media outlet; put a smile on my face, and wiped my tears whenever the journey became tough," Balentine told *Our Lives*. "I would also like to thank local media sources for sharing my story. I'm also thankful for my vocal coaches, Prenicia Clifton and Brooksy Beilke-Skoug, who groomed my performance piece all summer. Without them, I would not have been much competition for the talented women I had the opportunity to perform with."

The Miss Black USA Organization is the first and oldest scholarship pageant for women of color, awarding more than \$500,000 in scholarships, according to the pageant's website. You can learn more about the pageant at MissBlackUSA.org.

The Miss Black Wisconsin contest was the first pageant Balentine had entered as an adult. From the start, she has been insistent on using the platform to help bring visibility and support for the LGBTQ community.

"As Miss Black USA 2019," she added, "I am now able to represent the communities that felt unheard during my years as a child. I'm beyond excited for what this year has in store!"

STAFF / BOARD CHANGES

Who's moving on or moving into org leadership.

DIVERSE & RESILIENT **Osha Towers** has joined the team as the Youth Program Manager. Osha will focus on expanding access to resources, sexual health education, harm reduction, and growth for LGBTQ youth and people of color. D&R also welcomes **Dawn Matlak** as the new Finance and Operations Assistant.

GSAFE The organization bid farewell to several long-term board members who finished their terms in June. Many thanks to **Evelyn Gildrie-Voyles**, **Kameron Williams**, **Jean Haughwout**, and **Beatrice Hadidian** for their years of service. At the same time GSAFE is excited to welcome new board members **Davette Baker**, **Chris Barcelos**, and **Mariah Young-Jones!**

WI LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **Jack Feria** is the chamber's new Membership & Events Coordinator. Originally hailing from Madison, Jack moved to Milwaukee to pursue a career in community engagement. Over the last five years, Jack has served in various development, education, and programming roles with the UWM LGBT Resource Center, Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival, Milwaukee Film, and In Tandem Theatre.

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OCCUPATION WORKPLACE VISIBILITY

Service With Pride

LGBTQ-identified members of the **Madison Fire Department** talk about why LGBTQ representation within firefighting matters, and what drew them to the job.

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Linnea Anderson

Fire Lieutenant
Paramedic
20 Years

IT'S IMPORTANT FOR OUR Fire Department to reflect the community we serve, so we are relatable to everyone. To be out and visible also shows young members of the LGBTQ+ community that the Fire and EMS Services could be a future career for them, too.

Athletics were always a huge part of my life, so the team aspect was a great fit. We work closely as a crew of two paramedics on the ambulance and four on the engines and ladders; with all six of us on EMS calls and with multiple crews on fires and larger incidents.

Being a Firefighter/Paramedic is both a physical and mental challenge, with the adventure of every day being different. We never know what 911 call we will be responding to next and who we will meet along the way. I also don't have to wear dress-up clothes to work!



Lori Karst

Fire Apparatus Engineer
25 Years

TO BEST SERVE the community, reflecting the community is essential. Being visible is a power we need to acknowledge, the same as our voices. I probably wouldn't have turned to firefighting if I hadn't seen another woman on a neighboring department doing this as a

career choice. Visibility can be an a-ha moment and cause many ripples in lives.

I chose to become a firefighter to be challenged physically and mentally, in the capacity of helping others. The bonus is not having to wear dressy clothes.



Tamara Dinkel

Firefighter / Paramedic
3 Years

IT'S IMPORTANT to represent the LGBTQ community because as firefighters/paramedics we and reflect the faces of the diverse community we serve. Through our diversity we gain our greatest strengths, find commonalities and embrace our differences.

I began the journey of becoming a FF/PM 10 years ago. I heard the call after thriving through Stage 3 breast cancer. I have always had a passion to serve those who needed help. During the journey I experienced while going through cancer treatment, I was shown so much support, care, compassion, and pure humanity not only from my family and friends, but from complete strangers, too. This was

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the catalyst to making a life-changing and career-changing decision. I vowed to spend my life paying forward all that I have been blessed to receive. It is an honor and privilege to be a City of Madison Firefighter/Paramedic.



Maj Williams

Firefighter/Paramedic
3 Years

OUR PROFESSION represents what the civilians of Madison stand for: safety within our community, people willing to serve others when in need, and compassion. Our job can be done regardless of who people are/identify as.

I became a firefighter after being approached by two gentlemen at my local gym. They opened my eyes to the possibility that you could make a career out of this profession and were looking to get more women on the local Fire Department.



Becky Blaschka

Firefighter/Paramedic
18 Years

DIVERSITY is so important because having individuals with a wide range of backgrounds and experience makes the department as a whole much stronger. Related to LGBTQ representation, I think it's important for fire departments to represent and be able to

identify with the community that they serve. Madison has a strong LGBTQ community, so it's great to see that reflected in the MFD.

I became a firefighter because I wanted a career that was rewarding and challenging, both physically and mentally. As a Firefighter/Paramedic, every day brings new challenges. There is always something new to learn about or something we can train on to improve our skills. You never know when a call will come through or what it will be for, but every call is a chance to help someone. It's a great feeling to be able to serve my community in a way that directly impacts citizens.



Patrick Tomko

Firefighter/Paramedic
22 Years

I WAS IN MY MID-LATE 20s and was making a significant career change. I had already been affiliated with a fire service in Illinois, serving as their chaplain. In that role, I learned that the women (of which there was only one) and men I served had incredible satisfaction with their chosen careers. I had already been in a service-oriented profession and had also been hired as a paid, on-call firefighter for that same department. Once I had decided to move to Madison (a primary reason for the move was for a relationship), I had missed that biennium's application process by two months. Two years later, I applied and was hired in the first round of my first application process. The only self-disclosure of my orientation on my application was that I was "single."

Carri Holloway

Fire Lieutenant
12 Years

I STARTED MY CAREER in Kansas as a closeted lesbian. I did not want my brothers within the fire service to think less of me after I worked so hard to earn their respect. The thing is that there are LGBTQ members of the community in Kansas, just like in Wisconsin, so I was making a positive difference and didn't even know it.

Now in Wisconsin and older, I'm finally living my life open and happy. I am still making a difference within the community, whether educating a member of the fire department or being an advocate for a LGBTQ member within the community. Being a positive member of the fire service and a lesbian shows that doing what you love has nothing to do with who you love.

As a career firefighter one never knows how the day will play out. Having the challenge to be prepared to help anyone with any problem drives me to keep learning. I started as a volunteer and enjoyed the feeling of showing up and fixing what was wrong. I still have that feeling today as a Lieutenant; however, now I have the responsibility/challenge to make sure that each member has the knowledge to answer the call of the public. ■

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QTPOC DRAG PERFORMERS

The Queens of Color

Local performer and activist **Dana Pellebon** profiles some of the Madison area's **drag queens of color** and helps us all get to better know these varied and dynamic performers who are part of putting the city's drag scene on the map.

MADISON'S VIBRANT DRAG SCENE is on the rise. Led by a fierce group of queens, local venues like Five Nightclub and Prism have been instrumental in keeping the scene alive and growing. I had the opportunity recently to talk with several local queens of color. With a scene that is rich in diversity, these performers further actual representation of performers of color onstage. The resilience of each performer to keep pushing for their ideals and keep learning was inspirational.

I would be remiss to not give a special mention to Dave Eick of Five Nightclub. He was consistently mentioned as being a huge supporter of the scene in Madison and of performers in general. His leadership, especially in the pageant system, has been instrumental in opening doors for and giving opportunities to our queens.

ANYA KNEES

Born and raised in Chicago, Anya Knees moved to Madison with a solid performance history under her belt. A triple-threat singer, actor, dancer, Anya spent her childhood performing in church, school, and with the local Boys & Girls Club. When *RuPaul's Drag Race* first aired, and then Anya attended a drag show at the UW, it dramatically changed her performance track. Drag became the focus.

Anya is a solid performer and one of the hardest working queens in town. She performs three to four times a week. While this hard work has paid off, many performers of color feel as if they have to work twice as hard to get the same recognition afforded to white performers.

Anya is on it. Self-taught through tutorials and by watching fellow performers, she keeps up with the latest trends in makeup and, as for many of us, deconstructing her face after a performance can be quite a feat.

Performing is where Anya shines. Her favorite piece of the drag queen puzzle is audience interaction. One day after a performance, an audience member approached Anya to let her know that she needed to hear the song that Anya had performed to, and what it meant to her. "Art is subjective; you can touch people through your art," Anya notes.

When asked about the one thing that people in Madison should know about her or the drag scene here, her answer struck me right to the core:

"Just because there are a few queens of color, we are not the same. We do different things. Speaking out is not being a troublemaker. Right is right and wrong is wrong. If we are about inclusivity, then everyone should be included."

VANILLA S. DIAMOND

Another theater and choir kid growing up, Vanilla S. Diamond took some time off from performing after high school. A community theater production of *The Wizard of Oz* reawakened the acting bug, though. While Vanilla was always aware of drag, being in clubs and around other queens, she had never pursued performing it herself. Then one day, "Drag just happened," she says. Vanilla firmly feels that drag "picked" her, and I for one am glad she was chosen.



Anya Knees



Vanilla S. Diamond



Persephone B. Diamond



Amethyst Von Trolenberg

A former cast member at Plan B and last reigning Queen B before the change to Prism, Vanilla knew from the start of her career that a coveted spot on stage in the cool local nightclub would be an "18-year-old gay boy's dream come true." She got that first chance at Five Nightclub. There she solidified her belief that music is the universal language and felt her first adrenaline rush of performing as a queen.

The irony of her journey through drag is how her reluctance toward makeup as a young performer has now turned into a great passion. Learning the tricks of the trade made it more fun. Finding out that the adrenaline rush and butterflies from the first time Vanilla was introduced is still the same when she steps on stage now, her "inner sparkle" awakens every time they call her name on stage.

Feeding off the energy of the crowd allows her to incorporate her culture into her art. Performances that feature artists like Selena have allowed Vanilla to be "loud and proud" about her Hispanic heritage. Being a drag performer also helped Vanilla overcome the fear of coming out to her family, who are all hugely supportive.

"Just because there are a few queens of color, we are not the same. We do different things. Speaking out is not being a troublemaker. Right is right and wrong is wrong. If we are about inclusivity, then everyone should be included."

In a scene that is growing and booming, it's important to recognize that all queens of color have a bond but, aesthetic-wise, they are all different. Being open to adapting, stepping out of her comfort zone, and asking questions helps Vanilla realize in moments of doubt that she is here for a purpose. Vanilla is determined to allow the path to lead where it may as long as she "keeps the love of performing in my heart."

PERSEPHONE B. DIAMOND

Persephone B. Diamond grew up performing from a young age. Her mother was also a dancer and had a Latin dance troupe, with queens as members, that focused on Mexican Folklorico. For years, that was the sole focus of Persephone's performance. One fateful evening, though, a friend in the group needed a backup dancer for a pageant. When she saw the competition, the pageantry, and the hair and makeup, she fell in love.

Persephone started performing at local Latin nights. As she grew in popularity, she was booked in clubs around the Midwest—if she kept to traditional drag. Clubs were very hesitant about allowing numbers that were only in Spanish. Persephone's passion for Mexican Folklorico, however, kept her pushing to incorporate more diverse numbers.

"Cultural performances are appreciated and important," she says. "(The audience) may not understand the language but they have visuals and dance (to connect with)." Persephone found this to be true the first time she did a Mexican Folklorico number for a drag brunch in Minneapolis. The audience loved it, and she has since been able to incorporate more of her culture into performances at many different venues.

With all the talk of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, Persephone entered a local version of the hit show. *Charlie's Chicago Survivor Season 2* is a reality program that challenges the queens to runway and personal challenges to avoid elimination. When asked about a favorite moment of competition, Persephone brought up the Drama/Show Off Who You Are challenge. She was able to incorporate both Folklorico and traditional dress (in



DANA PELLEBON is a bisexual performer and advocate in Madison. Her day job is working with survivors of sexual violence. She is also active in the arts in Madison through music, theater, and burlesque. Most importantly, she is the mother to an amazing kid.

sequins) into her runway competition. She not only walked away with the win, but also went on to become the winner of that entire season.

Persephone's mother and boyfriend make her costumes. She creates and styles her own wigs out of her salon, Touch of Vanity LLC. Her biggest passion is feedback from and interactions with the audience. She takes great joy in opportunities to chat with audience members. When asked for some final words of wisdom, Persephone says, "Don't settle. Always look for opportunities. Work hard. Keep growing and learning."

AMETHYST VON TROLLENBERG

Amethyst always wanted to wear beautiful things, sing, and perform. Then she saw queens on the internet and decided "that was for me." However, taking that next step was extremely difficult due to anxiety. One day, though, she realized that what she loved about drag was the ability to see herself the way that she always wanted to be seen. Amethyst took a risk and was ultimately able to see the beauty within herself.

As other performers have noted, the scene has opened up more in the last few years for queens of color. The rich culture and history of Black drag has been inspiring for Amethyst. She takes that history and works to raise awareness that people of color are not a monolith and have varied styles of performance. In particular, she says she has seen significant changes from Five Nightclub, which recently added a "Mx" category to give space for non-binary people to participate in the pageants.

Amethyst takes risks that not everyone understands. She recently added elements of body positivity into her acts. A statement on feeling good about one's body was slow to catch on but people are starting to get it.

Amethyst is constantly updating, too. She knows that queens don't have the privilege to rest on their laurels. From taking a stand on body positivity to crafting a banging number set to a Carly Rae Jepsen song, she says, "No matter what, when I am onstage, I am working to give the best and newest product I can." ■

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT OPEN MICS COMEDY

Once a Week

Host **Cal Smith** talks about the LGBTQ-affirming performance space provided by the **Sunday Slam**, a weekly open mic that centers queer folks and people of color.

Its queer, women, and POC- prioritizing stance sets it miles apart from most every other open mic I have been to—throughout the U.S. and beyond—which are always dominated by (usually white cis het) men.

I first met Dina Nina Martinez in January of 2018. Many folks encouraged me to reach out to her to answer my questions about pursuing comedy. I asked myself, “Who is this woman? And why does everyone want me to meet her?”

Martinez runs Lady Laughs Comedy, a feminist and women-focused comedy collective that offers classes and produces festivals. I took a few of her courses in 2018. Before I was even finished with level two, I was booking comedy gigs that take most folks a few years to get to, performing showcases (and getting paid), and being offered a hosting gig less than six months after starting. I went from starting with 8 to 10 minutes of material to being asked to do a 30-minute set in a matter of months.

By the end of the Martinez’s level two course, we had started performing at Art In, a local DIY space for artists on Madison’s near east side. It morphed into an open mic night.

Martinez created the Sunday Slam Stand-Up Open Mic to create a safe space for women and LBGTQ+ folks to perform. The reality is that if you are not a white cisgender heterosexual man, open mics can be nightmares, fraught with endless genital jokes, misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism, and transphobia. I can attest to how many times I’ve waited for hours to perform for five minutes, only to be forced to endure some of the most awful and insensitive jokes I have ever heard along the way.

Martinez handed the Sunday Slam over to me and another classmate, Alicia Buskirk, in the spring of 2018. Taking over was definitely a challenging learning experience for us, specifically regarding how to create and foster a safer space for marginalized folks in the comedy and storytelling world. Creating a space that was explicitly feminist that supported and prioritized women, LBGTQ+ folks, and people of color proved to be especially difficult.

Nevertheless, Alicia and I were there every week to make the Sunday Slam happen. Last

fall, however, Alicia moved away, and I was briefly displaced and had to move out of town. The Sunday Slam abruptly ended. It wasn’t until I returned to Madison in January 2019 when I considered restarting it.

It became clear there was a need for this particular space in the Madison comedy scene. It offers an inclusive setting for marginalized folks who are just starting out and/or looking to hone their crafts in comedy or storytelling.

The series has been back for over six months, and I’m glad I decided to restart it. As much work as it is, there’s so much positivity that comes from it.

“It is my home base,” slam regular Mary Schumacher told me. “I’ve been warmly welcomed, encouraged by Cal and others, made friends, had fun, performed, and improved.”

Another comedian, Lalita Dee, told me that “the Sunday Slam was the first open mic I ever attended as a performer, and it remains my favorite. Its queer, women, and POC- prioritizing stance sets it miles apart from most every other open mic I have been to—throughout the U.S. and beyond—which are always dominated by (usually white cis het) men. The comedy scene is notoriously treacherous for women, trans folx, and POC, and to have an open mic that is actively inclusive and welcoming is much more revolutionary than you’d think would be necessary in 2019!”

Comments like these make the work more than worth it. The Sunday Slam continues to be a place for folks from all walks of life to perform, from young, queer international students to comedians in town from California, to all of our local talent. We have also inspired attendees to try out stand-up! It is an honor to see the evolution of a space I helped to create and maintain, and to see new performers blossom.

We’ve created one giant queer family and a place where marginalized comedians can share their real world experiences. I encourage attendees to harness their lived experiences to laugh at the most ridiculous, mundane, amazing, and sometimes wholly unfair things about life when one is a woman, queer, and/or trans person, or person of color.

One of the four rules at the Sunday Slam is “Laugh, C’mon Laugh.” This has been my guiding principle in hosting the mic, and also handling whatever life throws my way.

The Sunday Slam Stand-Up Open Mic is hosted by Cal Smith every Sunday at 6:00 p.m. at the Art In (1444 E. Washington Ave.). More information can be found on Facebook @ SundaySlamOpenMic. ■



“WHEN ARE YOU PERFORMING AGAIN?” a friend asked as they chased me down in the parking lot of High Noon Saloon.

It was August 2017, the first time I performed a mixture of stand-up comedy and storytelling at a Trans Liberation Art Coalition Showcase.

“I don’t know, I kind of expected to bomb and never perform again,” I replied.

Everything I read online left me expecting to do terribly my first time on stage, but I had the completely opposite experience. Little did I know, but I was about to embark on my own journey with comedy and with life.



ALLYSHIP WORKBOOKS TRANSGENDER NONBINARY

A Lesson in Allyship

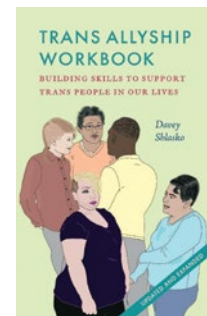
A brief commendation for Davey Shlasko’s **Trans Allyship Workbook: Building Skills to Support Trans People in Our Lives**.

LANGUAGES ADAPT as cultures progress. How we talk about ourselves reflects how we think and feel about ourselves. I felt that struggle growing up in an era when we were supporting our friends/siblings/community members/loved ones and trying to explain to our parents that being gay and lesbian was not something to be feared and that we needed help and love navigating the AIDS crisis. That era was a milestone, but not the end of navigating and breaking through stereotypes.

I find, as I get older, that I, too, need assistance navigating the verbal changes that accompany the growing awareness of our trans communities. My children tried to explain gender pronouns to me, but I found that I was lost in a maze of terms that were just not familiar to me. I had an incident at the grocery store where I clearly hurt a clerk by using an incorrect gender label. I had assumed the correct pronoun, when I really should have stepped back and not assumed. I felt terrible, but also caught in my awkward unfamiliarity with how to deal with a situation and my rootedness in outdated verbiage. In addition, I felt even more caught up from all the language training I had by studying a handful of European languages where each verb is attached to an implied or stated “he/she/it” pronoun. I had spent a lot of time training my limitations.

Enter Shlasko’s workbook. Shlasko gives clear strategies and advice for dealing with the pronoun conundrum, but that is only a part of allyship. They give reflections and practice exercises to help you get through some of the issues you might be dealing with. That is my kind of help, and I love doing the work to change my habits. The book does not just deal with the issue of pronoun appropriateness, but is a thorough guidebook for what it means to be an ally. It addresses responsibility surrounding that term and offers suggestions on how to take actual steps to be an ally rather than just intellectually affirming a need for allyship.

There are many great things about Shlasko’s book, but I was totally surprised by one thing—it is a great read on top of being useful.



Shlasko’s friendly tone and respect for the feelings behind this multifaceted issue make it hard to put the book down. I am in need of buying a second copy so that I can loan it out while still having a copy to refer to and work with. These practices and reflections are things that will take some time to get good at, but as I practice my new verbal skills, as I become more aware of what others are going through, as I take action rather than sit on the sidelines, I become a more adept ally for my friends/siblings/community members/loved ones to have in their lives. With Shlasko’s book, I feel a new confidence for these endeavors.

Available online at thinkagaintraining.com/ shop and at A Room Of One’s Own Bookstore. —Jules Wolf Stenzel



“We loved working with Curt and Janean. The results are enjoyed aesthetically and functionally every day!” **PAULA & ANN**



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Sept & Oct.

The days get just a bit cooler, and the sights and sounds of the harvest in the fields and students returning to campus fill the air—it must be autumn in Madison!

For more LGBTQ-specific events, see our Organization Events on page 15.



Schalk



Kane



Banks

OCTOBER

18

OUTREACH AWARDS BANQUET Monona Terrace

The annual awards and banquet benefits OutReach's various support groups and services for the LGBTQ community in Madison. Expect moving speeches, great food, good community, and a little bit of drag.

outreachmadisonlgbt.org

2019 OutReach Award Winners
LGBTQ Advocate: Dr. Sami Schalk
OutReach Volunteer: Karen Kane
Organization: Pediatric & Adolescent Transgender Health Clinic
Courage Award: T Banks
Board of Director's Special Recognition: Community Pride Coalition

SEPTEMBER

10

CIRQUE DREAMS JUNGLE FANTASY

Overture Center for the Arts
Directed and reimaged by renowned theatrical and circus impresario Neil Goldberg, Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy is an exotic encounter inspired by nature's unpredictable creations that appeared on Broadway to critical acclaim.
overturecenter.org

14-15

WILLY STREET FAIR Williamson Street

The 42nd annual street fair returns to usher in the official end of summer in Madison with five stages of music (main, WORT Underground, Folk, Beats, and a kids stage), tons of local food and retail vendors, performance art, and the most Madison street parade ever (Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m., starting at Prism). All free!
cwd.org/willy-street-fair

15

BIKE THE BARNs Southcentral Wisconsin

The bicycle tour hits its 13th year with visits to 3-4 farms, featuring gourmet local food, craft libations, on-farm activities, and live music. Proceeds benefit the FairShare CSA Coalition.
csacoalition.org

25

WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER'S BUSINESS AWARDS & SHOWCASE Italian Conference Center, Milwaukee

Spend the evening toasting the chamber's 2019 Business Award Winners, learning about the growth of the organization and where it's headed next, and connect with other businesses that share your values.
wislgbtchamber.com

17-22

THE BOOK OF MORMON Overture Center for the Arts

This outrageous (and multi-award-winning) musical comedy follows the misadventures of a mismatched pair of missionaries, sent halfway across the world to spread the Good Word. The Washington Post says, "It is the kind of evening that restores your faith in musicals."
overturecenter.org

27-29

MADISON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA SEASON PREMIERE Overture Center for the Arts

Wagner and Debussy explored tonal sensuality, and Dvořák prayed that his paeon to the Czech nation would "move the world" (it did). But Barber's powerful Toccata will move you in Greg Zelek's masterful performance on the Colossal Klais.
madisonsymphony.org

OCTOBER

4-10

STAGEQ'S "DOG SEES GOD" Bartell Theater

Madison's LGBTQ theater makes its season premiere with this dark and brutally honest twist on the Peanuts comic strip. The play centers around CB, a high school bully, who has to put down his beloved beagle after a rabid rampage. In his depression, CB unexpectedly connects with Beethoven, a childhood friend who has become the target of his group's homophobic bullying. CB thinks he's found both a relationship and a means to rebel against his predictable doormat persona... but he may have to lose everything to gain peace of mind.
stageq.org

5

AIDS WALK AND 5K RUN Summerfest Grounds, Milwaukee

Join honorary Co-Chairs Naina Khanna, Mondo Guerra, and Cleve Jones, for the annual fundraiser to benefit the life-saving work of the ARCW in Wisconsin. With 5k run/walk options along the lakeshore and live entertainment.
aidswalkwis.org

13

GSAFE'S TRICK OR TROT Franklin Elementary School

Support GSAFE at their annual run/walk event! A perfect early fall outing for the family with free face painting for kids before the race. The Kid's Dash will be a two-block mini-run complete with cheering and a prize for participating. The

5K-ish route features three trick-or-treat stations. Young ones in strollers and dogs on leashes are welcome.
gsafevi.org

18

BUSINESS EQUALITY LUNCHEON Pfister Hotel, Milwaukee

Cream City Foundation's 11th gathering is Southeastern Wisconsin's premier corporate event focusing on the state of LGBTQ+ communities in the business sector.
creamcityfoundation.org

18-20

RACHEL BARTON PINE PLAYS KHACHATURIAN Overture Center for the Arts

Madison Symphony Orchestra sees the debut of violinist Rachel Pine, as you hear three brilliant Soviet composers who all prove they deserve their wild popularity: Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Shostakovich.
madisonsymphony.org

NOVEMBER

1-2

FREAKIN' HALLOWEEND High Noon Saloon

Wear your best costume and take in the stellar line-up of local musical all-stars paying tribute to some of their favorite bands. Costume contests both nights with cash and gift prizes. So far, this year's line-up includes tributes to Culture Club, Prince, Elton John, The Doors, Indigo Girls, Sarah Maclachlan, Tool, and The Cure.
high-noon.com



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19/20 Season

Fundraisers
Music & Meatloaf
October 19th
Midvale Lutheran Church

Cabaret: Heroes & Villains
March 13th & 14th
The Brink Lounge



AUGUST 17 WOOFs Pride Block Party



AUGUST 18 OutReach Magic Pride Festival



PHOTOS BY PATRICK FARABUAGH



AUGUST 16 New Harvest Foundation 35th Gala



PHOTOS BY IAN DEGRAFF

AUGUST 18 QTPOC Pride (at OutReach Magic Pride Festival)



PHOTOS BY DUKE VIRGINIA & TRUE THAO



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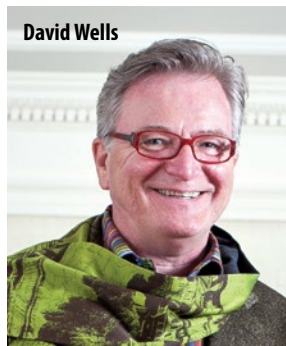


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DJ Avalon



David Wells



Gender Confetti



Angela Richardson



OD Kimani



Michael Velliquette



Anna Campbell



Dina Nina Martinez



T Banks

The Great Madison LGBTQ+ Artist Survey of 2019

MADISON'S ARTS SCENE is always popping, and LGBTQ+ identified people bring so much of the color and variety to the scene. Through everything from live music to mixed media, teaching to curation, dance to poetry and literature, queer folks have long contributed enormously to the artistic fabric of the community. To honor those creative efforts, we've put together what we hope will become an annual survey of LGBTQ artists and bands with LGBTQ-identified members in the Madison area. May it serve to spread awareness and appreciation of their work!

As always, this is by no means a completely comprehensive list. We reached out to our various networks for names and resources, and did our best to get permission before including them on the list. We hope to continue building on this survey in future years, so feel free to reach out with recommendations at contact@ourlivesmadison.com.

PERFORMING ARTS: BANDS

ONCE A MONTH [FACEBOOK.COM/ONCEAMONTHBAND](https://facebook.com/onceamonthband)

The "lofi brat punk" duo of Margaret Dryer (guitar and vocals) and Tessa Echeverria (beats and vocals) of Half Stack Sessions and Williamson Magnetic Recording.

'90SDREAMBOY [FACEBOOK.COM/90SDREAMBOY](https://facebook.com/90sdreamboy)

Self-described as "the new hot boy band on the block," the group is a passion project built with the intention of creating an intimate setting with a dash of nostalgia. The trio is made up of Ash (bass/vocals), Danielle (guitar/vocals), and Vivian (drums/vocals).

AKIYA ALEXANDER [SOUNDCLOUD.COM/KILOAKASKITLZ](https://soundcloud.com/kiloakaskitlz)

The hip-hop artist and emcee won Female Artist of the Year at the 2015 Madison Hip Hop Awards, establishing herself as one of the top emcees in the Madison area. She brings an R&B sensibility to pointed and smooth flows.

BONE HOLLER [FACEBOOK.COM/BONEHOLLER](https://facebook.com/boneholler)

Like if Johnny Cash were made of four women, two guitars, a bass, a kickdrum, and spite. You'll hear songs about death, destruction, and murder, all with laughs and comradery. The band is Ellie Erickson, Maggie Maggerson, Molly K Mitchell, and Iris Hutchings.

CNL The solo project of Proud Parents member Claire Nelson-Lifson, a singer and guitarist.

DAMSEL TRASH [DAMSELTRASH.BANDCAMP.COM](https://damseltrash.bandcamp.com)

The filthy, feminist, and very queer punk-rock duo of Meghan Rose and Emily Mills may now split their time as a band between Madison and NYC, but their more sporadic live shows always bring the fun.

DANA AND THE JOANIS [FACEBOOK.COM/DANAANDTHEJOANIS](https://facebook.com/danaandthejoanis)

Dana Perry (formerly of She She) brings her powerhouse vocals and expert rhythm guitar to Jenna Joanis' nuanced, groove-heavy drumming, with poignant original songs of an evolutionary folk rock variety.

DEQUADRAY [DEQUADRAY.ART](https://dequadray.art)

An interdisciplinary artist, Dequadray's music offers pointed social commentary with a sly grin and a smooth tenor. He's become a regular at queer art and music shows in town, and also hosts writing workshops and produces engaging music videos.



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The Rabble Rousers



GENDER CONFETTI

genderconfetti.bandcamp.com

PERFORMING ARTS / MUSIC It's been a big year for Gender Confetti. The self-described "cute queer punk" duo of Elyse Clouthier (drums/vocals) and Sylvia Johnson (guitar/vocals) set off on a multi-week Midwest-to-East-Coast tour in late July after releasing their first full studio album, "We're Gay," on Madison-based Maneuvers Records, which Johnson founded specifically to support queer and trans artists.

The duo pulls sonic inspiration from a wide range of genres, including riot grrrl, surf rock, hardcore, pop punk, and disco glam. Their message is radical and explicitly political, all set to catchy, crunchy, danceable hooks. Their first EP, "Queers of Joy," focused predominantly on issues of queer liberation, while the new record goes even further, into "liberation for all."

Songs also cover polyamory, trans rights, ethical communication, mutual care, romantic friendships, experimental sex, and shattering binaries.

Gender Confetti has become a staple on the Madison music scene, particularly at queer-thrown shows and basement parties alike. Both members have played music in Madison for years, Clouthier in bands including Clean Room and Lurk Hards and Johnson in projects including the electronic-pop solo project Midas Bison and under the DJ Hitachi moniker. But they both seem to realize that Gender Confetti has resonated with audiences in a much bigger way than anything either musician has done before.

"Being vulnerable is very powerful," Clouthier says, reflecting on Gender Confetti's quickly won popularity. "Being genuine allows others to open up. Queers, gender deviants, communists, anarchists, socialists, people fighting for liberation and social justice can all relate to something in the lyrics."

The music itself is indeed powerful, making room for hurt, humor, and righteous fury, often all in the same breath. It also comes along at a moment when queer people are making a renewed push for visibility and inclusion in music scenes and in every other societal context.

"A lot of trans/queer/GNC folx feel really unsafe in a lot of DIY punk situations because of toxic masculinity and rape culture," Johnson says. "I think people, especially queer women and femmes, feel comfy at our shows."

Going forward, the duo wants to explore a broader range of sounds, including songs that incorporate more overt elements of both pop and hardcore. Clouthier and Johnson are working on a couple of songs specifically aimed at queer youth, which they plan to perform this September at Haystack Weekend, a gathering in Maine for LGBTQ students.

(A portion of this article originally appeared at tonemadison.com, written by Scott Gordon, and is used with permission.) ■

DUMPSTER DICK DUMPSTERDICK.BANDCAMP.COM

Queers to the front! The post-hardcore band from Madison is made up of all trans, all queer folks. Growing up in scenes dominated by macho posturing where expressions of femininity or queerness made them feel unsafe, the members of Dumpster Dick decided to take the music they love and bring it to other people marginalized by the male-dominant punk and metal scenes. They are by and for queers everywhere.

THE HASBIANS FACEBOOK.COM/THEHASBIANS

Hard rocking and no nonsense, with a dash of eerie and oddball sounds of the theremin. The band's motto is "we do what we want!" Can't argue with that. Members are Jaime Jones (bass), Jill Malicious (guitar/vocals), Emmalee Pearson (theremin/vocals), and Carmela Wiese (drums).

HELLMUFF Currently undergoing reconstruction, the group plays in-your-face, unforgiving punk/rock with blues undertones and tackles hard-hitting subject matter. Blythe Gamble (vocals) of the Rolling Dice fronts the band along with Maggie Maggerson, Michael Pann, and Shannon Callaway.

ILANA BRYNE SOUNDCLOUD.COM/ILANAMUSIC

A veteran of the rave scene and former fixture in the drum & bass community of Minneapolis (where she DJ'd under the alias Ricochet), Bryne calls Madison home and continues to make groove-heavy electronic/dance music, with house, breakbeat, and downtempo influences.

JULIA MCCONAHAY FACEBOOK.COM/JULIAMCCONAHAYMUSIC

The new project showcasing Madison violin virtuoso and multi-MAMA winner Julia McConahay pairs her with members of Crycopia performing aerial dance. Irish-rock infused music paired with astonishing spectacle.

KAT AND THE HURRICANE FACEBOOK.COM/KATANDTHEHURRICANE

A genre- and gender-bending indie band that delivers a unique blend of pop and haunting rock, which they dub as "Sad Lesbian Music." Members are Kat Farnsworth and Benjamin Coakley.

KILLCROP FACEBOOK.COM/KILLCROP

The solo project of Josh Killcrop, one half of the founding members of psychedelic-industrial band, Gentleman Loser, the experimental electronic music draws influences from indie rock and darker industrial.

LADYSCISSORS FACEBOOK.COM/LADYSCISSORSWI

Prolific and longtime Madison musician Stephanie Rearick joins forces with Lorrie Hurckes Dwyer, Brent George, and Anne Bull for a boppy rock project with an irreverent core.

LINE FACEBOOK.COM/LINESOUNDSLIKE

Maddie Batzli, Esther Chun, Will Ault, and Austin Lynch make up this outfit of queer, lyric-driven pop music with folk and R&B influences.

LINN JENNINGS FACEBOOK.COM/LINNJENNINGSMUSIC

Singer/songwriter Linn Jennings writes catchy melodies, influenced by acts like The Weepies and Iron and Wine, and lyrics inspired by love, heartbreak, and her dog, Gibson.

LUCKY VITA FACEBOOK.COM/LUCKYVITAMUSIC

The newest project by the artist formerly known as Joey Broyles, Lucky brings his glitter-pop and performance art sensibilities to new heights.



'90sdreamboy



Angela Richardson



Bone Holler



Karin Wolf

OLYVIA JAXYN OLYVIAJAXYN.BANDCAMP.COM

This dreamy solo project brings elements of the underground, melodic no-wave of the '80s and combines it with heady, introspective lyrics.

RAINE STERN FACEBOOK.COM/RAINESTERNMUSIC

Raine is an innately talented artist who writes, arranges, and produces her own work. Her sound hits hard because she pours her guts into every aspect of her art. She has a gritty soulful voice, shreds the electric guitar, and incorporates a little bit of every genre into her work.

RIN'S VIOLIN FACEBOOK.COM/RINQRIBBLE

A genre-bending violinist and teacher, Rin plays with several area projects, including the Five Points Jazz Collective, Shotgun Mary, and Sortin' the Mail.

SEAFOAM IN MY SWIMSUIT SEAFOAMINMYSWIMSUIT.BANDCAMP.COM

Describing themselves as "just a couple of BFFs making music," SIMS is the duo of Caitlin Warlick-Short and Alexa Drake, who also teach yoga around town. The music is soft and acoustic.

VENUS IN FURS VENUSINFURSBAND.COM

The long-running surf-rock outfit features couple Victoria Echeverría (guitar/vocals) and Natalie Hinckley (bass/vocals) alongside energetic drummer Marlo Darken. Heavy on the instrumentals, more recent tunes have begun adding darkly humorous and sometimes pointedly political lyrics to the mix.

WOKE UP CRYING FACEBOOK.COM/WOKEUPCRYINGBAND

The newly formed group calls themselves a "Vending machine for sad dream beans," and names plenty of '90s pre-emo influences like The Lemonheads and Juliana Hatfield.

THE CLASSIC TALE OF LOVE, SACRIFICE, & LOSS

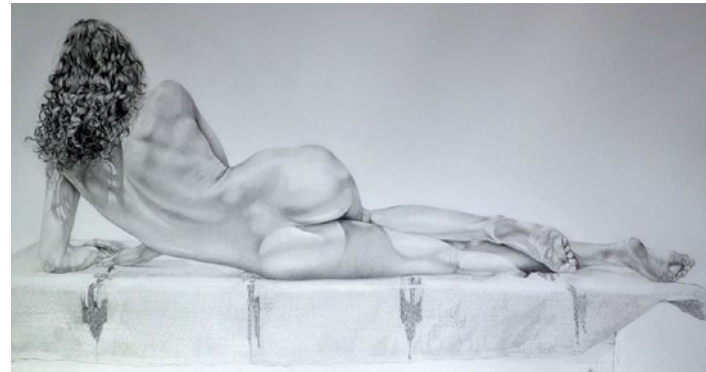
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Intimate Illustrations



GOLDIE RAYE

goldieraye.com

VISUAL ARTS / ILLUSTRATION Over the last year, Goldie Bennett has been illustrating and designing "Intimacy Manuals" as an experiment in increasing sexual comfort and self-care for women. She illustrates in graphite pencil and combines it with her writing in zine form. They are laser printed, assembled, and distributed by herself and women friends.

In her artist statement she writes, "Breakthroughs happen when you've spent time with your own body, shifting headspace around what survivors look and feel like during sex, and the fact is, we are strong and beautiful." Her practice destigmatizes the healing process and promotes self-care.

Her art is comprised primarily of figurative work in which she documents the identities of queer women in her life. She states it best herself when she writes,

"In my experience, queer femme people have always felt some level of restraint, of keeping themselves hidden, of protecting themselves. We fear judgement. We face harassment. We want to feel safe to speak openly about our sexualities and our personal lives, instead of hiding them through avoidance, disguise, defensiveness. My art seeks to document how queer women present themselves, to avoid, cope with, or fight against these trials. And I am happy to report that in my documentation, I've discovered we choose to be powerful. We choose power in the clothes we wear, the make-up we put on, the way we carry ourselves. And as an artist, I feel it is my job to document these women through my personal, female gaze. To help women feel safe to be seen." ■



Kat and the Hurricane



Rebecca Bedell

COMEDY & PERFORMING ARTS

ARIEL LEBRON [FACEBOOK.COM/MELANIKMADISON](https://www.facebook.com/melanikmadison)

Performer | Ari, aka Melanie Khandroma, aka MettahDroid, is a wildly creative and hardworking performance artist who tackles innovative forms of glitter and droid drag, fetish, and burlesque, recently winning the Mx. Pride title at FIVE Nightclub.

DANA PELLEBON Director/Producer/Actor | Dana is a longtime Madison performer and director, part of the Peach Pies Caburlesque group, and a regular director and producer with StageQ and other local theater companies. She acts sometimes, too, last seen in StageQ's 2018 production of "A Lady and a Woman," about two Black women who fall into a romantic relationship in a small, late-1800s town.

DANIELLE DRESDEN & DONNA PECKETT [TAPITNEWWORKS.ORG](https://www.tapitnewworks.org)

Producers, Performers, Writers | Donna, choreographer-deviser, actor, tap dancer and arts educator, is producing artistic director of TAPIT/new works, which she co-founded in 1985. She received two Choreography Fellowships from the Wisconsin Arts Board and was recognized by the Wisconsin Dance Council for her contributions to the field. Currently, Donna serves on the faculty of the Edgewood College Department of Theatre Arts, and as an instructor for UW Education Outreach and for the UW-Madison Department of Liberal Studies and the Arts.

Danielle, playwright, actor and residency artist, is producing artistic director and fellow co-founder of TAPIT/new works alongside her partner, Donna. She has served as a peer review panelist for the Wisconsin Arts Board and Dane Arts, and is a member of the Barrymore Theatre Board of Directors, the Dramatists Guild, the Theatre Communications Group and the Network of Ensemble Theaters. Her playwriting awards include a 2010 Wisconsin Arts Board Literary Arts Fellowship, 1999 Finalist for the Yukon Pacific New Play Award and the Council for Wisconsin Writers Drama Awards in 2001, 2003, and 2006.

DINA MARTINEZ [DINAMARTINEZ.COM](https://www.dinamartinez.com)

Comedian, Actor, Writer | Her signature blend of disarming sass and charm has been featured in comedy festivals and multiple world-class comedy venues including LA Pride, The Chicago Women's Funny Festival, LA's The Comedy Store and Chicago's Zanies Comedy Club. She is a HuffPost blogger, the founder of Lady Laughs Comedy & Artemis Bow Productions and writer of "The Misadventures of Delilah James." She was named one of the "58 Trans Women Actors You Should Know & Also Love" by Autostraddle, and won Madison's Favorite Local Comedian as voted by the readers of the Isthmus. She will be in the upcoming film "2 Men & A Pig" with Dermot Mulroney.



Sarah Akawa
(Saint Saunter)



Akiya Alexander
(kiloakaskitz)



Rin Ribble



Dequadray

JOHANNES WALLMANN [JOHANNESWALLMANN.COM](https://www.johanneswallmann.com)

Musician | Pianist and composer, recording artist on Fresh Sound New Talent Records and Shifting Paradigm Records, Johannes is currently the Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

KELSYANNE SCHOENHAAR [ENCORESTUDIO.ORG](https://www.encorestudio.org)

Director, Musician | A Jane-of-all-trades, Kelsy is the Executive Director of Encore! Studio for the Performing Arts, which produces plays with input from and acting by adults with physical and/or developmental disabilities. She has mixed a career of music, theatre, and human services.

MERCURY STARDUST [MERCURYSTARDUST.COM](https://www.mercurystardust.com)

Performer, Emcee, Producer | "The Ambassador of Cheese and Tease," Mercury is a founding member of the Wisconsin Burlesque Association and tireless instructor, organizer/promoter of all-things

burlesque. She's also a creative force to be reckoned with, winning Wisconsin Burlypics Regional Master of Comedy, Master of Lip Sync, and 2nd Best Overall, before going on to win 3rd Best Overall and Master of Comedy at the national Burlypics competition later that year. In 2019 Mercury came out as a trans woman and continues to pioneer what's possible in the performance world for people of all identities.

MICHAEL BRUNO TV Host/Emcee | Michael is a longtime Madison-based TV entertainment personality for WISC-TV's "Backstage With Bruno," the former President of StageQ, former Artistic Director for WhoopDeDoo Productions, a stand-up comedian, and regular master of ceremonies at events across the city.

OD KIMANI Performer | OD is a creative and innovative burlesque and performance artist, seen regularly on the stages at FIVE Nightclub, and a founding member of the Wisconsin Burlesque Association. He won the Judges' Choice Award at the Great Burlesque Expo in Boston in

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2017, and has gone on to compete at several burlesque shows nationally and internationally, winning awards and hearts along the way.

RICHARD GANOUNG Actor | The Madison-based actor is best known for his roles in the movies *Parting Glances* (1986), *True Identity* (1991) and *Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss* (1998), but has appeared on stage in

The Unusual Sculptor



MICHAEL VELLIQUETTE

velliquette.com

VISUAL ARTS / MIXED MEDIA Michael Velliquette's work is vibrant even when monochrome, formalist even when colorful, and sculpturally durable even though his medium of choice—paper—is so noticeably ephemeral. In fact, Velliquette, who is a Faculty Associate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, identifies as a paper sculptor even when designing large-scale public works out of non-paper media.

He has exhibited widely and is collected by museums and public art collections throughout the country. He is currently working on a commission for Madison Public Library to create a public art piece for the new Pinney Library on Cottage Grove Road that will convert what would be a fenced-in lot between the main library and the parking lot into a colorful outdoor learning room. Velliquette cares about his community and is often seen interacting and sharing his work with people in public settings.



In addition to having a solo art practice, Velliquette is part social sculpture artist, meaning that sometimes cultivating people's participation in the process of making is more important to him than the resulting material product. For example, in 2013 he created the playful project, "Lovey

Town," a pop-up miniature gallery where the audience placed tiny photographic self-representational figures within a miniature contemporary art exhibition. Visiting a gallery the size of a doll house reduces the angst of going to an art exhibition into an experience of nonthreatening play.

Look for his art around town as he has also contributed images of his paper sculptures to Madison's popular Art on Utility Box Program. ■

the city with groups like Tap-It/New Works, the Madison Rep, and in quite a few productions of Shakespeare, among many others.

SHAWNA LUTZOW Comedian | Shawna started her comedy career shortly after coming out of the closet. She draws from personal experiences to shed light on queer issues and to dismantle stereotypes. She's also been known to play a tune or two on her guitar.

VANESSA TORTOLANO Stand-up & Improv Comedy | Vanessa is the co-owner/founder of Madison-based NessAlla Kombucha. As a mama, she's busy with four growing boys, animals, and growing things. As an entertainer, she jumps from improv comedy to playing music and singing, and can be found on various Madison stages and in support of women- and LGBTQ-centric stand-up comedy classes and events.

DJs

DJ AVALON FACEBOOK.COM/THEONLYDJAVALON mixcloud.com/avalon-clare | DJ Avalon has been curating party vibes through music since 2011, getting her start in Philadelphia doing a weekly all-vinyl country night, then starting a party called NEW RADIO that celebrated women in music. DJ Avalon's look is as eclectic as her music taste, but rest assured that a party DJ'd by Avalon will be ripe with dancing, debauchery, neon, and glitter.

JOEY BEE / DJ BOYFRRIEND FACEBOOK.COM/DJBOYFRRIEND soundcloud.com/djboyfrriend | Former Queer Pressure co-producer and stalwart presence at LGBTQ+ events and parties, Joey Bee is a proudly feminist, versatile, and responsive DJ who specializes in queer pop and dance music but can throw down with just about any genre.

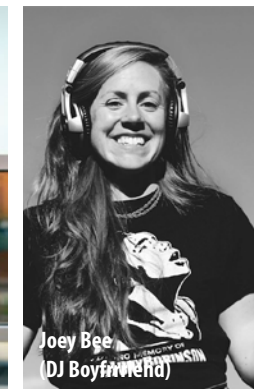
ELLY FINE / DJ ELLAFINE FACEBOOK.COM/DJELLAFINE mixcloud.com/ellafine | DJ and promoter ellafine spins current and classic darkwave, industrial, goth, new wave, post punk, synthpop, dream pop, indie, and has recently branched out into more retro sounds as well. Part of the regular rotation at Crucible, she's also the host of its quarterly EDGES dance party.

DJ FEMME NOIR FACEBOOK.COM/DJFEMMENOIR Prism's resident DJ for its Thotty Thursday 18+ parties, Femme Noir can also be found at the Glitz! Drag parties at the Majestic and elsewhere, always spinning an eclectic blend of highly danceable tunes.

SYLVIA JOHNSON / DJ HITACHI FACEBOOK.COM/DJHITACHI Also one-half of the punk band Gender Confetti, Hitachii brings the same fun and in-your-face sensibility to her DJ work, with a "commitment to sexual self-determination, LGBTQ+ community, and vibrators."

MICAH LÊ / DJ KALYCHO FACEBOOK.COM/DJ.KALYCHO.OFFICIAL The DJ and creator is a multidisciplinary artist "committed to enriching our communities through music, art, and inclusion," and can be found at LGBTQ+ parties and club nights spinning a wide range of house and electronic dance music.

EMILY MILLS / DJ MILLBOT FACEBOOK.COM/DJMILLBOT soundcloud.com/millbot | With a long history and a wide repertoire, Millbot's heart lies in the house genres, with a regular night at Crucible (House Rules) that features DJs from underrepresented identities. You can also catch her as a regular at Prism's Hot Flash early dance parties



spinning popular and more obscure hits from the '70s through the '90s.

SARAH AKAWA / SAINT SAUNTER FACEBOOK.COM/SAINTSAUNTER mixcloud.com/saintsaunter | The tireless DJ and event organizer/promoter has helped create and maintain a series of queer/POC-focused spaces and parties over the years, including Gender Fest, queer.IRL, Hot Summer Gays, and formerly Queer Pressure and the She Said Party.

VISUAL ARTS

AMBER SOWARDS AMBERSOWARDS.COM Photographer | Currently also running communications for GSAFE and Fair Wisconsin, Amber is a fine art photography with a special focus on shooting with film and in black and white. Her work is often beautiful and gritty at the same time, showcasing deeply personal reflections on identity, location, class, and more.

ANGELA RICHARDSON Photographer & Performance Artist | Visual artist and performer Angela Richardson's work often explores the idea of "community"—how communities form, how they operate, and how art plays a role in their vitality. Designing experiences for herself, audiences, and project participants is core to her creative process.

ANNA CAMPBELL ANNACAMPBELL.NET Sculptor | Using sculpture, site-specific installation, and ephemera, Anna's work deconstructs signifiers of gender and heteronormativity. Her work is in the collections of the MoMA Library, the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, numerous universities, and her site-specific, bronze sculpture is permanently installed at the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, NY.

BABETTE WAINWRIGHT BABETTEWAINWRIGHT.COM Sculptor | Babette is a clay sculptor who draws extensively on her

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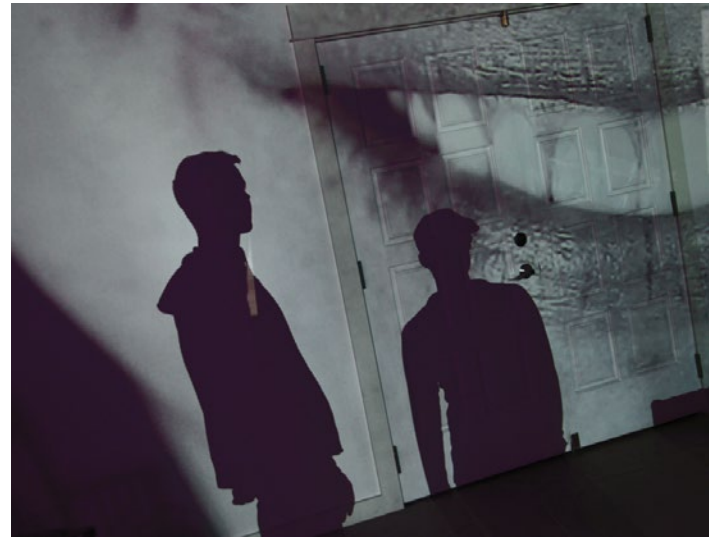
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African roots and the work of the pre-Columbian people of Haiti, where she was born. Her work has been exhibited across the country and in galleries across Wisconsin. In 2000, she earned an MFA in Ceramics at the UW-Madison. She has since been working in both mediums, using the female image as a vehicle for conveying her sense of uprootedness and her spirituality.

BETH RACETTE BETHRACETTE.COM

Mixed Media, Sculptor | Beth is a visual artist and cultural worker who aims to bring a breadth of wonder, inquiry, and inspiration to her fellow Earthlings. She has worked with many materials and processes. The themes that unite her work are flow and interconnection. She is currently working on a series of paintings about Earth called Gaia Series.

Shadows and Light



BOREALIS

alauraborealisart.com patreon.com/alauraborealis

SOCIAL ART / MIXED MEDIA Borealis' practice is conversational, performative, written, and researched; major projects typically span years, crossing multiple and mixed media. In early 2017, Borealis began researching the aesthetic language of shadows as a way to understand experiences that aren't easily measured or represented. Season of Shadows became a social project in which Bo interviewed trans and queer peers about gender, working together to conjure metaphors for those parts of ourselves that can feel difficult to explain otherwise.

Borealis' social practice is built to be accessible for the subjects, co-conspirators, and consumers of their work. "In a lot of ways, there's no mystery to my art. I spend months on end following an idea, pursuing it wholeheartedly through reading, writing, thinking, sketching, and getting a little lost in it on my own," says Bo. "This is the initial research phase of a major project. I went through it for Toast, Citizen Cityzine, and Season of Shadows. After some time, I pull the simplest research questions out into my community to see what new paths we might uncover together. Interviews and conversation have become critical components of my practice."

From interview transcripts printed on vellum for a Season of Shadows exhibition at Overture Center in Spring 2018 to interview excerpts assembled in Citizen Cityzine in Summer 2019, Borealis pulls the literal or mundane out of private life and into the art realm, where words and experiences function as art objects carefully curated for a public audience.

Then again, something seems to percolate just beneath the surface of Borealis' work. Borealis negotiates the line between art and life, between their role as an artist and their role as a community member. "We can't talk through identity and social circumstances, especially within queer community, without encountering some pain or painful questions," they explain. "A major aspect of the interviews and performances for Season of

Shadows became witnessing my peers' trauma. There's labor involved in that witnessing as an artist and as a neighbor, and it impacted me personally. There were actually a few weeks, between the private interview stage and the beginning of the public events and performances for Shadows, where I couldn't form a coherent sentence around gender. For me, this is where art steps in. By translating the conversations and metaphors into other physical forms—like performance, adornment, dance, dinner parties, mounds of dirt, reverse Cut Pieces—we could dive back into our queer softness with renewed strength."

The work starts with research, moves through conversation and performance, and settles back into its final stage: writing. "I take the excitement of public happenings and fall back into the more secluded research of reading, scribbling, diagramming, and getting my own thoughts back down on paper," says Bo. Six months after the close of their project Toast, which unfolded at Arts + Literature Laboratory in 2016, Borealis assembled a small book that archived the production of the project through poetry, essays, and other reflections. Season of Shadows post-public writing phase is taking the form of fiction.

"I had originally intended to create a book modeled after Toast, but realized that fictionalized stories would be the best way to capture metaphors while protecting the precise experiences of my interviewees," says Bo. "I'm taking the feelings from those interviews and forming new characters who hold pieces of all of us, all of our contradictions and our pain and our joyful expansiveness. We're elusive and we're real. We take up volume and our forms can shift. I'm writing us as shadows."

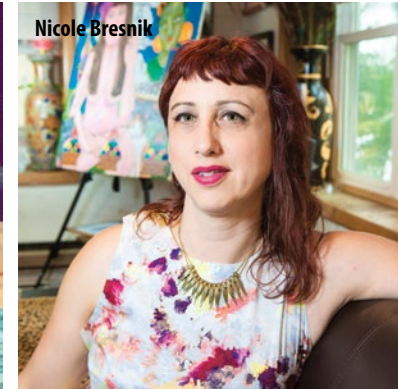
Borealis aims to have the creative writing for Season of Shadows complete by late 2020. "I have a few performative and social events planned for Spring 2020, which will help to fuel the final stages of my writing for this project. I'm so grateful for this community's patience as I work through all this data, and as my own understanding of the work evolves. I feel fortunate to be able to be vulnerable in this work with my peers." ■



Abigail Swetz



Tempestt Ballenger (DJ Femme Noir)



Nicole Bresnik



Duke Virginia

DAVID WELLS Curator | David Wells is Director of the Edgewood College Art Gallery and Ernest Hüpeden's Painted Forest folk art site. As an independent community-based curator his projects include Art On the Rooftop at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center (since 2014) and GLEAM: Art in a New Light, at Olbrich Botanical Gardens (since 2015).

DUKE VIRGINIA DUKEVIRGINIA.COM

Photographer | Duke is a self-taught visual artist born and raised in Detroit, with a love for capturing documentary style portraits of local artists, friends, brands, and events. Duke focuses on the moment in her portraits. Constantly curious, constantly evolving, her latest objective is tackling cinematography and creative direction.

KARIN WOLF Arts Administrator | Karin serves as the Arts Administrator for the entire City of Madison, curating events, running grant

programs like the BLINK temporary art project, and generally advocating for all things arts and artist.

NATALIE HINCKLEY HINCKLEYPRODUCTIONS.COM

Videographer | Natalie is the owner and founder of Hinckley Productions, and has created video work for companies like Lands' End and Duluth Trading Company as well as Madison Roller Derby and the Roller Derby World Cup. When not playing with her band, Venus in Furs, Natalie is busy building her videography business and team, which has won dozens of awards for their work.

NICOLE BRESNIK Painter | Co-founder of Teen Pride Arts, which showcased and supported work by LGBTQ-identified youth, Nicole is an accomplished painter and arts activist who brings her trans and sober identities proudly, incorporating them into her artistic and educational work, along with a focus on mental health.

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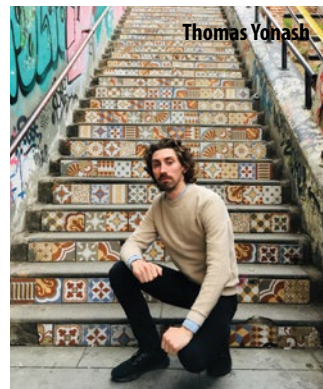
Beth Racette



KelsyAnne Schoenhaar



Johannes Wallmann



Thomas Yonash

ROLANDO CRUZ ROLANDOCRUZ.COM

Photographer, Mixed Media | Rolando is an award-winning artist and photographer, as well as ardent runner, who frequently explores issues of identity and race through his work.

SIMONE DOING Multimedia | Simone is a visual artist, youth worker, and museum educator involved in projects that reflect her interest in ethics, technology, and local community issues. She is co-founder of the multimedia studio Midwest Story Lab, and the artist collective Solarpunk Surf Club, and is currently pursuing an MFA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with her collaborative partner, Max Puchalsky.

THOMAS YONASH THOMASYONASH.COM

Photographer | A freelance photographer, Tommy's work combines people and landscapes, often focusing on the connection between the two. His subjects are often posed, but in familiar environments playing on the idea that spaces are created, established, and framed in a theatrical way. With this thinking, even landscapes are shaped to document people.

TIM SAUERS Arts Administrator | Overture Center's Vice President of Programming & Community Engagement, Tim is responsible for ensuring diverse offerings at the space and engaging the community with the arts on offer. Tim develops and recommends the programmatic philosophies of Overture Center, developing policies, systems, procedures, budgeting, and measures for program implementation.

YVETTE PINO YVETTEPINO.COM

Painter/Printmaker | Yvette served with the 101st Airborne Division from 2002-2006 and then earned a BFA from the UW-Madison in 2011, followed by a Certificate in Museum Studies from Northwestern University in 2018. She currently works for The Wisconsin Veterans Museum as the Traveling Art Exhibit Coordinator, serves on the Madison Arts Commission, sits on the board of the National Veteran Art Museum, and founded/runs the Veteran Print Project. She has published stories with *The Warhorse* and in *See Me for Who I am: Student Veterans' Stories of War* and *Coming Home*.

LITERARY ARTS

ABIGAIL SWETZ ABIGAILSWETZ.COM

Poet | Abby is a former teacher, current advocate, and spoken word artist. She premiered her play, "An UnCommon Core: the spoken word journey of one middle school classroom" at the Kansas City Fringe Festival in 2016; in 2018, it was awarded Most Outstanding Solo Performance at the Fresh Fruit Festival in New York City.

ALI MULDROW Poet, Spoken Word artist | Ali is a parent, partner, writer, instructor, advocate, and doula. She began her work in education in 2006 when she became the after-school spoken word club liaison for East High School in partnership with UW-Madison's First Wave program. Ali went on to partner with Madison School & Community Recreation (MSCR) to create and host spoken word clubs at five Madison public high schools. Ali is currently the Director of Youth Programming and Inclusion at GSAFE. In the spring of 2015 Ali launched GSAFE's New Narrative Project in the Dane County Juvenile Detention Center, a program that provides incarcerated young people with clear channels to academic success, civic engagement, and self-determination.

BRIDGET BIRDSALL BRIDGETBIRDSALL.COM

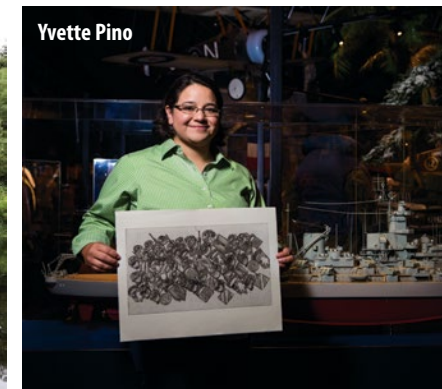
Bridget is a multi-disciplinary artist, an award-winning author, educator, and inspirational speaker who overcame dyslexic challenges to pursue her dream to write books that make a difference, especially in the lives of young people. Bridget teaches writing, yoga, and daylong workshops that inspire others to dream big and to live authentic lives.



Babette Wainwright



Venus in Furs



Yvette Pino

LISSA MCLAUGHLIN Lissa McLaughlin used to teach fiction writing at UW-Madison, but these days she supports kids and young adults on the autism spectrum.

RAPHAEL KADUSHIN Writer, Literary Curator (retired) | Raphael recently retired as the humanities editor at the UW Press. He is an award-winning travel and food writer, with work appearing in a wide range of anthologies, including three editions of *Best Food Writing*. He is the editor of two travel anthologies: *Wonderlands* and *Big Trips*.

REBECCA BEDELL Poet | Rebecca Bedell is a trans poet who loves queering the church and making friends across many hobbies. She earned an MFA at UW and works at Pres House.

RITA MAE REESE RITAMAERESE.COM

Poet | Rita Mae Reese is a poet and the Literary Arts Director at Arts + Literature Laboratory. She also designs Lesbian Poet Trading Cards for Headmistress Press.

T BANKS T Banks is a community organizer, a mental wellness advocate, poet, and playwright. After graduating with a degree in English Creative writing, Banks has successfully used his art through plays and poetry to address racism, transphobia, and ableism. As a black, trans, queer person with a disability, T believes the movement for Black Lives must be intersectional and deeply connected to the struggle to end patriarchy, specifically as it manifests as violence against black trans folks. His work addresses the need for the black liberation movement to be accessible to those with mental wellness challenges and/or physical disabilities as well fights for the ability of these populations to regain their autonomy in a capitalistic society. ■

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The Power of Words

A Room of One's Own's owners look back at their first year at the helm of Madison's long-running and beloved independent bookstore, and ahead to new ways the business can build and support diverse community.

LITERATURE LOCAL BUSINESS IMMIGRATION ACTIVISM



CONGRATULATIONS ON HAVING MADE IT ONE YEAR AS BOOKSTORE OWNERS! WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU SEEN SINCE BEFORE TAKING OVER TO NOW?

Gretchen Treu: We have tried to be pretty thoughtful with the changes we've made—slow and steady, and if it ain't broke, don't fix it! We are trying mostly to focus on reinvigorating our store's history of feminist and progressive politics, and working to foreground more intersectional concerns, particularly racial equality and trans inclusion, as well as maintain high standards of curation and really trying to focus our inventory and our staff on quality service and taking advantage of our staff's wide range of reading to provide great book recommendations to everyone who comes in.

Wes Lukes: We're happy to now welcome well-behaved leashed dogs, and over the last year have made some great progress developing our displays and sections, especially on the immigration experience as that issue becomes more prescient. It's still a good mix of fiction and non-fiction, though activism and action become ever more popular!

WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE KEEP COMING TO YOUR STORE VERSUS A CHAIN OR ORDERING THROUGH AMAZON?

G: We hear several times a day how incredible our selection is, how lucky we are to be in a city that supports an independent bookstore, and how important we are to people. Whether casual drop-ins from travelers to being a destination especially for queer people who don't have anything like our space available in other cities or towns; it's a space that affirms, supports, and in some ways reflects their identities without it being a special event or alcohol-based space. That's really unusual.

We have books by marginalized people on display and featured for readings and events where people can meet the author. These authors aren't suppressed by an algorithm that says queer representation is automatically assumed to be sexual content. We have highlight sections for queer fiction for a variety of ages and identities, if that's your destination, and we also shelve queer books in their relevant genre sections so anyone can stumble upon them.

W: Room (and Madison) has been a space traditionally for radical ideas. One of our primary concerns is to continue being a space with a strong curation of intersectional feminism and LGBT titles, as well as a world-class general new and used bookstore. The recommendations lining our shelves, as well as our staff knowledge base of many different topics, helps us to find something for everyone. There are things people can do that shopping algorithms can't (i.e. find a young adult book, fantasy, based in Romania) and we can carry and find stock that might not be found at the library (small, queer presses). People want to talk to people about books!

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A RESURGENCE OF BUYING LOCAL? WHAT TRENDS DO YOU SEE?

W: Yes, as people see the economic effect of Amazon and global corporations, as well as concerns about personal data being online, I feel that people are looking to keep money in their community and keep dynamic, local spaces alive.

We definitely had a large response to our Bookstores Against Borders campaign from customers as well as other bookstores; we had quadruple sales during that campaign weekend! This type of thing only works in a symbiosis—since the donation was a percentage of sales, we wouldn't be able to make a difference without the resounding YES we got from our community both here in Madison and the literary community at large.

G: I think the commitment to buying local only goes so far unless you're offering a great product or service that stands out from the generic chain offerings. With our staff, selection, and focus on intersectional books for everyone, we're lucky to be winning over customers. It doesn't hurt to be downtown and next to several other excellent and engaged local businesses, which helps us to be a part of the downtown destination for loyal Madison readers.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS YOUR ROLE AS AN INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE IN THIS COMMUNITY?

G: We're committed to expanding our support for marginalized communities in the city, and working to elevate other businesses and non-profits, as well as institutions, by being a provider of quality knowledge and insight into the best books for their needs. We try to provide space and support for community literary gatherings, particularly author events and book discussion groups. We try to be both proactive about what we curate for our shelves, as well as listen to the input of customers and authors in our area as to what we can do for the community.

W: We are curators—information keepers—a neutral space to find information. Understanding not just what we want to carry in our store, but what people are looking for, what topics people are seeking, and keeping access in mind. Keeping sensitivity in discussing difficult topics (i.e. sexual violence, relationships).

WHAT DO YOU THINK OUR ROLE IS AS READERS?

G: I don't believe there is a 'canon' that a well-read person must read, only a journey each reader experiences as they seek books that build upon, reflect, expand, comfort, entertain, grow, or otherwise affect their own life. Reading engages the mind in a way that breaks us out of where we are and can change our perspectives, and books are a cultural conversation that readers engage with past the point they leave the page.

Stories are powerful—they can empower or humble, warn or encourage, comfort or terrify. Each of those experiences is meaningful and important to how we enact our own stories in the world. It's important to talk about the stories we take in, think through how they have impacted us, and convey to other readers our own perspectives about them. We need to take an active but nonjudgmental role in helping ourselves and our communities critically approach our reading consumption and recognize the diversity of our intellectual and inter-relational needs.



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W: Read diverse! Fiction especially can be a powerful tool for communicating different times, places, and identities. Our role as readers is to reflect on the information we take in, our opinions, and our understanding of the world. This can manifest in different ways, from asking for #ownvoices books and reading a novel through the lens of race, gender, or class, all the way to changing our life philosophy based on ideas in nonfiction in terms we may not have thought of before.

It is also totally okay to read to escape or for pleasure; that has its own function in self-care and self-keeping!

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY? WHAT ARE THEY?

G: *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong

Gideon the Ninth by Tamsyn Muir

W: *The Need* by Helen Phillips

On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong

Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Marie Brown



Misian Taylor

Room employee Misian Taylor talks about the Bookstores Against Borders campaign, which raised over \$105,000 for RAICES, a non-profit organization providing legal aid to immigrants in Texas.

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR BOOKSTORES AGAINST BORDERS?

News was breaking about kids sleeping on cement and having only aluminum foil blankets. I thought: What can I do? What do I have access to? I emailed Wes and Gretchen with three ideas of how to use the store to raise money. They said we could donate a portion of the sales but instead of one day, which had been my idea, they said we could do a whole weekend. They picked the weekend after July 4th because it had been a big weekend for the bookstore, sales-wise, last year and it felt impossible to think about celebrating an idea of freedom while these kids are in concentration camps. So we had a week and a half to get everything in order.



Gretchen Treu & Wes Lukes

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I am so grateful to Wes and Gretchen. Because Room is an independent bookstore, this idea had a chance, and working here has meant this idea was supported, given resources, time, and energy. Wes and Gretchen understood that what is happening at our border, and at detention centers in Wisconsin, is more important than what could potentially happen with sales.

Most, if not all, of the stores who have participated in Bookstores Against Borders saw an increase in sales from how much their communities wanted to do something about what is happening at our border.

HOW'D YOU DECIDE TO ENLIST BOOKSTORES ACROSS THE COUNTRY? WHAT'S THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SELLING BOOKS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE?

I was talking to my friend Emily about how well Gretchen and Wes received the idea, that we'd already started planning, and I was so excited about the language we were using to explain why Room was doing this, how it was necessary to do something—that it immediately didn't feel like enough. Emily suggested other bookstores in Wisconsin or Chicago that could and might participate, too. I didn't know how to do it, but I knew we had to try.

The next day I approached Gretchen about getting other bookstores involved and they were in total agreement. BAB really exploded once we utilized all of Gretchen and Ely's connections in the book world. Having the legitimacy of long-time booksellers helped us get BAB off the ground.

Bookselling is inherently radical. The written and read word have always been acts of resistance. When institutions want to oppress people, they take away their books. We've seen governments force people out of their languages as a way to keep them from recording their own stories and histories. We've seen states try to take away books from people who are in prison. We know illiteracy is a tool for keeping people and communities disempowered. Everyone who works here is deeply in love with and shaped by what words do within us and outside of us. Using books to raise money for a legal organization fighting to get these kids and families free is logical and is also what we owe to books, their makers, and the potential they embody.

WAS IT A SURPRISE TO SEE HOW MANY GROUPS GOT ON BOARD, AS WELL AS THE TOTALS RAISED FOR RAICES? WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT SAYS ABOUT PEOPLE/ THE BOOK-BUYING/SELLING COMMUNITY?

We've been floored. Our original goal was to raise \$1,000, then \$5,000. To have raised \$105,000 and to have BAB still growing is astounding.

I think people who love books do so because they offer an entry into other worlds. I think many people who love books have done so their whole lives, and there is something integral about books from their childhoods. When I found out what was happening to kids and young people and their families at our border, it was a visceral realization, one that affected my whole self, my kid self included. I feel indebted to words and what they've made.

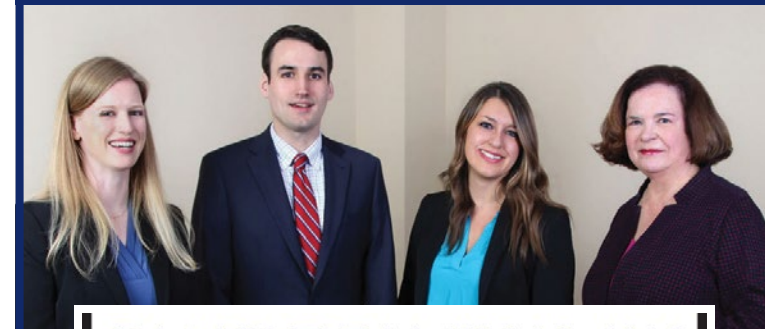
A lot of book lovers, and bookstore owners, feel the same way. They know there is something counterhegemonic about how books live in the world. At their simplest, books tell us more than has been necessarily imagined.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?

We are so grateful: To our local community of book lovers, to our national community—and our international community. So much feels possible in the wake of BAB's success. We are grateful to the media who has given BAB a legitimacy locally and nationally. With the energy this community of book lovers has given us, I am looking forward to focusing energy on how to disrupt ICE locally.

The BAB campaign is closed, but you can donate directly to RAICES at raicestexas.org/donate—and keep an eye out for future events in Madison aimed at raising money for bail funds for detained immigrants in Wisconsin. Follow A Room of One's Own online at facebook.com/roomofonesownbookstore.

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More Than Merely Players

Proud Theater celebrates 20 years of innovative theater that empowers and shares the stories of LGBTQ youth in chapters across the state.

THEATER YOUTH A&E

I HAVE BEEN WORKING with Proud Theater since 2015, first joining as a youth in Proud Theater-Madison when I was a junior in high school. While I couldn't come back my senior year, I made sure to stay involved, helping program and operate sound for that season's show, *Fearlessly Queer*. I also joined the board and started doing digital communications.

After high school, I moved to Wausau for college, where I've directed Proud Theater-Wausau for the last two years. Even after graduating and moving to Menomonie to work on my bachelor's degree, I'm still finding ways to be involved.

When I was asked by our team to write about our 20th anniversary for *Our Lives*, I was excited for the opportunity to share our story. Proud Theater saved my life, and I don't say that lightly. Navigating life as a queer and trans person can be very difficult without support and community. Proud Theater provided those things for me in a difficult time, and it provides them for so many other young people as well.

ONE KID'S DREAM

Proud Theater is an organization with a rich past and a colorful, exciting future. From a rag-tag group performing "amidst drag-shows and beer tents at Madison's annual MAGIC Picnic" at Brittingham Park in 2000, to a statewide organization and national leader in the queer youth theater movement, our story is constantly evolving. We will keep writing it until our pens run out of ink.

While many know our story, some might not. We do so much work that sometimes we forget to tell the community at-large what we do. Depending on how long you've known us, you might not know where we've been or where we're going.

Proud Theater started in 1999 when local queer activist Sunshine Jones called up Callen Harty, who was working with OutReach at the time. Sunshine's daughter, Sol, was looking to start a theater group for queer and allied youth. While Harty hadn't met either Sol or Sunshine, he agreed to meet to talk about the idea.

Sol and her moms, Jo Kelley and Sunshine, and Callen and his partner, Brian Wild, all put in countless hours in our early years to build something with momentum that could sustain itself when they stepped away.

EMPOWERMENT ON-STAGE AND OFF

Now in our 20th year, the youth voice remains as central as it was in our founding. Each of our chapters (what we call our theater com-

panies) features a youth artistic committee. This youth-elected group meets regularly with chapter staff to maintain communication and ensure that youth voices are heard and needs are met. Depending on the size of a chapter in a given season, they may also have a youth artistic director. This is another way to give youth leadership opportunities and hone their skills as artists and leaders.

The way that leadership opportunities and training are built into the organization on every level is different from many other organizations. Making sure we listen to youth helps challenge ageism and adultism. It also lets youth learn by doing and gives them confidence to know that they will succeed. When we say we empower LGBTQ+ leaders, we know that they are already capable of doing amazing things. What we do is help them to realize their potential.

For those that don't seek a leadership position, there are still other ways that Proud Theater empowers young leaders. Each end-of-year show is presented as an anthology of work that youth write collaboratively throughout the year. Starting from small group conversations, mentors and directors guide the youth toward common themes expressed in those conversations. Youth share ideas on how to transform those themes into a performance, and collaboratively improvise to write a piece. This is what gives our work and our process the power that they have; every voice is valued and expressed as art.

Sol and her moms, Jo Kelley and Sunshine, and Callen and his partner, Brian Wild, all put in countless hours in our early years to build something with momentum that could sustain itself when they stepped away.

Personally, I know I would not be as effective in my roles with Proud or as a professional without Proud Theater. The organization saved my life by giving me purpose and believing in me, and trained me to be a much better leader.

ROOTS AND BRANCHES

Our roots may be in Madison, but we have since branched out to serve other communities as well. We launched a chapter in Wausau in 2011, in Milwaukee in 2013, in Sun Prairie in 2015, and in Green Bay just last year. And while Proud Theater chapters are for youth ages 13-18, we launched Proud Theater Beyond in Madison in 2016 for young adults ages 18-24.

Using the process developed in the early years in Madison as a framework, chapters tell their community's story. Chapters also innovate to respond to community needs beyond rehearsals and shows. Just last season, Proud Theater-Wausau held workshops open to all queer youth in the community (regardless of whether they were in Proud Theater's weekly rehearsals or not) on the topics of queer sex ed, trans health, and mental health.

We aren't just a leader in Wisconsin. Proud Theater was a founding member of the Pride Youth Theater Alliance, a national collective of queer youth theater organizations. Leaders from Proud Theater have received awards for their contributions to the field, and two Proud Theater directors serve on the board for the Alliance (I am proud to be one of them). Our commitment to intergenerational leadership and dialogue has been looked to nationally as a model.

BRIDGING GAPS

Being intergenerational and breaking down generational divides is critical to our work. There are few spaces that intentionally bridge



*Because of who you are,
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We welcome ALL and stand together for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Our Global United Methodist Church recently chose not to fully embrace the gifts and lives of our LGBTQ+ members and friends.

We grieve this decision and believe there are no limits to God's love. The local United Methodist faith communities listed below proclaim God's love and grace are for ALL and extend a special welcome to our LGBTQ+ neighbors, allies and families:

Bashford UMC (Madison), **Bethany UMC** (Madison), **First UMC** (Madison), **Monona UMC**, **Mount Horeb UMC**, **People's UMC** (Oregon), **Stoughton UMC**, **Sun Prairie UMC**, and **Trinity UMC** (Madison). **Also standing with us, Reverend David Hart of Sherman Avenue UMC**

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The cast & directors for Proud Theater-Madison's *Fearlessly Queer* in May 2017



generational gaps, and the divide between generations in the queer community can be large. Younger generations are denied the right to learn their history due to erasure in schools, and the community at-large doesn't see their stories portrayed in media. We work to counter the divides that are artificially constructed by agism, adultism, and cis and straight institutions, by sharing stories and recognizing that people of all ages have stories to tell and stories to learn.

Our work is also intersectional. We know that in order to create meaningful work that reflects the diversity of our identities and community, we need to bring our full selves to the table. That means that

Being intergenerational and breaking down generational divides is critical to our work. There are few spaces that intentionally bridge generational gaps, and the divide between generations in the queer community can be large.

while our work is centered on the queer community, we cover a wide range of other issues and identities. We do not live single-issue lives.

To live out our commitment to the elimination of generational divides, we are intentional in both our leadership structure and our programming. Our intergenerational board and youth leadership in chapters makes sure we hear voices of all ages. We also hold Connections, a communal storytelling event, each year in Madison. Using the Proud Theater process of devising theater based on common stories, groups connect and present performance art to event attendees.

From a young person's dream to operating in five cities around the state, we have grown and changed a lot in the past 20 years. We are excited to see where we can go in the next 20, too.

As a nonprofit organization, there are many ways for supporters to get involved. We would greatly appreciate it if you considered volunteering with us, joining our board, or donating to us to secure our next two decades. We welcome you to celebrate with us this 20th season. See you at an upcoming show! ■



GRACE STOLEN is the operations manager for Proud Theater-Wausau, and also currently serves as the board vice president at Art and Soul Innovations.

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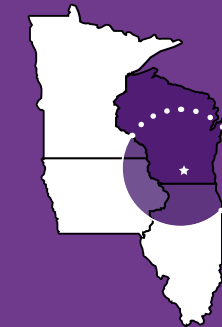
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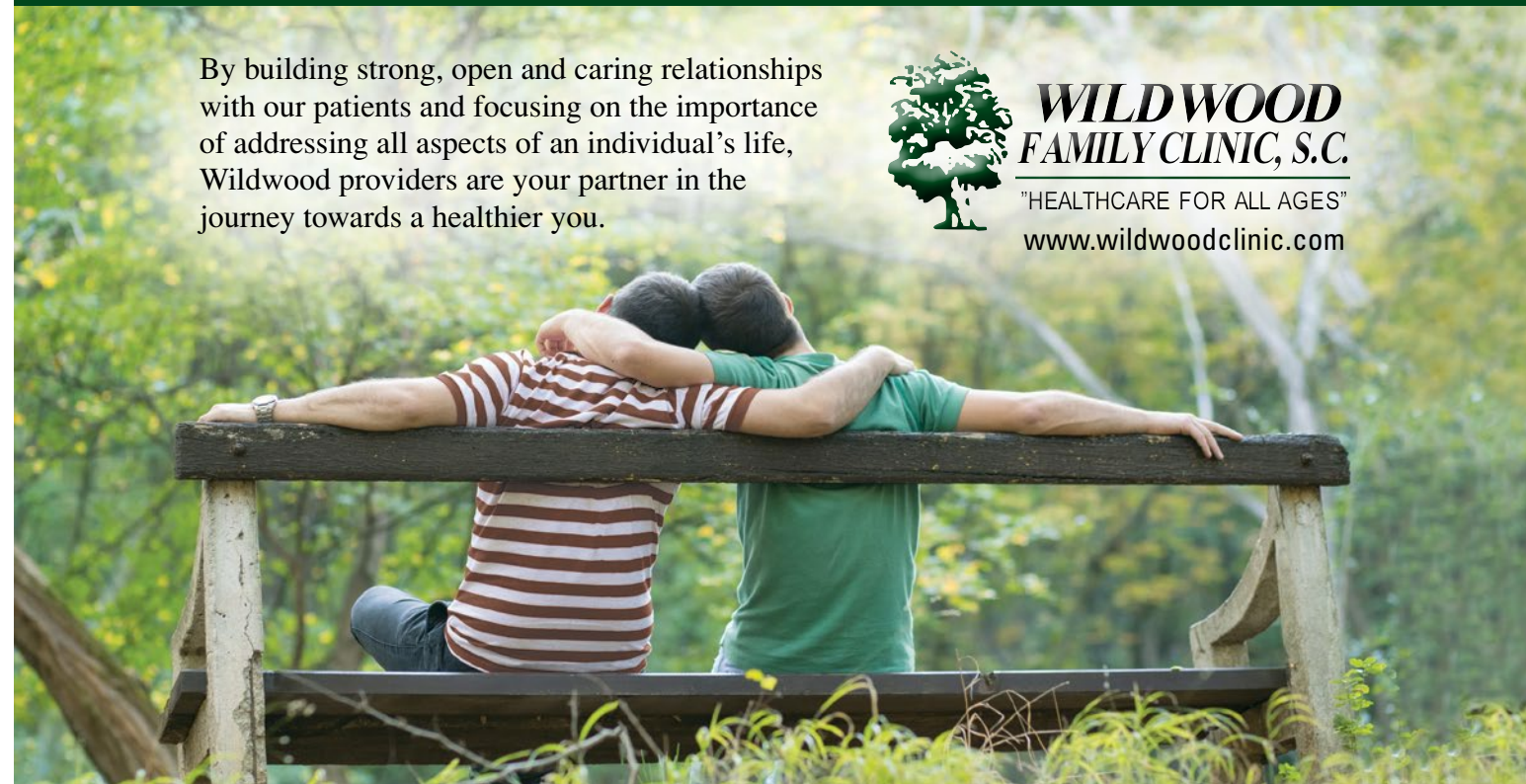
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Sober Curious

As more LGBTQ folks look to build community outside of the bar and club scene, a new queer sobriety movement gains momentum in Madison and beyond.

COMMUNITY SOBER INTROVERTS

CELEBRATING PRIDE MEANS festivals, parades, and block parties. If you've participated in the festivities, you've likely also experienced corporate sponsorship by companies that produce alcohol.

It's hard to disentangle alcohol from the history of LGBTQ culture in America. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots: a remarkable event where queer people resisted police corruption and violence at the bars where gay folks gathered. The bars have been our "safe" spaces, our de facto community centers.

Safety is relative, however, and centering cultural experiences and

community building around alcohol brings problems, particularly for those who struggle with addiction. Famous gays and lesbians have had very public challenges with alcohol. Abby Wambach and Jane Lynch wrote about their struggles with addiction in their memoirs, and Elton John's biopic out this year shows his past experiences with drugs and alcohol. For them, sobriety is a critical part of their story. They faced addiction and dysfunction head on and committed to a sober life.

Not everyone reaches a crisis, however. Instead of a crisis they are simply curious about what life is like without alcohol or they question the strong role of alcohol in the queer community's celebrations, history, and economy. Making a space for the queer community that doesn't involve alcohol isn't a new idea, but a new queer sobriety movement is bubbling up in places around the country.

JOSH HERSH
QUEERET MOVEMENT/QUEER INTROVERTS ON IG/QALM GATHERINGS

It was in 2010 when Josh Hersh moved to New York City. He'd lived in big urban areas before. Unlike Chicago or Washington, D.C., however, it seemed tougher to find his social niche in New York.

"I made a core group of friends," said Josh, "but the queer community in New York is even more go, go, go. It seemed like everyone was really outgoing, always out and about. The real spark for me was watching Hannah Gadsby's 'Nanette.' She talked about being a quiet soul whose favorite sound is that of a teacup finding its place in a saucer. 'Where do the quiet gays go?' she asked. That's what lodged in my brain."

Josh had a vision of getting friends and like-minded people together at a quiet coffee shop with low light, candles, a cozy atmosphere, and music you didn't have to struggle to talk over. He started an Instagram account, Queer Introverts, that posed the question, "Are there other queer introverts?" As the account gained followers, Josh realized there were a lot of them.

In a stroke of serendipity, he had also attended an event where author Ruby Warrington spoke. She wrote a book called *Sober Curious*, and

her perspectives on alcohol inspired Josh to take a two-month break from drinking, just to see what it would be like.

As New York started to turn from autumn into winter, Josh launched a website, picked a date for the first meetup, and asked his friends to come and bring others. Their first meetups began in November and had 10 or so people.

"By the end of the evening, the windows were totally fogged up from people talking," Josh remembered. "That's the thing about introverts. People think we're just shy, but we aren't. We can get drained when we have to push up against loud music and crowds. When it's chill and quiet, that's when we open up."

Josh knows he's not the only person in the LGBTQ community who is questioning the role of alcohol in our culture, nor is he the first. He points out that while bars have always served as gathering places for the gay community and have been relatively safe spaces for us to be ourselves, alcohol was also the first product marketed directly to the gay community.

"Just by creating this space, it questions the role of alcohol and creates another possibility," said Josh. "We don't have to rant about the evils of alcohol. We just create this other space. Queer people are all about possibility, about asking who we want to be for our own lives. To me, creating this space is so in line with what it means to be queer, to always question, to create more spaces for people to be together."

RUBY WARRINGTON
SOBER CURIOUS AUTHOR AND PODCASTER

It was also in 2010 when author and podcaster Ruby Warrington started questioning her relationship to alcohol. Drinking didn't feel good, and she wondered why she needed it in social situations. For Warrington, her approach is more about being curious, asking exploratory questions about one's relationship with alcohol or drugs. It's very different than someone who is in crisis, who is in a recovery program, or who is working the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

"Who says I need to drink in order to be confident, to look cool, to fit in, to relax?" Warrington asked when she began getting "Sober Curious." "I'm going to embrace my independence and walk my own path."

When examining the role of drinking culture as it relates to queer spacemaking, it's necessary to outline how capitalism co-opts and twists queer spacemaking to further oppress queer people, and this happens because "queer" is now seen as trendy and profitable.

Warrington reminds us that alcohol does two things: enhances our experience of pleasure or numbs our experience of pain. Even if someone isn't in crisis or addicted to alcohol, it's normal to want to have more fun or feel less pain.

She notes that the part of our brains, the right temporoparietal junction, is numbed by alcohol. It's the part of our brain that monitors what other people think of us, what "labels pop up in front of people's eyes when we are communicating with them," she explains. When alcohol switches that part off, we feel freedom because it removes inhibitions. We want to be free of labels and to act from our essence, and it's why alcohol feels good and is ultimately addictive.

The more we can feel comfortable or supported in being ourselves—confronting our pain and healing trauma—the more power we can reclaim over our lives and move beyond painful experiences.

This resonates deeply with members of the LGBTQ community who

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live in a society where being queer still means facing discrimination, if not violence, and a wide range of family trauma, from microaggressions to outright rejection.

“Healing is about being able to acknowledge the source of the hurt, be present with your feelings, and integrate and accept who you are,” said Warrington in her podcast. “Identify what hurts. Processing the root causes of that hurt is how we heal and are able to be present with others...and are able to make choices that align with who we truly are.”

It’s the norm to drink. The dominant drinking culture makes it seem like we don’t have a choice. But when we choose alcohol to feel pleasure or numb pain, Warrington explains, we give away our power.

Her Sober Curious podcast might not resonate with everyone, but she drops some seriously deep ideas.

THE CHALLENGES OF BARS AND QUEER SPACES

The gay bar scene in Madison, like many urban areas across the country, has its challenges. Predominantly lesbian bars are on the decline nationwide and there aren’t any bars that specifically cater to a lesbian clientele in Madison (though there are lesbian/trans/queer-owned bars like Square Wine Co., Delta Beer Lab, and Giant Jones brewery). FIVE Nightclub, WOOF’s, and the Shamrock Bar and Grille are still going strong (though they largely cater to gay men), and Prism is still finding its footing after an ownership change from its former identity as Plan B.

For those looking for an alternative to gay bars, sober or sober-friendly spaces and fun need to be created. That means defining the time, activities, spaces, and norms for something beyond the walls of a bar.

DJ BOYFRRIEND DJ AND EVENT ORGANIZER

For Joey Bee, who performs as DJ Boyfriend, holding space for those who choose sobriety or who want a safer, substance-free environment was an idea first sparked outside of Madison at a queer music festival in Tennessee.

“At this festival, the main stage was in a barn, with a balcony built into it,” she said. “Signage at the entrance to the balcony asked that no substances or highly intoxicated people enter. You could be up there and still have a great view of the stage, feel the atmosphere, and get the full sound of the party without having to worry about drinks being spilled on you or having interactions with people on drugs.”

“Being up on that balcony for a few nights at the festival really opened my eyes to how wonderful it can be to have respite from those elements and still be able to get turned up on the atmosphere of great music and a highly social party vibe. Coming home from the festival, it became a priority for me to incorporate that into nightlife events whenever it was a logistical possibility.”

Joey remembers organizing a queer sober party in an underground



To play in bars, you get ‘paid’ by drinking for free. Musicians work hard and we should be paying them money so they can focus on their creative process. Their work should be accessible to all ages.

dance studio after Trump was elected. With a powerful sound system, lively decor, and art supplies, it was an intentional creative space.

“People danced, created, communed, and even mourned,” she remembered. “It had all the elements that I love about classic dance parties but the sobriety seemed to allow many people to connect with each other and be present in an intensely beautiful way that felt really necessary in that exact moment.”

When she travels outside of Madison to perform, Joey gets the sense that event organizers are aware that sobriety is gaining traction. She explains that the challenge is in finding ways to create queer-friendly spaces where the music, lighting, sound, and atmospheric elements create the feelings of freedom and fun, without heavy substance use.

TESSA ECHEVERRIA COMMUNICATION, OPERATIONS MANAGER

The all-ages music and arts space, Communication, opened a year ago at 2645 Milwaukee Street and is an intentional sober venue.

The idea came after Tessa Echeverria opened up her all-analog recording studio for events and experienced a huge demand for all-ages, sober shows. She approached others for help with launching a new space. After an eight-month search, they identified the vacant building on Milwaukee Street, a former window and blinds store. They had to do a lot of work to gut and rebuild inside, but now they have areas for offices, retail, and performances.

Escheverria grew up in Washington State and has been active in the music and queer scenes there and in Wisconsin. Her experience with the role of alcohol in the music scenes prompted some questions.

“When you’re a musician and doing live performances in bars, there is so much drinking,” said Tessa. “It not only limits the access of teens to be in the social scene and to play. But it’s also a kind of payment for musicians. To play in bars, you get ‘paid’ by drinking for free. Musicians work hard and we should be paying them money so they can focus on their creative process. Their work should be accessible to all ages.”

Communication seeks to have a truly safe space for everyone, and that means having house rules. Classist, homophobic, racist, or sexist behavior isn’t tolerated. No touching without consent. Be mindful of the space you take up. Echeverria says these rules are easier to follow when people are in a sober state of mind.

“Our main goal is that if we set up a dynamic that is immediately welcoming to everyone, regardless of identity, and if we are upfront about our policies, it will help keep the space safe for everyone,” she said. “Putting up a sign that says ‘no transphobic behavior’ signals to people what our values are. We book a lot of queer artists, and it’s important for people to feel welcomed and to see themselves represented in the shows and artists we have here. We also have a booking policy not to book bands that have exhibited problematic behavior.”

As Communication heads into its second year, they will be looking for ways of diversifying their funding and revenue, especially since they aren’t making money off of alcohol sales like other performance venues. Tessa remains committed to making Communication a space for a variety of community events—from book clubs to health care workshops and a space for high school music and arts.

“We don’t have all the ideas all the time,” said Tessa. “There are endless opportunities to use this building to help make things happen.”

CAL SMITH ARTIST AND COMEDIAN

Last year, Communication was the venue for a comedy show on International Womxn’s Day. Artist and comedian, Cal Smith, said the experience was different from performing comedy or storytelling at a bar.

“At a comedy show where alcohol is sold, it impacts not just the performance but also how you get paid,” Cal explained. “People may be generous with their laughter when they’ve been drinking, and that impacts the pace of your performance. But at a venue that sells alcohol, you might get paid plus get food and drinks on top of what you get from the door (cover charge). A venue like Communication is really transparent about how performers are compensated, but they have to absorb some of the money made at the event because they are not selling alcohol like other venues.”

Cal also explained other ways alcohol affects the live performance scene when they described the pressures put on performers. Comedians and storytellers may calm pre-show jitters with alcohol, be encouraged by venue owners to remind audience members to buy drinks if alcohol sales are down, and by simply having shows at bars drinking appears more prevalent. They’ve had young people ask if they can come to shows to find community, even if they weren’t 21. They’ve also hesitated in inviting sober friends to performances where there is alcohol.

“Communication is an inherently feminist space,” they explained. “They have basic tenets for managing that space, including emphasizing the importance of consent and being a safe, welcoming space. Alcohol makes consent and safety harder for other venue owners to manage, even when selling drinks is a part of a business.”

Safety and accessibility was also something that struck Cal as something that felt different at bars. With a sciatic injury, Cal may need a place to sit. But at bars where people have been drinking, it’s harder for people to be aware of their surroundings and of the needs of people with visible and invisible disabilities they are sharing space with.

“At some point we have to ask why venues put profit over safety.” Cal hosts the Sunday Slam on Sunday nights at 6:00 p.m. at Art-In where alcohol is served, but not required to purchase to attend. The Sunday Slam is a queer-friendly open mic for comics and storytellers.

SARAH AKAWA DJ AND EVENT ORGANIZER

Local DJ, promoter, and curator, Sarah Akawa, is no stranger to queer spacemaking. As an organizer of local events, she’s had many conversations with friends about what she describes as “the frustrating tendency for queer social events to be drinking-centered or held in bars and



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clubs.” Though, historically speaking she recognizes the important role of gay bars in queer liberation, including the Stonewall Riots.

“I find that the issue at hand is more than drinking and alcohol use,” said Akawa. “In order to fully understand why this is an issue to the queer community one needs to take a broader view and examine the role of capitalism and the concept of ‘rainbow capitalism’ or businesses’ shallow inclusion of LGBT people for the pursuit of their own profit.”

Akawa has been organizing queer events in Madison since 2013 and recognizes that the scene has changed.

“Previously we would have to fight to convince bars to let us access the space—and even more so to let us curate it to our needs—even for things as simple as having bartenders be aware of what pronouns are,” she said. “Now, supporting the LGBT movement is trendy and seen as profitable for bars, especially (and sometimes only) during pride month.”

“Increasingly I am noticing that bars as well as corporations and brands simply slap a rainbow on their venue, advertisement, or product and congratulate their effort as being supportive of the LGBT community. This does not help queer people or support their well-being and is insulting to the efforts of those actually working towards queer liberation.”

She expressed frustration about the entwinement of the pervasive drinking culture with queer culture and works to provide sober spaces and alternative community gatherings at art galleries and places like the Black Locust Cafe at Robinia Courtyard.

“I’d like to see support for the queer community year round, not just during June for pride,” she said, “as well as a real commitment to queer people’s well-being, regardless of how much booze is purchased. When examining the role of drinking culture as it relates to queer spacemaking, it’s necessary to outline how capitalism co-opts and twists queer spacemaking to further oppress queer people, and this happens because “queer” is now seen as trendy and profitable.



Jacqueline Goldstein & the Queer Climbing Social.

Akawa’s summer projects include DJing as Saint Saunter and organizing the Hot Summer Gays and queer.IRL series of events. She is planning a queer spacemaking workshop this fall to provide resources for people in the queer and sober communities to create and curate welcoming spaces.

OTHER SOBER SPACES

Madison does have some alternatives to the bar scene. In the May/June 2019 edition of *Our Lives*, Lucy Hodgman wrote about LGBTQ-owned “third spaces” (not home, not work, but social spaces). Java Cat, Cargo Coffee and Ground Zero coffee shops, Café Social, and the Fair Trade Coffee House are options for a quiet date night. This year, a Facebook page helped people gather for “Queer Cafe,” monthly weekend gatherings at local coffeeshops.

For those who like a more active social scene, there is the Badgerland Softball league, Madison Gay Hockey Association, Madison Queer Yoga, and the Queer Climbing Social for other alternatives.

JACQUELINE GOLDSTEIN QUEER CLIMBING SOCIAL

The Queer Climbing Social started two years ago after Jacqueline Goldstein attended a queer climbing night at Boulders. The event was organized by Sarah Akawa and it inspired Jacqueline to keep it going as an after-hours space similar to the Madison Women Climbers events. Boulders was supportive and offered discounted rates for attendees and belay (climbing rope tying) lessons.

“The gym is a sober space for safety reasons,” said Jacqueline. “You literally have the life of your partner in your hands. Rock climbing with ropes is typically done in pairs, with each person connected by a rope to their partner. This allows people who climb together to develop trust and grow confidence, in themselves and in each other.”

The Queer Climbing Socials are as much about climbing as they are about being social. Every month features a community meal with a potluck, a grill out, or donated food.

During the evening, people stop climbing and come together to sit around a long table and share food and stories. Food and drink is a large part of the social—no alcohol needed. Goldstein reports that participants say the space feels warm and welcoming, and others say they wouldn’t have tried rock climbing otherwise.

“We built a culture where regular attendees walk around and make sure newer folks feel included and that no one feels isolated by asking if they want a climbing partner,” said Jacqueline. “It’s a risk. And for

folks who take risks just by moving through space, we provide a safe, sober place where they can climb out of their comfort zone, make new friends, and have a fun time.”

S ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

For anyone who is looking for help in addressing personal challenges with alcohol—either for themselves or in their own family and relationship history—LGBTQ-focused Alcoholics Anonymous groups are available in Madison that provide support and understanding. There are over 200 meetings or events each week in the Madison area, including the Go After Your Sobriety Group at 8:00 p.m. at the First Congregational Church and a Sober Qrunch brunch meet up on the last Sunday of each month.

An active member of local AA meetings, S said they are glad LGBTQ+ AA meetings exist, but it’s the pursuit of recovery and understanding the impact alcohol has had on their lives that brings people together in 12-step programs.

“I enjoy the fellowship the Sober Qrunch provides, but I am a queer non-binary individual and none of the AA or Al-anon meetings I regularly attend are LGBTQ+ specific,” said S. “To the point about the LGBTQ+ community needing their own AA/Alanon meetings, I will say that I have found an LGBTQ+ community within AA and Al Anon, and I never had to hide my identity to do so. I attended an AA drag show and ball and it was one of the most beautiful experiences I’ve had in sobriety, to see so many sober queer people having wild fun—and remembering it the next day!”

(To find the full list of meetings, visit aamadisonwi.org.)

For those who are just looking for a quiet alternative to bars, that scene is available and growing one sober curious person at a time. ■

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FAITH COUNSELING SPIRITUALITY

Reconciling Faith with Identity

When religion spurns us for who we are, many simply turn away from it forever. But spiritual community can be a positive way to connect and grow, particularly when we reclaim it and change the rules.

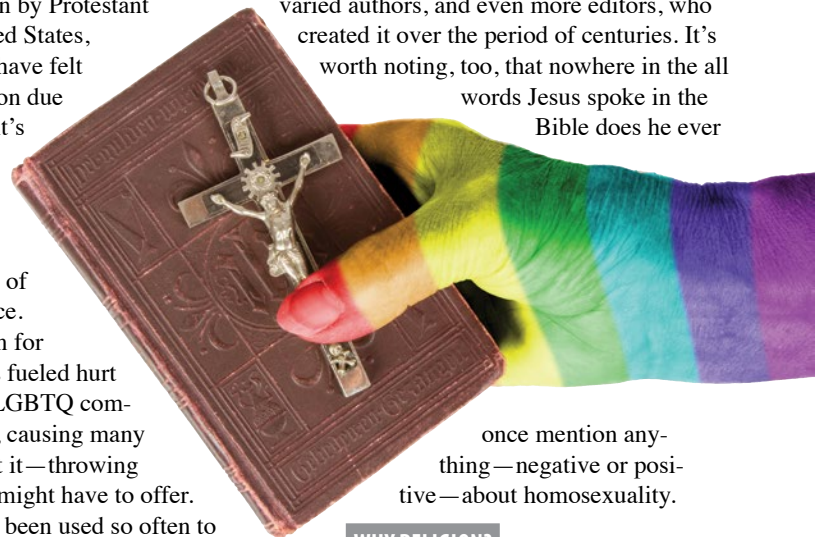
WITH ALL THE RECENT DEBATES surrounding LGBTQ inclusion by Protestant churches in the United States, and with many who have felt excluded from religion due to religious bigotry, it's important to figure out if and how our community can once again embrace the church as a place of community and solace.

The use of religion for bigoted purposes has fueled hurt and rejection in the LGBTQ community for centuries, causing many of us to simply reject it—throwing out even the good it might have to offer. Because religion has been used so often to divide and shame queer people, many of us felt we had to completely separate ourselves from the spiritual faiths in which we grew up in order to come out of the closet and accept who we are.

Disconnection can be necessary when we are rejected by a social system, but the shame that comes from being called “sinful” can remain in our psyche long after we have rejected this false construct. The message that something intrinsic to the person I am is bad or wrong can be manifested beneath the surface of our consciousness. Tara Brach, in her book *Radical Acceptance*, describes this concept as the “trance of unworthiness”—an underlying belief system that we are or never will be good enough that is reinforced by overt and covert conditioning throughout life.

Humans are generally happier and healthier when connected to meaningful values, purpose, or community. However, all too often the image of a higher power is presented as one of dooming rigidity, punishment, and judgment. Many would understandably run away from this idea toward it. It's important to remember that religions were constructed by people, many of whom have used their own interpretations to fuel the trance of unworthiness for not being straight

or cisgender. The Bible itself has many and varied authors, and even more editors, who created it over the period of centuries. It's worth noting, too, that nowhere in the all words Jesus spoke in the Bible does he ever



once mention anything—negative or positive—about homosexuality.

WHY RELIGION?

If the relationships we value and choose to keep in our lives have none of these negative qualities, why would we consider signing up for a faith that portrays us as bad or wrong? The answer is, we shouldn't. But we can look deeper at the messages delivered to us and assess what we may need to let go of

If you are interested in reconnecting with faith or seeking a corrective experience, the good news is: you can. Important factors to consider are safety and choice in the process of re-writing your own narrative of faith or spirituality.

in order to heal. Similar to our process of grieving for other lost relationships, we heal by identifying what we've gained.

This healing lays the groundwork to seek a corrective relationship experience, stepping back into a relationship dynamic to erase negativity and create a revised version that is different from before. As the Sufi poet Rumi wrote, “Keep your gaze on the bandaged place. That's where the light enters you.”

Part of my own corrective experience with spirituality was validation I received from a

spiritual leader who essentially was the first person of faith in my life to tell me that being gay was who I was meant to be. Prior to that, I was taught to feel shame for being gay and pushed to be something I'm not. Within this rigid paradigm of invalidation, it can often feel like there is no choice. However, the truth is that it is acceptance, not rejection, that is the lifeblood of a spirituality.

If you are interested in reconnecting with faith or seeking a corrective experience, the good news is: you can. Important factors to consider are safety and choice in the process of re-writing your own narrative of faith or spirituality. If you imagined your own higher power or faith that you could really believe in, what would the values and qualities of him/her/zi/they/it be? Start with what would offer personal meaning and belonging to you, and you might find that there are a variety of faith-based systems that are more inclusive and can help speed the healing process.

There are many ways, beyond going to church, that can help us connect with our inner spirituality and go on to form a sense of community. Connection with nature, yoga, or a meditation practice can be powerful forms of connection. After all, prayer is a form of self-guided meditation—often focused on the hope of a positive outcome. In fact, anything that allows your perspective to widen, so you can see a larger view of yourself in the universe, offers benefits that can reduce depressive or anxious feelings.

While our country is founded on the concept of separation of church and state, the reality is that the very nature of our politics does not allow them to be easily separated or siloed. Religion is continually used by some to pretend we are sinful “others,” which makes it easier for people and institutions to victimize our community. However, if the so-called “religious right” gets to choose a religious interpretation that fits how they want to see the world, then so do we.

Reconnection with faith can be for personal growth or meaning, and it can also be integrated into a form of political activism. After all, reclaiming a space that we've been forced out of is a very powerful form of healing and reconnection. Sometimes the best way to further differentiate ourselves is to realize we have the power to change some of the rules we never agreed to in the first place. ■



ALEXANDER EINSMAN, MS LMFT is a licensed psychotherapist with Atlas Counseling, located in Downtown Madison. He specializes in working with adolescents, adults, intimate relationships, and the LGBTQ community.

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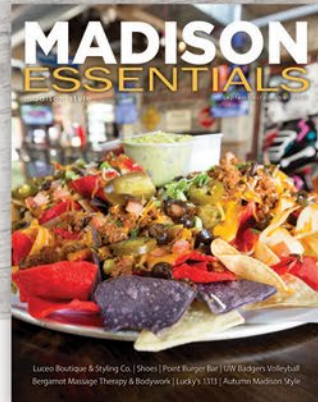
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DIVERSITY & INCLUSION WHITE ALLYSHIP ANTI-RACISM

Talking Race in Majority-white Space

In this installment of the Dear Queer White People advice column, **Dr. Sami Schalk** looks at white-majority groups and discussions of race.

Dear Sami,

I'm in a predominantly white local queer group and have brought up discussions about race and privilege, but there is push back from the white members who say they aren't interested in the topic because the group is not racially or culturally diverse. How can I convince them these are important topics for us to discuss as a white-majority group?

Sincerely,

Doing My Best to be an Ally (DMB)

DEAR QUEER WHITE PEOPLE,

This isn't the first question I've received about what white-majority groups can do to educate and diversify their membership. DMB, I think you're on the right track here in recognizing that even without people of color currently in your group, your white queer members would benefit from these discussions, and your group is more likely to be appealing and welcoming to people of color if you have talked about white privilege, racism, microaggressions, and related topics before your first QTPOC member shows up. Many groups and organizations want to bring in people of color, sometimes in a tokenizing way, without fundamentally changing the behavior, values, or ethos of their group or organization. That is not a recipe for long-term success.

Race and racism don't only exist when people of color are present. In fact, a lot of white queer folks' casual racism comes out most when they are around other white folks with whom they feel comfortable. If you are leading a white-majority group, do you or others correct members who make casually racist comments or reveal racist assumptions, stereotypes, or beliefs? If you let these comments pass, you are allowing an environment to persist that is not welcoming to QTPOCs. The work of creating an inclusive environment in your group, as DMB's question indicates, starts before QTPOCs enter the room—otherwise you risk inviting folks into a space where they will be subjected to microaggressions and racial hostility or harassment.



A lot of white queer folks' casual racism comes out most when they are around other white folks with whom they feel comfortable. Do you correct members who make casually racist comments or reveal racist assumptions or beliefs?

For this group and others, there are multiple ways to do this work. One way would be to find articles by people of color with your group's shared gender or sexual identity (like an Asian non-binary person or a Latinx asexual person) to read and discuss together. Another way would be to attend ethnic and cultural festivals and events as a group to learn and grow together. You could also have a discussion about the way(s) you are marginalized and ways that you are privileged in terms of race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, and citizenship status. Talk about how other identities have impacted your experience or understanding of your group's shared gender or sexuality. For instance, as a black woman, my experience of biphobia (when I identified as such, now I identify as queer) was impacted by the fact that bisexuals are often stereotyped as hypersexual and so are black women. As a result, I often felt that coming out to new people as bisexual increased the chances that I would be read as a hypersexual person open to sexual



DR. SAMI SCHALK is an Assistant Professor of Gender & Women's Studies at UW-Madison. Her research focuses on disability, race, and gender in contemporary American literature and culture, especially African American literature, speculative fiction, and feminist literature.

Have a question that could be addressed in a future column?
E-mail: DearQueerWhitePeople@gmail.com

encounters with anyone and everyone. On the flip-side, as a middle class person, I have the privilege of being able to afford the makeup and clothing that feel affirming to my identity as a femme.

Beginning conversations like these and learning from the experiences of others not only helps members expand their understanding of how people with the same gender or sexual identity experience it differently depending upon their other identities, but it also begins to prepare the group for how to listen to differing experiences and respond to them without judgement when, perhaps, people of color join.

What I want to particularly emphasize here is that white majority queer groups cannot simply put up a sign that says "QTPOCs WELCOME" and claim they have done the work to be inclusive. Inclusive groups, groups that multiple marginalized queer people want to belong to, are those that have members who are welcoming and understanding, who have educated themselves independently (not at the expense of a QTPOC by expecting

The work of creating an inclusive environment in your group starts before QTPOCs enter the room—otherwise you risk inviting folks into a space where they will be subjected to microaggressions and racial hostility or harassment.

them to teach), and who are doing the work to be allies regardless of the presence of people of color in a space. In other words, you can't wait to talk about race until people of color arrive. Your group needs to be thinking about how whiteness is already shaping how it operates and make changes whether or not people of color are regularly attending. Good luck, white allies, I believe in you.

Your local fierce black femme on a mission,
Sami

*QTPOC = Queer and trans people of color

Want more from Sami? Follow her on Twitter (@drsamischalk), Facebook (facebook.com/drsamischalk), or Instagram ([fierceblackfemme](https://instagram.com/fierceblackfemme)).

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As the tone of the national conversation shifts, it is clear the importance of groups like New Harvest and the role they play in their local communities. Our mission is even more vital now than ever before so we ask those who have not given to consider giving to New Harvest's mission in supporting the LGBT communities of south central Wisconsin.

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MEDICAL GATEKEEPING GENDER CONFIRMATION SURGERY TRANSGENDER

Our Bodies, Our Choice

Randi Hagen outlines the many ways the medical establishment acts as the often irrational gatekeeper for trans folks seeking medical transition.

I HAVE A BRAND NEW VAGINA.

No, I didn't lose my old one. I never had one—this one is fresh out of the shop. She's sparkly and new and complains a lot, but not nearly as much as I expected her to. Her name's Alia. I love her to death.

Getting a new vagina is super easy. All you to have to do is jump through a bunch of hoops, endure a ton of pain, shell out a bunch of money, convince a bunch of cis people that you're trans enough, and bam! It's cooter city!

Sounds great, right?

Sorry, what I meant to say is that it sounds like a load of horseshit. Let me tell you about medical gatekeeping and how it impacts the trans community in particular. Namely, there are a number of requirements you have to meet and a number of hoops you need to jump through in order to get bottom surgery (aka vaginoplasty, aka gender confirmation surgery).

Hair removal on your nethers? Got it. That's actually pretty reasonable. Hair growing in my post-surgical muffin would be a nightmare. Hair removal was painful (ohmy-god so painful), but it totally makes sense.

Be on hormones for a year? Well...I wanted that anyway, so no big deal. I mean, I do have a serious liver disease, and I had to sign an informed consent that hormones might make it worse. What if I hadn't been willing to make that call? Would a minge be off the table? What's the reasoning behind this requirement? I can't imagine a medical need for estrogen in order for my body to support a newly smithed snatch. I can't see any reason for this requirement.

What's next? Get a letter from a doctor you've been seeing for at least 18 months about gender stuff? Woah. Well, I already have an awesome doctor (hi, Dr. Hayon!), so I'm set here, too. Get a letter from a therapist you've been seeing for a while? OK. I'm lucky I've been going to therapy for a few years, so I've got my bases covered there as well. Get a letter from a therapist you've never met before? Jesus Christ! How many letters do you need? Is the fate of my muff dependent on whether I make a good impres-



Who determines if these patients have properly lived in an "identity-congruent gender role" unless someone else is defining their gender?

sion on this stranger?

I'm privileged, so these resources are available to me. They're much harder to access for folks without insurance, or who don't have trans-inclusive therapists and doctors in the area. The rules make it harder for these humans to access healthcare in general.

And what's the point of all these letters? To "prove" you're trans. You need to prove you're mentally stable enough to become responsible for you very own vajayjay (because all cis women had to pass this test in order to get theirs). Suddenly, having told your therapist about all your problems seems a little dicey. If I say I'm struggling with self-harm (true facts, but that's another story), will I be deemed unqualified for a quim (spoiler alert: the answer is no. I think. I mean they gave me one and it's not like they can take it back now)?

I saved my favorite requirement for last: Live for one year as a woman.

What does that even mean? Who defines "woman?" I ride a motorcycle. Is that a womanly activity? I play hockey. Is that a woman sport (the answer is yes and it's very gay ♥)? Do I need to own at least three dresses and prove I can apply makeup and carry a purse? Have I not been a woman my entire life?

The goal is to keep people from ending up with a body that doesn't match their gender identity. Think about that for a second. The medical profession wants you to sit in a body that doesn't match your gender identity just in case you might end up with a body that doesn't match your gender identity.

What about the trans women who wear jeans and t-shirts? Who like car racing and hiking and monster trucks? Are they "trans enough?"

I have non-binary friends who've expressed concern about meeting with their surgeon for top surgery. If they don't present as "masculine enough" because their gender is floating somewhere between the ethereal and the fae, will they be told no? Who determines if these patients have properly lived in an "identity-congruent gender role" unless someone else is defining their gender? Are surgeries only allowed for trans people who happen to fit into one narrow view of a gender binary?

Gatekeeping used to happen all across the board. Different surgeons had wildly different requirements, so as a way to "improve" the situation, the medical profession standardized the requirements (first in 1979 and most recently in 2012), and then institutionalized them. That means everybody follows them, and there's no way around them.

What's the point? Why have all these barriers? The goal is to keep people from ending up with a body that doesn't match their gender identity. Think about that for a second. The medical profession wants you to sit in a body that doesn't match your gender identity just in case you might end up with a body that doesn't match your gender identity.

Look, I get it. The first rule of medicine is



RANDI HAGEN is a proud trans woman, storyteller, geek, programmer, athlete, feminist, sister, mother, and Slytherin. She's a developer for Epic by day, notably on healthcare interoperability, better support for queer patients in the medical record, and customer cooperation.

"above all do no harm." But the issue here is that cis people are determining what "harm" is, and they don't have any experience with the harm that comes from being a trans individual who desperately wants to alleviate their dysphoria but is told they need to wait a year or more for a (cis) therapist to agree with them.

The requirements are stringent—more stringent than they need to be. There are plenty of cosmetic procedures with fewer requirements and higher rates of post-surgical regret than bottom surgery (i.e. a full-face tattoo). Some trans humans will regret moving forward with gender-related surgeries, and we need to hold space for them and their experiences, but we can make accessing healthcare easier at the same time.

I'm writing this on the four-month anniversary of getting my new vagina. She's not perfect—my vulva's still swollen, we had a brief scare with hemorrhaging, and she's still so sensitive that she doesn't want anybody touching her. I'm worried she'll be a sourpuss when I bring up the topic of sex at some point in the future.

Despite all that, my new vagina has given me something I've never experienced before: a sense of gender euphoria, of my body matching my gender identity. I'm so happy I got to meet her. ■

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TALK MORE ABOUT YOURSELVES. HOW DID YOU COME TO OWN THE BUSINESS? HOW DID YOU MEET EACH OTHER?

Jesus: My name is Jesus, and I'm Mexican.

Pedro: I am Pedro, I am from Mexico as well, from a place called Guadalajara. We have known each other for about 12 years, and became a couple, and the business started in November about five years ago.

Before we were both welders. It was a completely different job, but we started taking interest in everything baking and, little by little, we kept making cakes until we finally decided to open up the bakery.

CAN YOU TALK TO ME ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SOLDADO (WELDER)?

We worked in factories welding metal and all of those things. Jesus and I worked in different departments, but now our job is very different. Back then we did not imagine we would be doing this now.

DID YOU START MAKING CAKES TOGETHER? OR DID ONE OF YOU START FIRST? HOW DID THIS INTEREST START TO GROW?

Jesus: Pedro started first. While he was a welder, he also worked in a bakery, so he already kind of had that love and passion for baking. He began doing it in his free time, and with his family. We would go to parties and bring one of our own baking creations. I started to get more involved, and that's how we started liking it, and how we commenced the whole bakery thing.

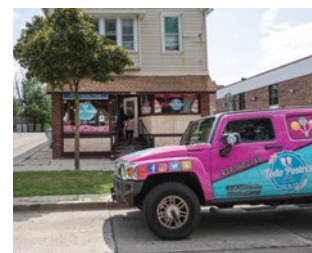
HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE CEREMONY THAT HAPPENED AT THE STATE CAPITOL WHEN THEY RAISED THE LGBT+ FLAG? WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE, AND WHAT DID IT MEAN FOR YOU TO HAVE ONE OF YOUR CAKES IN SUCH AN HISTORICAL EVENT?

We are very proud of who we are. We are proud members of the LGBT+ community. We are always involved in LGBT issues. We did not know that the flag was going to be raised, but then one day, checking through Instagram, I saw what was going on. I told my husband about it, how beautiful that was, and what it means to the LGBT community.

Later, JoCasta Zamarripa called us. She is always letting us know of these events that are happening in the capitol. She told us that the governor was going to be giving a speech, and she wanted to invite us to be there and to see if we could bring one of our cakes decorated for the occasion. That was something really beautiful, very emotional.

WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT LGBT+/LATINX/MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES?

I think it is very important. Our community is having a huge



impact this year. We are growing and are getting rid of old stereotypes. It is very beautiful that people see that the LGBT community has the opportunity to advance and grow like everybody else. There are not many LGBT Latino owners, but it is important for the community to know that we are here and that we are part of the LGBT community. We hope we can be an example to other people. ■

Find out more about Todo Postres at facebook.com/ToDo-Postres-LLC-320550384730446 or by calling (414) 988-2149.

Interview by **Karen Perez-Wilson**, with translation and transcription provided by Latino Academy of Workforce Development staff.

FOOD LATINX MILWAUKEE

Of Love and Baking

Discover **Todo Postres**, the gay, Latinx-owned bake shop in Milwaukee that's making life a little sweeter for their community.

WHEN PRIDE MONTH WAS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED and celebrated with a flag raising at the Wisconsin State Capitol in June, the politicians and other attendees were treated to a particularly fabulous rainbow cake to mark the occasion.

The spectacular piece of baking had an appropriate backstory, too. State Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa made a point to specifically commission it from a Latinx and gay-owned business in Milwaukee.

Todo Postres, at 1567 W. Oklahoma Ave., has been owned and operated by couple Jesus and Pedro for the past five years. Here, Karen Perez-Wilson talks with them about their business, their history, and the importance of Latinx LGBTQ representation and community.

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ACTIVISM QTPOC YOUTH

Fuel for the Fire

GSAFE Scholarship winner and La Follette High School grad **Dija Manly** finds motivation for the fight ahead in the support of community and through direct action.

IN A SOCIOPOLITICAL CLIMATE like ours, to say that it's hard to remain optimistic is...an understatement. With news outlets constantly sensationalizing the most heinous of acts against humanity, and society generally treating human rights issues as if they're debatable, it's easy to lose hope.

Last year, following the Parkland shooting, I, along with other members of Save Our Students-Madison, helped organize a student walkout demanding gun control. The rally was one of the most inspiring events of my life, and the momentum from the movement prompted me to continue organizing with the group. However, when Wisconsin State Representatives (along with politicians from the rest of the nation) continued to show themselves to be more committed to the NRA's money than the safety of their constituents, I struggled to maintain energy.

The same was true about my work with the Rape Crisis Center. I had volunteered throughout high school with the nonprofit to advocate for consent education and had seen with my own eyes the small progress I had helped make. Yet, the result of the Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court hearings and the nationwide victim blaming of Christine Blasey Ford made me question if all my work had been for naught.

I began to show up to my activist groups tired and emotionally drained. I had difficulty finding the passion to properly support action, and I shot down ideas because I doubted they would lead to the kind of immediate, radical change I was looking for. I was tired of feeling powerless, and sick of talking to politicians who treated our pleas like childish requests. I carried on like this for a few months until I came to a realization: We cannot afford to remain pessimistic. Pessimism leads to compliance. Feeling like you can't change anything leads to change being halted. It is exactly what oppressors try to instill in the oppressed—a normalization of evil, a



In focusing on the hands-on work that truly connects me to my community, I became more grounded and more conscientious about my place in society. In doing work that immediately helped others, I became more optimistic about slow-but-sure progress in our future.

coerced acceptance of dehumanization, and subjugation.

So, for the last half of my senior year of high school, I took a step back from activism. Instead, I spent time educating myself on the issues we face as a society. I spent less time on social media, and more time reading up on theories that helped explain why our nation had become what it had. I refused to debate with those intent on playing devil's advocate. I wanted answers and felt like the more time I spent with people debating morality and humanity, the more lost I would feel. For me, reading up on social theory provided me with a sense of clarity, and a vision of a more just world. It got me out of my mindset of

giving up, and into the mindset of developing solutions. It prompted me to re-evaluate my own activism and the ways I wanted to show up in spaces. It also helped me develop a plan to move forward.

I began dedicating more time to doing work that immediately benefitted and built my community. I continued working as a youth juror for Timebank's Youth Court—a program that seeks to end the school-to-prison pipeline in Madison high schools through restorative justice. I helped fundraise for my school's Black Student Union to attend our annual HBCU tour. I presented about the importance of queer role models and inclusive sex education to queer students who may have struggled finding those resources back at home. In focusing on the hands-on work that truly connects me to my community, I became more grounded and more conscientious about my place in society. In doing work that immediately helped others, I became more optimistic about slow-but-sure progress in our future.

During this period in my life, my friends and mentors were the most pivotal for me. Although the powers that be were convincing me to give up, I was given the strength to push through by people who unwaveringly believed in me. More than this, these people checked in on me and made sure that I was taking care of myself. It's easy to feel like you must give all of yourself for the sake of progress, but for me, not taking care of myself put me in a place of being unable to even think about affecting change. Having a support system that reminded me to be kind to myself was, frankly, necessary to my survival.

I have been mostly able to overcome pessimism through taking care of my community and taking care of myself. I still feel distraught from time to time about what's happening in this world, but I'm trying to use that energy to fuel me to do better, rather than allowing it to hold me back.

For those of you who feel bleak about our future, I recommend learning about and trusting in the process of change. I recommend working a little bit every day to contribute to progress. That being said, I also recommend taking a step back when necessary and finding a community that heals you. Even if we can't see change immediately, we, collectively, have more power than we know. ■



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Wagner *Tannhäuser*: Overture and Venusberg Music
Barber *Toccata Festiva*
Debussy *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*
Dvořák *Symphony No. 7*

Friday, Sept. 27 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 28 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 29 2:30 p.m.

madisonsymphony.org/orchestral

OCT
18-20



RACHEL BARTON PINE PLAYS KHACHATURIAN

John DeMain, Conductor • Rachel Barton Pine, Violin

Prokofiev Suite from *Lieutenant Kijé*
Khachaturian Violin Concerto in D minor
Shostakovich Symphony No. 9

Friday, Oct. 18 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Oct. 19 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Oct. 20 2:30 p.m.

madisonsymphony.org/pine

NOV
8-10



JOYCE YANG PLAYS PROKOFIEV

John DeMain, Conductor • Joyce Yang, Piano

Kernis *Newly Drawn Sky*
Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major
Schumann Symphony No. 2

Friday, Nov. 8 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 9 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 10 2:30 p.m.

madisonsymphony.org/yang

DEC
13-15



A MADISON SYMPHONY CHRISTMAS

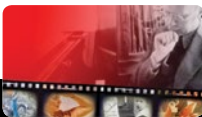
John DeMain, Conductor
Mackenzie Whitney, Tenor • Michelle Johnson, Soprano

Madison Symphony Chorus, Beverly Taylor, Director
Mount Zion Gospel Choir, Leatha and Tamera Stanley, Directors
Madison Youth Choirs, Michael Ross, Artistic Director

Friday, Dec. 13 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 14 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 15 2:30 p.m.

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JAN
19



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FEB
14-16



ROMANTIC ENCOUNTER ZUKERMAN & FORSYTH
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John DeMain, Conductor
Pinchas Zukerman, Violin • Amanda Forsyth, Cello

Berlioz *Le Corsaire* Overture
Brahms Concerto for Violin and Cello in A minor
Copland Symphony No. 3

Friday, Feb. 14 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 15 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 16 2:30 p.m.

madisonsymphony.org/romantic

MAR
6-8



THE MIRACLE BLAKE POULIOT PLAYS MENDELSSOHN
— KENNETH WOODS CONDUCTS

Kenneth Woods, Guest Conductor • Blake Pouliot, Violin

Haydn Symphony No. 96, *Miracle*
Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor
Strauss Ein Heldenleben (*A Hero's Life*)

Friday, Mar. 6 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Mar. 7 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Mar. 8 2:30 p.m.

madisonsymphony.org/miracle

APR
3-5



DVOŘÁK REQUIEM

John DeMain, Conductor
Madison Symphony Chorus, Beverly Taylor, Director

Ann Toomey, Soprano
Julie Miller, Mezzo-soprano
Eric Barry, Tenor
Matt Boehler, Bass

Friday, Apr. 3 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Apr. 4 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Apr. 5 2:30 p.m.

madisonsymphony.org/requiem

MAY
1-3



PIANO POWER

John DeMain, Conductor • Yefim Bronfman, Piano

Weber Overture from *Euryanthe*
Stravinsky *Petrushka*
Brahms Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor

Friday, May 1 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, May 2 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 3 2:30 p.m.

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